Practicing Diversity in Digital Shakespeare Pedagogy

Varsha Panjwani[1], Anne Sophie Refskou[2]

[1]NYU London, United Kingdom; [2]HamletScenen, United Kingdom

vp46@nyu.edu; annesophie@hamletscenen.dk

Virtual ('Artificial') communities affect our behaviours in the real world and prejudices in real world are carried over, sometimes more aggressively, to online environments. What is selected, preserved and promoted on digital platforms can be related to long-standing privilege. However, the 'artificiality' of the virtual world may simultaneously hold potential for a more critically conscious representation, which could challenge and better 'reality'.

This is an important issue for courses centred around Shakespeare which, thanks to subfields such as Feminist Shakespeare, Early Modern Race Studies, and Global Shakespeare, have only recently begun to diversify their curriculum. In this scenario, will the increased adoption of digital resources and tools lead to increased inequalities in Shakespeare teaching, or might it support a more diverse practice? In this seminar, we are interested in how digital humanities, the cultural capital of Shakespeare, and racial, sexual, physical, socioeconomic diversity intersect in the 21st century pedagogy.

Whereas Shakespeare scholars have examined the challenges and affordances of blogs (Peter Kirwan, 2014), YouTube (Stephen O'Neill, 2014), Twitter (Danika Barker, 2013), Wikipedia (David C. Moberly, 2014) in teaching, there still remains a huge scope for examining the inherent biases of the tools and resources that are being employed. Moreover, while some digital archives and databases address diversity in Shakespearean theatre history (BBAS University of Warwick), or in the early modern period (TIDE project), or allow students to study global Shakespearean performances (MIT Global Shakespeare; Asian Shakespeare Intercultural Archive: A-S-I-A), more can be done by combining digitization and critical archive studies in the classroom.

Papers might address how to assess whether the digital tools we are using are amplifying or silencing marginalized voices inside and outside the classroom? What resources are needed for realizing the diversifying potential of digital humanities pedagogy? How can educational digital archives be curated with a view to redressing what Imtiaz Habib (2018) has called the 'invisibility of the black subject' in early modern England? How can we employ existing inclusive databases to create a more diverse curriculum and practice?