



PhD Studentship

Title: **Shakespeare as Resistance in 21st-century Ukraine**

Closing date: 24th April 2023

Interview date: w/c 15th May 2023

Supervisory team

Director of Studies:

[Prof. Nicoleta Cinpoes](#), School of Humanities, University of Worcester

Supervisors:

[Dr Whitney Standlee](#), School of Humanities, University of Worcester

[Research Group: Early Modern Research Group](#)

Collaborating organisations:

Zaporizhzhya National University, Ukraine

Ivan Franko Lviv National University, Ukraine

The Project

Applications are invited for a fully-funded, full-time PhD studentship for the project: **Shakespeare as Resistance in 21st-century Ukraine**.

For the world, the Ukrainian story has been a patchy one, with only a handful of studies available in English, so this project aims to redress this in its contextualization and write the 21st stage of Shakespeare as Resistance in Ukraine.

Context

Shakespeare's story in Ukraine is peculiarly absent from the wider narrative that has been written in the past thirty years as country after country in central and eastern Europe gained their

independence from Russia. As elsewhere in the Soviet 'sphere of influence', culture had been hijacked by the Soviet regime to introduce and ensure its ideological line. Several waves of this carefully designed and imposed process have been implemented systematically in countries east of the Berlin Wall after 1945. Shakespeare – the man – and his works have been no exception. On the contrary, singled out by the Party as key cultural capital, Shakespeare has seen a thorough transformation into the perfect agent of proletkultism, tasked with excising “western, decadent, bourgeoisie” values and promoting communism across the region.

USSR's self-proclaimed “unifying” and “liberating” mission bulldozed national culture in dozens of countries, which were levelled into what became the Eastern Bloc. On the ground, the Red Army remained “stationary” in Poland until 1993, in Romania until 1960, in Bulgaria until 1989, or returned to “liberate” Hungary in 1956, and Czechoslovakia in 1968, to ensure its local supporters gained access to power and refashioned each previously independent nation in its Soviet image. Locked inside the communist gulag, countries in the Bloc were denied *de facto* independence. Cultural production – literature, art, theatre, cinema – toed the Party line officially; unofficially, translating from English and teaching in English became a covert dissident stance (for writers otherwise banned by the regime): this may not have been an outright protest, but it refused to speak Russian. Under the great Soviet leveller, national resistance and survival took different forms; the role Shakespeare played in each of these countries' journey to independence, however, is similar. The more the Soviet-promoted regimes tried to paint Shakespeare red, the more underground indigenous culture tasked Shakespeare with ‘hold[ing] the mirror up to nature’ (*Hamlet*, Act 3 Scene 2) and ventriloquising the silenced national voices of dissent.

With the collapse of the Soviet domination, which started in 1989, the (hi)story of Shakespeare's complex role in countries in the region has been charted country by country in monographs. Collected volumes published in the past thirty years have been working to piece together Shakespeare's life in the region, its role as lingua franca, and the position Central and Eastern European scholarship occupies in global Shakespeare Studies.

The story of Shakespeare in Ukraine shares some similarities with existing studies in Central and Eastern European Shakespeare (see **References**) and some crucial differences, not least linked to the country's long history of oppression by Russia for almost three centuries. During the eighteenth century, Ukraine was gradually colonized by Russia, and in the nineteenth century the metropolis moved to the purposeful destruction of the national and cultural identity of Ukrainians. The official politics of the Russian government restricted the use of the Ukrainian language to the domestic sphere. Following two tsarist decrees (in 1863 and 1876, respectively), Ukrainians were forbidden to use their mother tongue in public communication, culture and education. As a result, both the translations of Shakespeare's works and staging them in Ukrainian were banned. During the Soviet period (1917-1991), the development of Ukrainian Shakespeareana was under double pressure from the communist regime, which, on the one hand, imposed ideological clichés on the reception of Shakespeare's figure and legacy, and on the other - suppressed any attempts at Ukrainian cultural expression because they could cast doubt on Russia's total cultural hegemony. However, during the seventy years of Soviet domination, this pressure varied: it decreased somewhat between 1923-1929, and then between 1956-1964; conversely, it increased between 1930-1939, 1948-1953, and in the 1970s, escalating into brutal political repression. Overall, it has always influenced the development of Ukrainian Shakespeare in all areas: translating, staging and scholarship.

It comes as no surprise that the first Ukrainian translation of Shakespeare's *Complete Works* occurred as late as 1986; five years later, Ukraine's independence (1991) marked a new stage in Shakespeare's reception paradigm, one that saw a development and updating of Shakespeare Studies that looked to Europe. Since the Maidan Revolution [the Revolution of Dignity] (2013-2014) and the Russian Federation's undeclared aggression against Ukraine (which led to annexing Crimea and occupying Ukrainian south-eastern territories), Shakespeare has been at the forefront of Ukraine's theatrical repertoire. During the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, which began on

February 24th, 2022, Shakespeare performances on Ukrainian stages (or rather underground bunkers, tube stations, shelters) have acquire strong nation-building accents and resistance connotations.

Aims and Objectives

While existing studies on Shakespeare in Ukraine – most not available in English – offer some background data, ideas and potential methodologies on which to continue building the history of Shakespeare in Ukraine, virtually no systematic work has been conducted on 21st century Ukrainian Shakespeareana. The main aims of the project, therefore, are to fill this identified knowledge gap and generate its original methodology that will enable the understanding of Shakespeare’s role in Ukraine in relation to 21st-century changes and recent challenges.

Research questions

What are the directions in which Shakespeare develops in Ukraine ten years after its independence from Russia?

- Are there new translations for print?
- Is stage practice “catching up with the world”?
- Has the “Soviet baggage” been left behind in teaching and interpreting Shakespeare?
- How does Ukraine participate in European and world Shakespeare studies?

What are the key stages that mark changes in 21st century Shakespeare in Ukraine?

- What stimulates new theatrical and critical experiences in the noughties (the creation of the Ukrainian Shakespeare Centre, participation in ESRA, festivals, etc.)?
- What is Shakespeare’s role post-2014, when Crimea is invaded and occupied by Russia? How are old resistance and survival habits and new modes (such as post-dramatic theatre, art therapy, etc.) negotiated in Ukraine since 2014 and after 2022?
- How does the world pandemic impact on Ukraine’s Shakespeareana (digital trends in production – page, stage – and critical studied) compared to other countries (and Europe in particular)?
- What are the new Shakespeare(s) that have emerged since the full-scale invasion of and war in Ukraine (in work with refugees, Shakespeare underground, bomb shelter Shakespeare, academic work, Shakespeare activism)?

Indicative methodology

The project will focus in equal measure on the collection of primary sources and on critical interpretation of this material in order to articulate the Ukrainian story of its recent Shakespeareana.

Quantitative methods will be used to collect, catalogue and archive the primary data (plays translated, staged, adapted, taught; when; what region; professional or amateur production; main critical and teaching trends, etc).

Qualitative methods will be employed to analyse and interpret the data, in order to articulate the critical voice of Ukrainian Shakespeare. The project is expected to use, in its exploration, a postcolonial approach closely informed by presentism. Historicist tools will be employed in the forensic mission to uncover cultural material buried under layers of oppression, censorship and ideological war. Given the recent shifts in Shakespeare cultural production that have been responding to seismic political, social and economic events, the study will draw on post-communist studies, democracy studies, as well as bio- and necro-politics.

References

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Gajowski, Evelyn. *The Arden Research Handbook of Contemporary Shakespeare Criticism*. London: Bloomsbury, 2020.

Gregor, Keith. *Shakespeare and Tyranny: Regimes of Reading Shakespeare and Beyond*. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2014.

Guntner, Lawrence. *Redefining Shakespeare: literary theory and theater practice in the German Democratic Republic* tells the story of East Germany. Newark: Delaware Press, 1998.

Korstihova, Marcela. *Shakespeare in Transition: Political Appropriations in the Postcommunist Czech Republic*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.

Matei-Chesnoiu, Monica. *Shakespeare and Romanian Cultural Memory*. Maddison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2006.

Portmann, Alexandra. "Hamlet in Times of War – Two *Hamlet* Appropriations in Former Yugoslavia in the 1990s. in *Local and Global Myths in Shakespearean Performance*. Eds. Aneta Mancewicz and Alexa Alice Joubin. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 173-187.

Schandl, Veronika. *Socialist Shakespeare Productions in Kadar-regime Hungary*. Lewiston; NY: Mellen Press, 2009.

Sokolova, Boika and Alexander Shurbanov. *Painting Shakespeare Red*. Newark: Delaware Press, 2001.

Torkut, Nataliya and Yuri I. Cherniak. *A Sea-change into Something Rich and Strange: Shakespeare Studies in Contemporary Ukraine*. Lviv-Torun: Liha Press, 2020.

Details of the studentship

The studentship is offered for a 4-year period on a full-time basis. The studentship is campus based. During the period of your studentship you will receive the following:

- a tax-free bursary of £17,668 for 3 years
- a fee-waiver for 4 years (expectation that full time students complete in 3 years. If student enters year 4, bursary stops but fees waived)
- a budget to support your direct project costs including dissemination costs
- a laptop and other IT equipment and software as appropriate to the project
- use of the Research School facilities

You will be expected to play an active role in the life of both the Research School and of your academic School. You will be given opportunities to gain experience in learning and teaching within the School under the guidance of your Director of Studies.

Application Process

To begin the application process for this studentship please go to <http://www.worcester.ac.uk/researchstudentships> and click 'apply now' next to the project you wish to apply for. It is expected that applicants will have the following qualifications:

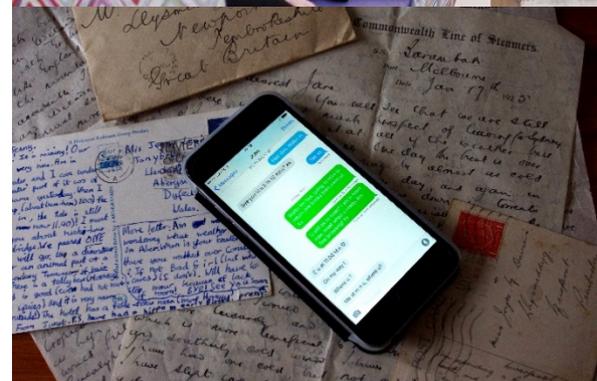
- A Masters in the area of Literature or Drama, particularly Shakespeare, or equivalent professional experience.
- A First or Upper Second Honours Degree

It is also expected that applicants will be able to demonstrate the following:

- A sound understanding of and interest in both the project and the wider subject area
- Experience of relevant research methods and skills
- Ability to contribute to the research design of the project
- Proficiency in oral and written English and Ukrainian
- Proficiency in IT relevant to the project [from Microsoft Office to digital databases, archive and repositories]
- Ability to organise and meet deadlines
- Good interpersonal skills
- Ability to work independently
- Ability to work as part of a team
- An enthusiastic approach and commitment to completing a higher research degree.

The Interview

The interview will provisionally be held on the w/c 15th May 2023 on Teams. Shortlisted candidates will be given at least 7 day's-notice of interview. In advance of interview, shortlisted candidates will be asked to write a short reflective review of a journal article. You will be advised about the subject matter of this review if you are selected for interview. Alongside the



interview, shortlisted candidates will also be asked to give a 10-minute presentation on a related topic.



Research at the University of Worcester

Research at the University of Worcester has grown significantly over the last 10 years. The outcomes of the Research Excellence Framework 2014 (REF 2014) showed that Worcester was the most improved University in the UK based on Research Fortnight's "Research Power" measure. The University's continued progress was shown in the outcomes of REF 2021 which demonstrated that both the scale and quality of our research has further increased, with over 40% of our research recognised as world-leading or internationally excellent.

The University has been successful in winning funding from a wide range of major funders: Research Councils such as AHRC, BBSRC, ESRC and NERC; major charities such as the Leverhulme Trust, the Alzheimer's Society and the British Academy; health-research funders such as the NIHR, the Department of Health and local NHS Trusts; European funding through Horizon 2020 and Erasmus+; and funding from local, national and global businesses.

The University is focused on research which addresses real world challenges and provides solutions to these challenges:

- [Human Health and Wellbeing](#)
- [Sustainable Futures](#)
- [Digital Innovation](#)
- [Culture, Identity and Social Exclusion](#)
- [Professional Education](#)

The University continues to provide a robust infrastructure for research. It has a well-established Research School which houses its growing research student body and which provides a comprehensive programme of researcher development for staff and students. It has a well-established Research Office, responsible for research funding, governance and strategy. The University is committed to further developing its research profile, through a strategic approach to its support for and investment in research. Its fully-funded studentships are part of this investment.

Research School

The Research School is a focal point for all our research students. It provides:

- day-to-day support for our students, both administrative and practical, through our dedicated team
- a Research Student Study Space with both PCs and laptop docking station

- a comprehensive Researcher Development Programme for students and their supervisors
- a programme of student-led conferences and seminars

School of Humanities

Humanities at Worcester encompasses subject areas including English, Media and Culture, History, Sociology, Law and Policing.

As an academic community, we are ambitious for our achievements and their impact upon individuals' lives and career prospects. We place a great value on the individual and creating a friendly and supportive environment in which to work and learn.

By sharing our academic work and collaboration with partners, we aim to make a distinctive contribution to public life in the region, and to international knowledge in our academic subjects. Dynamic interaction with associated professional worlds underpins the day-to-day environment in which learning, teaching and research take place.

We are a community of historians, theorists and practice-led researchers.

Research processes are fundamental to the work and development of our undergraduate and postgraduate students, whose teaching is enriched by the research activity and interests of doctoral and postdoctoral researchers, all of whom are also experienced and committed teachers.

Our academics regularly achieve national and international peer recognition for their contributions to knowledge, and we are committed to sharing the outcomes of their work publicly, and engaging in knowledge transfer, to the benefit of communities within our region. Much of our activity involves partnerships with colleagues based in other universities and with professional organisations and companies.

Our research in English Studies ranges from original poems and performances, to literary criticism and cultural theory, to ethnographic language studies and computer-assisted linguistic analysis. Striving for excellence in all areas therefore entails the celebration of diversity in 'English Studies', and a commitment not only to pure subject specialisation, but also to the interdisciplinary work which challenges traditional boundaries.

Historical research in the School spans early modern Britain, pre-colonial West Africa, and modern Britain, Ireland, and the USA. Areas of thematic strength in research include gender, imperialism, slavery, political culture, and religious history.

Widening Participation

As part of its mission statement the University is committed to widening participation for its higher degrees. Although most candidates will have an undergraduate and/or a Masters degree, the University is happy to accept applications from candidates with relevant professional qualifications and work related experience.