

# Punk, Shakespeare and Stand-up Comedy

MS KRISTA BONELLO RUTTER GIAPPONE talks to us about the punk in Shakespeare

**I GRADUATED** from the University of Malta with an undergraduate degree in Law and English, and went off to study Shakespeare in Stratford-upon-Avon, England. I emerged with a Masters in Shakespeare Studies.

My dissertation was on tragicomedy, metacomedy (where characters realise that they are living in a comedy), and parody in Early Modern Drama. I focused on the poets and dramatists John Marston and Thomas Randolph, as well as Shakespeare. While researching, I took a little detour through punk

productions of Shakespeare, which soon became the springboard for my Ph.D. proposal.

I received AHRC (Arts and Humanities Research Council) funding to research the interrelationship between punk performance and alternative stand-up comedy. Under the supervision of pioneering academic and stand-up comedian Dr Oliver Double (University of Kent), I am looking at the traces of music hall theatrical entertainment in punk performance and punk's influence on comedy. My argument is that early 1980's alter-

native comedy is infused with a punk attitude — from the way these comedians interact with audiences, to their reinvention of stand-up comedy, with an emphasis on 'honest' obscenity. Through punk, they have even returned to certain music hall values.

Punk kindled a renewed sense of political responsibility in alternative comedy. Yet, I have not abandoned my passion for the Early Modern, and a part of my thesis is dedicated to Johnny Rotten's declared reappropriation of Shakespeare's Richard III. ●