

M4C Collaborative Doctoral Award (CDA)

PROJECT TITLE				
Bathroom to Bedroom: interpreting early modern bodily functions				
LEAD INSTITUTION				
Name of HEI institution	Nottingham Trent University			
Lead regional city	Birmingham <input type="checkbox"/>	Coventry <input type="checkbox"/>	Leicester <input type="checkbox"/>	Nottingham <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
PARTNER ORGANISATION				
Name of organisation	Shakespeare Birthplace Trust			
URL for organisation website	https://www.shakespeare.org.uk/			
THE RESEARCH PROJECT				
To enable M4C to promote the CDA project effectively on the DTP website please can you present the information for applicants about the CDA project under the following headings:				
Project: Please ensure that the project title and project description will make sense to all readers, keep the title and description as clear and straightforward as possible.				
Process: Clearly articulate the expectations of the methods of research required to develop the project.				
Place: Focus the marketing text on telling potential applicants what will be expected of them, who they will be working with and how they will be supported.				
Person: Broadly identify the desirable knowledge, skills and experience applicants should have without using language which will discourage qualified and talented applicants.				
Recent work in Early Modern studies aims to pay critical attention to material cultures. But there remains a taboo surrounding the representations of bodily processes / hygiene / sewage etc. This work will relocate the critical focus on the literary representations of bodies and bodily processes as they appear in the work of Shakespeare and his contemporaries.				
In this way the project will seek to re-negotiate our own prejudices, assumptions and attitudes towards bodily functions and disfunctions, and help situate the early modern domestic world in a unique, relevant and accessible context. The tired orthodoxy of the equivalence between human and the elemental – microcosm / macrocosm – might actually conceptualise an epistemological continuity between <i>Man and the Natural World</i> (Thomas, 1983) but, again, only by euphemising the actualities of households situated in an agrarian age without running water, antiseptic or anaesthetic. Shakespeare is bracingly unembarrassed by such actualities – Falstaff’s sweating bulk, Caliban’s fishy smell, Cloten’s BO, Gloucester’s eyes, Lavinia’s severed hands and tongue, Edmund’s and Portia’s self-harming – all figure stage centre as theatricalised instances of bodily failure, destruction or (self-) damage.				
The Shakespeare Birthplace Trust’s (SBT) collection will be a rich source of material: from early printed books and documents through to prompt books and museum archives. Exploration of bodily functions, and depictions and attitudes towards body parts within the collection, will greatly inform SBT’s engagement with disabled audiences, as well as disengaged families and individuals who may have no interest in Shakespeare, but do possess a broader curiosity about historical lived experiences. In addition, the research will underpin informal learning activities (e.g., family activities, trails, make and take, etc.) across the				

historical properties, and assist in re-negotiating SBT's museum interpretation so that, for example, domestic worlds and the body's relationship to it form a vital part of public engagement narratives. The researcher will work with SBT's learning team, with a specific focus on informal learning (as above) across the historic properties, as well as with the newly established Creative Programmes department to advise on public-facing events based on research activity. There will also be the opportunity to work with the Collections team to influence the interpretative framework and delivery of SBT's future 'mobile exhibitions' project. The researcher will have the opportunity to work in partnership with SBT to develop events and generate digital content.

The interdisciplinary project will lead to:

- A more nuanced understanding of bodily function and disfunction in drama and culture from the period, including material culture through documentation and chronological analysis of references to bodily deformity and disfunctionality.
- A digital compendium of bodily references in plays and poetry contemporaneous to Shakespeare in the form of an open access web-accessible resource.
- The development of practical applications for bringing research outcomes to younger audiences in a museum context, through formal and non-formal learning.

Questions asked might include:

- What are the differences between the humours as represented by Shakespeare and his contemporaries (poets or playwrights)?
- How does Shakespeare represent non-normative physicality – Richard III, Caliban – and mental breakdown – Ophelia, Constance, Lady Macbeth, Lear?
- How does Shakespeare engage with voluntary / involuntary bodily processes / physical functionality?
- What are attitudes to bodily discharge – sweat, blood, waste? Are these evidenced in material culture?
- How might such 'taboo' topics be approached in classrooms, contemporary performance, and the world as we know it now?

You should have a good degree in English or History and a passion for the period's lived experience whether that be culturally, through literature, or materially in terms of social history.

HOW TO FIND OUT MORE. Please email the lead university supervisor if you want to find out more about this CDA project.

Lead HEI Supervisor:	Professor Peter J Smith
Lead HEI Supervisor Email:	peter.smith@ntu.ac.uk