

University of Bucharest
Faculty of Foreign Languages and Literatures
English Department

Shakespeare Debating Society

Shakespeare's
Four
Hundred
Years
Celebration

ESSAY CONTEST

Shakespeare's Drama of
Excellent Differences

Motto: "Is't possible that the world should so much
differ, and we alive that lived?"

W. Shakespeare, *Timon of Athens*

Shakespeare's Four Hundred Years Celebration



Shakespeare's Drama of Excellent Differences

To celebrate four centuries since Shakespeare's death "Shakespeare Debating Society" organizes a contest of essays for the students of the English Department. Two prizes equivalent to £250.00 have been most generously offered by Mr. Kalu Singh, a retired university counselor and distinguished author interested in education, drama, and psychology from Cambridge, UK.

Students enrolled in the BA Philology programme studying English as a major or minor specialty [A or B] from years I, II, III whose grades in English literature [years II, III] or average grade at the admission exam [I year] are 7 and above are invited to participate in a literary competition to be held on December 17th.

The contest will consist in two stages:

Stage one: a two-hour academic essay written in class on a topic related to the subject of difference. The participants will be presented with a passage from two Shakespearean plays: *Hamlet* and *The Tempest* in class; they will choose a passage from either play, provide a close analysis of the text, and, relating it further to the whole context of the play, give a personal, broader, original interpretation of the problem of difference[s]. The essays will be then corrected and two winners designated.

Stage two: the winning papers as well as a selection of other best papers made by the committee will be then further elaborated under the guidance of a supervisor and presented in a special panel at the symposium *Shakespeare and Ionesco: Difference in Drama* to be held in March 2017, when the prizes will be officially awarded to the winners.

Students who would like to participate are asked to send an e-mail to the organizer, Dr. Ioana Gogeanu at igogeanu@yahoo.com, Subject: *SDS Shakespeare contest* by December 12th 2016 and specify their grades in English literature or or admission average grade. Accepted participants will receive a written confirmation.

Guidelines of possible topics



When they read *Hamlet* or *The Tempest* to prepare for the contest, students are invited to consider the following aspects:

- The process of differentiation and its result, difference, are significant issues in Shakespeare's work, which may not be confined to mere "otherness" but can be conceived more broadly. For example:

- Difference can be understood as marking an entity in terms of dissimilarity of personal appearance, but also as the result of being totally unlike anyone else: strange, monstrous, ethereal, uncanny beyond measure, uniquely, or radically other. Difference therefore may emerge in ordinary encounters between people varying in age, gender, rank, class, work, creed, but also in encounters with the supernatural, ghosts or spirits, unworldly or magical creatures.

- Differentiation is the process which fashions the difference, the fact of "being-unlike." As such, differentiation involves "a distancing from" or "a transformation into" some recognizable or unrecognizable form of otherness: the crisis of identity is an illustration of the struggle between the inner and outer self or being oneself changes into being estranged to oneself; differentiation is also a genuine transformation: being young becomes being old, being alive changes into being dead; ideal government moves between acting and contemplation linked to the fashioning and self fashioning of dukes, princes, and kings; war turns into peace, fortune grows into misfortune, power into weakness, high declines into low, low swings into high in the never ending ceaseless ebb and flow of life.

- Distinction can be seen as excessive differing, such as hatred and quarrel, dissension and altercation, but it can also turn into a condition for friendship and love or deep awe and worship.

- Variety is promoted and ensured by the play of differences. It may constitute a constellation which is articulated within the same individual as different states of mind, perceptions, beliefs, conceptions, attitudes, and poses. Or it can hold together difference and differentiation in the world: a wide range of beings differing in age, gender, rank, work, views, beliefs, attitudes, and actions are caught in a perpetual dynamic change.

In other words, Shakespeare's is the eventful Renaissance world replete with a variety of unlike beings of excellent differences manufactured by and held together through the dynamics of differentiation. How did Shakespeare manage it? Why did he do it? What is it to us?

Bibliography

Any edition of:

Shakespeare, W., *Hamlet*. Ed. G. R. Hibbard (Oxford: OUP, 1987; 2008)

Shakespeare, W., *Hamlet*. Ed. Edwards (Cambridge: CUP, 2003)

Shakespeare, W., *Hamlet*. Ed. H. Jenkins (London: Methuen, 1982)

Shakespeare, W., *Hamlet*. Eds. A.Thomson, N.Taylor (London: Bloomsbury, 2006)

Any edition of:

Shakespeare, W., *The Tempest*. Ed. S. Orgel (Oxford: OUP, 1987)

Shakespeare, W., *The Tempest*. Ed. D. Lindley (Cambridge: CUP, 2002)

Shakespeare, W., *The Tempest*. Ed. F. Kermode (London: Methuen, 1954; 1989)Ed. Shakespeare,

W., *The Tempest*. Eds. V.M.Vaughan, A.T.Vaughan (London: Bloomsbury, 2011)

Deadline and Contact:

Deadline for written participation request: December 12th 2016.

Contact person: Dr. Ioana Gogeanu, igogeanu@yahoo.com

