

Arts & Entertainment

From Beatrice to Viola: Shakespeare's Strong Women Brought to Life in Faculty Distinguished Lecture

Laura Culpepper, Staff Writer

On March 14, Dr. Garry Walton, Dean of the School of Arts and Humanities and Professor of English, gave Meredith's 55th annual Faculty Distinguished Lecture on "Shakespeare's Strong Women." This lecture coincided with the 400th anniversary year of Shakespeare's death. The first Faculty Distinguished Lecture was presented in 1964 by English professor Dr. Rose, who also taught Shakespeare at Meredith. Then, she focused on the children in the Bard's plays.

The stage was set up to mimic a classroom with a lectern and a teacher's desk on Jones Auditorium's stage as if the audience had walked into one of Dr. Walton's Shakespeare classes. Six actors, including senior Meredith theatre majors Sarah Koop and Elaina Mittleman, Meredith alum Rebecca Daw Blum from the class of '95 and Kacey Reynolds Schedler from the class of '96, and Seth Blum and Matt Schedler reenacted selected scenes from Shakespeare's plays, such as *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Winter's Tale*, and *Measure for Measure*. In his classroom, Dr. Walton uses multimedia, including

music, videos, and performances, both live and recorded, to illuminate Shakespeare's work, and he employed all of these techniques during his lecture.

Dr. Walton reminded the audience that there were many strong, well-known Elizabethan women that would have inspired Shakespeare. Queen Elizabeth, for whom the period in English history is named, and Mary Frith, also known as Moll Cutpurse, who had a penchant for men's clothing and a spirited reputation, were among such women named in the lecture.

Dr. Walton also reminded the audience that, ironically, Shakespeare's female characters were played by men or young boys during Shakespeare's time because of the ban on females acting, but women who traveled from the Continent, Europe, were sometimes allowed onstage to perform other works, and English women could act and perform in courtly venues and village or parish affairs.

Dr. Walton then focused his attention on the women in Shakespeare's work specifically, first separating the plays into genres. The history plays Dr.

Walton regards as "the least hospitable to women's voices." Tragedies feature men's voices two or even ten times more often than women's, and Shakespeare's comedies are the most egalitarian. Dr. Walton focused on three types of Shakespearean female

characters—villains, "loyal pairs of 'sisters,'" and daughters who stand up to "controlling fathers"—and explained the three distinguishing actions of Shakespeare's strong female characters: standing with their sisters, standing up to (unfairly or unwisely wielded) power, and standing firm for forgiveness. Beatrice, Paulina, Emilia, Portia, and the women of Richard III were a few listed.

Afterward, Dr. Walton expounded on the virtues of mercy, tolerance, and cooperation that Shakespeare's strong women

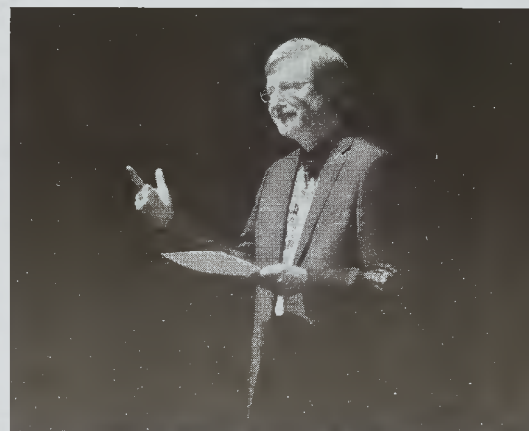


Photo courtesy of the Meredith College Marketing Department.

championed, practices that Shakespeare's works encourage. Dr. Walton connected issues like intolerance during Shakespeare's time and the brave actions of Shakespeare's strong women to the challenges society faces today and the strong women on and off campus that have continued to and will continue to make a difference well into the future.

A reception in Johnson Hall, featuring Shakespeare-inspired sweets such as "ginger-Bards" (Shakespeare-shaped gingerbread) immediately followed the lecture.

White America: Get Out and Watch Jordan Peele's Cinematic Phenomena: Review

Cheyenne Williams '16, Contributing Writer

Jordan Peele's breakout thriller, *Get Out*, (yes, Jordan of Key & Peele) is the movie that all white people in America need to see.

In short, the film is a social commentary about how white people choose the parts of black culture that we want to like and then dispose of or repurpose the rest of the black person, wanting them to be less black or more white.

As a social disclaimer, I'm white, and I'm often attracted to black men. I like to think that I have a fairly sound understanding

of an outsider's perspective of black culture. Combined, these attributes are part of the reason why this movie hit home for me.

It's important to note that actor Daniel Kaluuya, cast as Chris Washington, isn't whitewashed in appearance; his skin is dark in complexion and he is a representation of the black community.

In more cases than not, mainstream media only has one "black friend" cast so that they aren't labeled as racists, and even then the character gets fewer lines and less representation (seen in

Stranger Things, *The Vampire Diaries*, *Game of Thrones*, *The Walking Dead*).

Inherent racism is woven throughout *Get Out*; in the beginning, when Rose (the white girlfriend) reports an accident, the police officer asks for Chris (the black boyfriend) to render his driver's license, although the officer knows that Chris wasn't the one driving.

Later, at a family gathering, Rose's family members report that "black is so in." They grasp onto and comment on Chris' biceps and chest without his consent,

and they discuss how his "genetic makeup" would make for a great MMA fighter. Chris's blackness and Rose's family's ignorance mirror today's black experience in America.

You may not see the twist coming, so I won't spoil it for you. As a small hint, Peele's thriller comments on how white culture "hypnotizes" black culture into thinking it is less important, less valued and less interesting. The music will enchant you, and the imagery will satiate you. *Get Out* and witness this thrilling racial commentary, in theatres now.

Belle Means So Much More Than Beauty Now: Review

Shelby-Anne Sanders, Staff Writer

When I was growing up, bookish and brave Belle was my favorite Disney princess, and the Belle in the new live action film adaptation of the classic *Beauty and the Beast* did not let me down. The new and improved feminist Belle, played by Emma Watson, showed up in big ways. Belle wore her traditional blue peasant dress in a new way in the live action film by tucking the skirt into a belt and wearing pants underneath. After being locked in her room by the Beast, Belle did not cry on her bed like she does in the original movie. Instead, she comes up with an escape plan.

My favorite new aspect of Belle is that she is the inventor of the family, not her father, who is instead an artist in the new adaptation. Belle shows that she does not fit into her small village when she builds a horse-run washing machine and is mocked for it. She is punished for trying to teach a girl to read. The headmaster says the town already has one bookworm girl and that is enough. Belle also has a new backstory that explains where her mother is and why she is such a dreamer.

I was consistently impressed by the progressive

vibe of the entire movie. At least half of the couples from the castle were interracial, Gaston's best friend was gay, and there was even a crossdressing man. It was interesting that the people in the village were not very diverse and I did not notice any interracial couples until the curse was broken and the objects from the castle became human again. Disney's new progressive take on the classic *Beauty and the Beast* is important for today's children who will learn tolerance and diversity.

Another significant difference between the old

Belle and the new one is her interactions with the Beast. He is not the abusive monster he was portrayed as in the original movie. He still has a temper and yells at Belle, but he quickly stops and changes his attitude. Like Belle's new character, the Beast has a much more in depth backstory in this film. His father was abusive which twisted the Beast into the heartless man he was, as Mrs. Potts described.

The original songs within this new adaptation made me nostalgic for my childhood, while new aspects caught my feminist but still hopelessly romantic heart.