

Politics, Religion and Theatre during the Reign of James I

The aim of this project was to contextualise John Webster's play, *The White Devil*, and the work of his contemporaries, as part of an ongoing research project on Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama in the Centre for the Study of the Renaissance. My work was to contribute to the production of an online research and teaching resource on Jacobean drama, consisting of a variety of research tools.

Each event is tagged with keywords to classify it

Website users can select the type of events they wish to view, e.g. political and social

Interactive Timelines

Collating data

Production Reviews

Collating data:

Collation and critical evaluation of several sources, which provided entries on the Life of Webster and the seventeenth century context. The task involved:

- cross-referencing to ensure the accuracy (validity) of the information (dates)
- making judgements regarding the reliability of sources (for example, on the basis of the year in which they were published)
- creating a word document of the data

Converting data:

Training on MindMap Manager:

- inputting data under topics and sub-topics
- using text markers to categorise the data

Some exciting findings regarding the seventeenth century...

- the secret of chocolate was discovered by the Italians (1606)
- the first merry-go-round was introduced (1620)
- popcorn was invented (1630)
- the Master of Revels went insane after reading hundreds of Early Modern English plays (1622)
- the river Thames froze over for six weeks (1606)

Collating data

I visited the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust in Stratford to research the Royal Shakespeare Company's 1996 production of *The White Devil*, which involved:

- looking through the official photographs of the 1996 production, and selecting forty for the webpage
- reading the collated reviews of the 1996 production, and selecting quotes on the basis of their capacity to inform the reader about the production (on the set, costumes, directorial choice, casting, etc.)
- collating and categorising these reviews in a word document

Converting data

training in SiteBuilder2: how to create new web pages and sub-pages creation of new pages for each type of review

- submitting and formatting the data, with the aim of increasing readability and aesthetic pleasure

An interesting discovery...

Gale Hunter's 1996 production of *The White Devil* was so gory that an audience member fainted in the last act.

Collating data

Performance History

Collating data

- consulting (taking notes from) several sources on the performance history of *The White Devil*, for example introductions to editions of the play
- organising and presenting (amalgamating) this data into a comprehensive piece of prose as a word document

Converting data

- inputting this prose piece into the Webster subpage

Collating data

Bibliography

- training: how to use Warwick blogs, for example, how to tag entries according to entry type, source type, etc.
- using several sources to compile a comprehensive database of Webster bibliography on editions, critical studies and productions of *The White Devil*

On hovering the cursor over underlined text, a definition of it appears

A (colour-coded) key is provided to aid the website user

A text fragment from Act V, Scene VI of *The White Devil*

Key Fragment

My chance to act as the play's editor...

Having selected Act V, Scene VI to work on, my editing work included:

- taking notes from several key editions of *The White Devil*
- from these editors' notes, compiling four categories to aid the site user- paraphrase, character, instructions, and cross-referencing
- supplementing these editors' notes with information regarding staging, acquired from a video viewing of this scene as performed by the RSC in 1996

A series of activities to guide the reading of the text

Fragment Activities

Now a chance to work in the role of teacher...

- comparing and contrasting several critical analyses of the key fragment
- compiling questions and juxtaposing critical opinions in an 'analysis' activity, doing so in such a way as to stimulate discussion and debate in the website user
- training: Microsoft powerpoint
- putting these activities into a powerpoint presentation, easily convertible into a slideshow and accessible for a website user

In undertaking this research project, I feel I have gained invaluable skills for future academic study, both at undergraduate and postgraduate level. I have, for example, deepened my knowledge of this period of history, been trained to use the latest resources in academic study, and have developed my ability to critically evaluate a range of sources. Furthermore, I am excited to have created a research and teaching resource that others can go on to use. I would like to thank Nicoleta Cinpoes for her untiring assistance, and for answering so many of my questions.