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Guest Editors: Robert Sawyer
and Monika Sosnowska

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Contents

Contributors	5
Monika Sosnowska, Robert Sawyer , Introduction: Jan Kott and Posthumanist Entanglements.....	11
Robert Sawyer, Monika Sosnowska , An Interview with Karen Raber: Reflections on Posthumanist Shakespeares.....	17

Articles

Lisa S. Starks , Kabbalah, <i>Dybbuks</i> , and the Religious Posthuman in the Shakespearean Worlds of <i>Twin Peaks</i>	29
Seth Lewis , The Myth of Total Shakespeare: Filmic Adaptation and Posthuman Collaboration	53
James Tink , Horrible Imaginings: Jan Kott, the Grotesque, and <i>Macbeth</i> , <i>Macbeth</i>	71
Przemysław Pożar , An Unexpected Journey “from the naves to the chops”: <i>Macbeth</i> , Animal Trade, and Theatrical Experience.....	87
Robert Sawyer , “Forward and Backward”: Actants and Agency in Marlowe’s <i>Doctor Faustus</i> and Shakespeare’s <i>The Tempest</i>	105
Anne Sophie Refskou , “No beast so fierce but knows some touch of pity”: Compassion and the Nonhuman in <i>Richard III</i>	121
Darlena Ciraulo , Superhero Shakespeare in Golden Age Comics	137
Robert Darcy , Facial Recognition and Posthuman Technologies in Shakespeare’s Sonnets	153
Elizaveta Tsirina Fedorova, Jose Saiz Molina, Julia Haba Osca , Jan Kott is Dead, Long Live to the <<“Hybrid”> Critic	169
Joseph Campana , Afterword: Posthumanism—Past, Present and Future....	191

Book Reviews

- Zeyuan Hu: Latest Western Shakespeare Criticisms Introduced and Studied in China. A review of 许勤超, 《文本政治学: 文化唯物主义莎评研究》 [Xu, Qinchao. *The Politics of Text: A Study of Cultural Materialist Shakespeare Criticism*. Beijing: China Social Sciences Press, 2014. Pp.199] and 杨林贵、乔雪瑛, 《世界莎士比亚研究选编》 [Yang, Lingui and Qiao Xueying, eds. *Selected Papers of World Shakespeare Studies*. Beijing: Commercial Press, 2020. Pp. 407] 197
- Jie Tang: Mo Zhi, *Mo Zhi's Notes on Shakespeare's Sonnets*. Shanghai: Fudan University Press, 2019. Pp. 355..... 204
- Guixia Xie: Nigel Wood, *Shakespeare and Reception Theory*. London and New York: The Arden Shakespeare, 2020. Pp. 195 209

Theatre Reviews

- Bohdan Korneliuk, Daria Moskvitina: Cabbages and Kings: Post-humanistic Shakespeare on the Contemporary Ukrainian Stage..... 213
- Danielle Byington: *Romeo and Juliet*. Dir. Simon Godwin. A National Theatre, Sky Arts, and No Guarantees Production. The Olivier Theatre, London, UK. Film 221

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Painting by Danielle Byington entitled "Shakespeare in Pieces"

Monika Sosnowska* 
Robert Sawyer**

Introduction: Jan Kott and Posthumanist Entanglements

In a world where humanism still sounds grandiloquent, where human exceptionalism functions as a norm in human and non-human relations, where anthropocentrism resides in human cultural DNA, a transformation of the human relationship to nature and its animate and inanimate occupants requires an urgent rethinking of these distinctions. The emergence and flourishing of “new humanities” or “posthumanities,” with its key discipline known as post-humanism—serves as an opportunity to rethink and refashion the concept of the humanist human (intentional, autonomous, conscious and therefore exceptional) as well as to reexamine the doctrine that “man is the measure of all things.”

By the late twentieth century posthumanities has come to embrace a set of research approaches and tendencies related to posthumanism, and human-centrism is the central target. In general, a humanist worldview is based on the assumption that humans are the main protagonists in a drama we call *Reality*, while everything else plays the role of background actors, then a posthumanist perspective suggests that our world’s stage is capacious enough to house both human and non-human actors, playing roles that are often interchangeable. In fact, humans are “merely players” in a history of the world, being outnumbered both as a species but also as an individual. The nonspeaking and non-singing extras in this production have always constituted the majority of beings/organisms/entities. Such realization allows for a radical extension of dramatis personae in the above mentioned play entitled *Reality* by adding all non-human personae to the list, since all personae (meaning all organic and non-organic life) are co-dependent and none is devoid of agential capacities/possibilities.

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In each act and scene of the play mentioned previously, be it a comical, tragic-comical or tragical episode, the organic structure of the play insists on a distribution of agency. According to posthumanist assumptions, any change that happens, either in a real or fictional world of page and stage, has a web-like structure where one thing or episode is connected and is dependent on everything else. Interconnection of all beings is no longer a concept derived from Eastern philosophies. Even a human body is not purely human; if we look at the human body at the cellular level, metagenomic studies prove that only around 10% of homo sapiens's cells contain human DNA. The remaining 90% belong to a large community of species, namely bacteria and viruses. Our bodies create multispecies ecosystems, habituated by microscopic companion species. Human bodies are not exceptional (again) in this respect, since plants and animals also contain microorganisms within them, an ecological community invisible to the eye. Symbiotic beings, characterized by being multiple organisms-within-an-organism, that is WHAT we are, and why we have always been posthuman. Interestingly enough, decentring and/or unprivileging of a human, abandoning the humanist essentialism, re-conceptualizing of "a human" and "human nature," has been taking place in natural science as a byproduct of scientific findings, simultaneously being a crucial "contribution" to an ongoing posthumanist project.

Posthumanist approaches to cultural texts found in literature, film, arts and different media, as this issue demonstrates, have a common denominator: they seek to find out more about the multidiversity of species as well as non-living entities. It aims at moving beyond anthropocentric hierarchy of beings that always situates all non-homo sapiens on a lower plane, an inferior ontological, epistemological, ethical, intellectual, and cognitive position. In an old cultural game of comparison between humans and non-humans, the latter are considered as flawed/lacking/defective. To perpetuate this game, Western representations suggest that different "others" deserve to be referred to in a pejorative way i.e. by suffixing the "-less" on selected adjectives. For example, machines are emotionless, plants are bloodless, animals are wordless. Posthumanism powered by new scientific findings questions such assumptions and representations of "others" in search of relational and affirmative expressions and images. We are privileged to witness the dawning of a fresh, non-humancentric approach, applicable to all texts of culture, allowing for an emancipatory project to embrace the "-less"-communities and the "-less"-entities, those that have spent most of their cultural presences under the humanist regime. Not only can the liberating potential of a posthumanist perspective be freed for "the others," but it can also save "the human" from its cultural and ecological hubris.

One of the most important new fields where posthumanist perspective and theory is tested is Shakespeare studies. The ever-expanding universe of posthumanities could not only resist this expansion, but give birth to a Post-

humanist Shakespeare galaxy, which develops gracefully, yet ficklely, as befits an emerging body in cosmos. Karen Raber, via Bruno Latour, considers what Shakespeare offers: “a chance to relocate the human” (2018: 2) in this massive sphere. As Raber also notes in her interview in this issue, “Posthuman” refers to a being, object, or other entity that lies outside of definitions of “the human”—that is, it might be something like an amoeba or a dog, both of which are considered less than human; it might be a ghost or god, considered more than human; or it might be a robot or android, whose relationship to what we call “the human” is unresolvably vexed.

Posthumanist Shakespeare as a sub-discipline in Shakespeare studies pays a great deal of attention to ways in which new meanings in Shakespeare’s works can be constructed and invokes numerous questions: How to mean by Shakespeare (using Terence Hawkes’ expression) in a posthumanist way? On what basis can we claim that Shakespeare is our posthumanist? How can we approach Shakespeare in the 21st century, taking into account scientific data about ourselves as organisms-within-an-organism in constant flux and our symbiotic nature? How can we read his text to discover more about ourselves, about a multispecies nature of human nature; about the significance of non-humans in a planetary web of actions and reactions? Hasn’t Shakespeare always been “our contemporary” (to evoke the Kottian phrase) and haven’t we always been posthuman to some extent? Shakespeare as a playwright investigated human nature to mean by us. Jan Kott (1914-2001) as a theatre and drama critic advocated interpretations valid for us and demonstrated Shakespeare’s contemporaneity, and we as literary critics suggest that he is our posthumanist. We keep Shakespeare our contemporary by rendering him our post-humanist. Kott’s title of his influential book, *Shakespeare our Contemporary*, which contains a series of essays written over several years is our great inspiration. His reflections on Shakespeare’s works shaped the presentist title of this special issue of *Multicultural Shakespeare: Translation, Appropriation and Performance*.

In his analyses of Shakespeare’s texts and theatre productions, Kott availed himself of a technological expression—“the grand mechanism,” which suggested how all things unavoidably interconnect, and what we will refer to as “entanglements” for this issue. As Rey Chow explains, the word “suggest[s] a topological looping together that is at the same time an enmeshment of topics, which create loops of meaning,” in short a “tangle of things held together or laid over one another in nearness and likeness” (Chow 1). Such entanglements can be related to quantum physics, where the term “designates mysterious connections between particles” because they produce simultaneous “reactions that are not due to proximity” (Chow 2, note 2). Such scientific similarities between literature and the physical sciences is a staple of the posthuman project, which, as we will note, Kott seems to have been aware.

What many theatre practitioners and literary critics are not aware is that Kott was fascinated by such seemingly different topics, and in one instance, while admitting he was intrigued by Leon Chwistek's paintings, Kott confesses he was more interested in Chwistek's "system of logic" rather than his art (*Still Alive* 48). Indeed in his autobiography he claimed that Chwistek's "own system of binary notation for phrases and cardinal numbers . . . anticipated computer notation" (48-49) and Kott then details Chwistek's formula:

It consisted of two signs: a dot and a dash. One was a dot, two a dot and a dash, three a dash and a dot, four two dots, and so on. This new system obsessed me. Once I was awakened in the middle of the night by [his wife] Lidia's laughing out loud when, in a dream, I repeated: "A dot, a dash, two dashes." (49)

Other major interests for Kott included existential philosophy which he studied in France, the genre of "Theatre of the Absurd," the notion of the grotesque, polemics on political history, and theatrical practice, so much so that his innovative ideas strongly influenced Peter Brook when he was director of the Royal Shakespeare Company. His book *Shakespeare our Contemporary*, according to Michael Taylor, is "the most widely read book on Shakespeare since A. C. Bradley's *Shakespearean Tragedy* (1904); Taylor adds that "Kott replaces the . . . authoritarianism of Tillyard's Elizabethan World Picture" with what Kott refers to as the "Grand Mechanism," mentioned above, which is "equally Elizabethan (and Polish) and expresses the conviction that history has no meaning and stands still, or constantly repeats its cruel cycle," a complex and intertwined reading of history (180).

Our issue works on two planes of entanglement, each piece meshes with the others, and they also highlight entanglement individually. For example, essays by James Tink and the trio of Elizaveta TsirinaFedorova, Julia HabaOsca, Jose Saiz Molina highlight Kott's prescient notions of a post-humanist world, while an entanglement of the human with the non-human is considered by Anne Sophie Refskou's, Przemyslaw Pożar's, and Robert Sawyer's contributions. We also show the technological entanglement of the distant past in Darlena Ciraulo's essay on print culture, and in the current digital age, in Seth Lewis's piece. Similar to Kott's own multiple fascinations, Lisa Starks shows us how the literary, religious and Shakespearean worlds of *Twin Peaks* remain entangled, while Robert Darcy demonstrates how Shakespeare's sonnets can be profitably entangled with posthuman facial recognition technologies.

As the essays in this issue show, Jan Kott provided us with a prescient warning about the notion of a posthuman world, a location we all currently occupy. What we do in this space—now infected by a global pandemic—is not just up to us as humans, but also determined by the various agents, microscopic objects, and cellular units that act on us as much as we act on them. In Joe

Campana's "Afterword" in this issue he also raises the question about where do we go from here, agreeing with our belief that a central benefit of studies anchored in Shakespeare, especially in a journal like this one, is that adaptation, translation, and remediation rise to the fore in (post)humanist approaches.

Shakespeare's painting for this issue, by Danielle Byington entitled "Shakespeare in Pieces," reflects our belief that "Shakespeare" is composed of bits and pieces, an assemblage of colorful parts or collage; however, if one part is removed—the image becomes incomplete and somehow deformed, just as our human or even posthuman bodies would be since they too are organic structures. The image also invites us to appreciate diversity on a socio-cultural level, as well as the biodiversity in nature which surrounds us.

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An Interview with Karen Raber*: Reflections on Posthumanist Shakespeares

The interview has been conducted by Robert Sawyer (East Tennessee State University, USA) and Monika Sosnowska (University of Lodz, Poland)

Monika Sosnowska (later as MS):

Can you briefly explain what “the posthuman” means?

Karen Raber (later as KR):

“Posthuman” refers to a being, object, or other entity that lies outside of definitions of “the human”—that is, it might be something like an amoeba or a dog, both of which are considered less than human; it might be a ghost or god, considered more than human; or it might be a robot or android, whose relationship to what we call “the human” is unresolvably vexed. Posthuman beings can be multiple in ways that contradict our notion of discrete, individuated identities, or they might have no fixed boundaries that allow us to recognize their contours (think of something like the hyperobjects that Timothy Morton names, including global warming, that are so massively distributed that it is impossible to think about them in the usual way). Posthumans are enmeshed with other forms of life (and death) in a web of relations; they cannot be reduced to binaries, but are rather entangled with matter of all kinds. What links these entities is that they present an ontological challenge to concepts of “the human” either by indicating the unstable nature of its ontology, or demonstrating its inadequacy to account for experience, phenomena, or forms of subjectivity. You’ll notice I put “the human” constantly in scare quotes to signal that I’m interrogating the claims that that two-word phrase inevitably smuggles under the radar—that there is such a thing as a human being who is all the things humanism says he is: male, of course; white and Western and probably Christian; autonomous, rational, perfectible, endowed with free will, all of which

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place him at the apex of creation. It is this construct, the by-product of centuries of humanism, that the posthuman, and posthumanism, contests. If we think of humanism, the system of thought that emerged during the Renaissance and was made central to Enlightenment philosophy, as the proposition that “the human” exists as I’ve just described it, then what that system erases or devalues is all the other modes of existence and kinds of relationships that might be possible for the subject. I think it’s important to formulate this as a hugely disjunctive, even in some ways a negative process, to emphasize what is lost in this extraordinary philosophical revolution: humanism, we should say, displaces or disrupts human beings’ sense of connection to that which rests outside the (white, male, individual, Western) human subject. This has what I think are obvious consequences for our own fate: how we treat nonhuman beings, how we treat the earth, what we are capable of doing to others we deem unworthy of full inclusion as “human” beings. Posthumanism is returning the favor, if you will, by dislocating and disrupting, in turn, opening our thinking to new or different ontological and ethical possibilities.

However, looked at from another equally valid perspective, what posthumanism is doing might simply be called clarifying and reorienting the process of investigating what a “human” being is or should be, and describing more minutely and accurately how that being functions in the world it occupies—thus participating in the original agenda of humanism itself. Posthumanist theory does often look elsewhere for its objects of study, discussing animals, plants, robots, objects, systems, and so forth. But in the end, its purpose is to transform human relationships to all those things, opening up new options for living in and with our environments, our politics, and our social worlds.

Robert Sawyer (later as RS):

What was the intellectual trajectory that took you from critiquing literary texts into looking at science and technology and the animal kingdom?

KR:

I started my career working on early modern women’s writing, using feminist theory and cultural materialist methods. I was trained as a New Historicist, with feminist leanings. But a huge part of my life has always revolved around horses: I’ve ridden and competed for more than fifty years (it was expensive, and a distraction from school, to their horror). As a graduate student, while I was engaged in a strong and activist program of scholarship in gender studies there was this other set of interests and commitments in the background, which sometimes seemed to intersect with the work I was doing, but mainly got left aside because there was no precedent for it as a scholarly focus. In the early 1990s, just for fun, I wrote a presentation on William Cavendish and

horsemanship for a conference in Santa Barbara (later it became an essay in Patricia Fumerton and Simon Hunt's book *Renaissance Culture and the Everyday*). That planted a seed: there was a whole world of cultural, social, economic, political analyses of human-animal relations that few people had bothered to examine before that point. About five or six years later, Erica Fudge's first book *Perceiving Animals* (1999) came out, and suddenly there was a paradigm for a career working on early modern animals. She specifically rejected the idea that writing about animals was "hobby history" and she brought to bear new kinds of theory and new perspectives that I think shook up the discipline. At that point I was already on the faculty at the University of Mississippi, and I gradually took advantage of the opening Fudge had created by writing more often in that vein—it allowed me to bring into alignment more parts of my lived experience. At the time I was mainly using a cultural-historical perspective, and only gradually did I engage with other kinds of theory.

Now you can certainly do animal studies and have nothing to do with either posthumanism or science and technology. But the social justice component of animal studies (now sometimes identified with Critical Animal Studies) tends to intersect with ecological and other concerns driven by the ugly nexus of environmental degradation, global warming, capitalism, colonialism, and other human-made systems of exploitation. For me, that ethical pull was important. At the same time, theory from Derrida to Latour provided important insights that nudged my work on animals toward posthumanism. But my interest, informed by my non-academic pursuits, has always been on bodies—on the dance that human and non-human bodies do on a daily basis and the ways they shape and are shaped by one another and their environments. So thinkers like Vicki Hearne, Donna Haraway, and Vincienne Despret were all equally influential. I think the truth is that I first did vaguely posthumanist work and then later on tried to understand the wider range of theory that description implies and embrace it.

Posthumanism is an umbrella that covers a lot of different approaches and schools of thought, but cybernetics and systems thinking lies at its roots in the work of, for example, Humberto Maturana, or N. Katherine Hayles; most who fall clearly under the umbrella like Donna Haraway, Bruno Latour, Cary Wolfe, Karen Barad, Niklas Luhmann or Graham Harman, work interdisciplinarily across fields like biology or physics or computer programming, sociology, anthropology, history or literary criticism. To practice as a posthumanist literary scholar is therefore inevitably to become familiar with at least some of these interdisciplinary avenues and comfortable with the multiple disciplines that most speak to a particular topic.

I do think animals require the engagement of more than either side of the binary that we think divides our poetic souls from our analytical brains. In training horses, for instance, the animal connects to the rider on so many levels that we mere humans are unable to keep up. Horses have the equivalent of

multiple PhDs, only they're in disciplines of smell, bodily gesture, skin response, spatial judgment, environmental assessment, atmospheric pressure, and so on. Understanding animals in the training relationship thus requires that we think in multiple dimensions, which in turn requires some understanding of the sciences that can explain bodies, minds and how both interact with environments. Technology, in its original sense of *techne* or the knowledge that results in making or doing is a natural part of posthumanism because of its importance in reshaping us and our worlds; many or most animals, certainly domesticated ones, are products of technology—they are what Haraway would call a nature culture syntheses. So training is also linked to technology, whether we think of it that way or not. We are most successful in apprehending nonhuman others if we use all the tools of body and mind, which coincides with posthumanist thinking. So I would say that my current interests arose out of that particular human-animal relationship, rather than it preceding or developing from any other agenda.

RS:

What led to your latest monograph and how do you understand its intervention in both Shakespeare and posthumanist studies?

KR:

Shakespeare and Posthumanist Theory is an attempt to introduce readers to the field. I lay out as many of the concerns and possible avenues for scholarship as I'm able to in a short book, first by summarizing the work that others have done, and then modeling the practices I've summarized through new readings of the plays. Doing the latter required that I learn some new things—about disability studies, for instance, or about the machinery of war, or about Renaissance art and the techniques for representing volume, among other things. For me, a book that doesn't require you learn something new is probably not worth writing: I'm easily bored! But the book's goal, as I see it, is to demystify much of what has been done in posthumanist theory, to make accessible what theorists often seem to be unable to convey clearly. I will acknowledge that the book boils—but I hope does not dumb—the theory down. However, with any luck the result is a more usable template for those who don't have time or inclination to spend years with the theory and its philosophical antecedents. While Cary Wolfe grumbles that we shouldn't merely be “talking about a thematics of the decentering of the human” and wants us to grapple with “*how* thinking confronts those thematics” (2010 xvi), the average undergraduate or even the average graduate student is unlikely to get to that noble objective without taking more manageable steps toward it. My book is meant to be one of those steps.

At the same time, I've tried to send a few added messages, not least about how Shakespeare figures in posthumanism in general, and the advantages

and pitfalls of working on one of the most familiar signposts of literary high culture. On the one hand, Shakespeare has so much cachet that one hardly has to justify using his plays and poems as proof-texts for theory; on the other hand, as I say in the book's conclusion, if we simply and unthinkingly make Shakespeare a posthumanist *avant la lettre*, we may just be indulging in another version of bardolatry—celebrating individual “genius,” which is of course one of humanism's concomitant phenomena. The book advises against these kinds of responses and uses. Shakespeare can let us think about how what we call posthumanism is not a modern invention, part of a teleological historical process that always moves forward and beyond (which, in another register, is again the kind of triumphal narrative of perfectibility that humanism would endorse). The wide access and importance of Shakespeare lets the theory percolate differently through our culture, moving it from an abstruse and limited philosophical proposition to become part of a critical literary practice that our students and others can appreciate. Posthumanism will not save us or the planet; but it can make us think differently about both ourselves and our environments, and who knows, with enough of that we might indeed end up changing, as Wolfe requires, *how* we are able to think, and, in turn, what we are able to imagine and thus do.

RS:

What schools of thought are used in or exploited by posthumanist thinkers or theorists?

KR:

Posthumanism is, as I said, a very large umbrella. Like other recent theories that have dominated literary studies, it isn't in fact a single, coherent philosophical position traceable to a single writer or linked group of thinkers (unlike, for example, Marxism, and psychoanalysis, or Foucault and Derrida). It is an orientation that arises out of a number of schools of thought that enable consequent ways of reading, all of which decenter “the human” but in vastly different ways. Nor is it incompatible with the anti-humanist theories I gestured to parenthetically (Marxism and psychoanalysis, for example, both displace human autonomy and ego by referring human choice and action to forces that individuals don't control) but its main methodologies have emerged from a few significant domains. The advent of ecostudies and concern about how humans have found themselves in ecological crisis shifted attention to the ways that human beings interact with their environments. That played a huge part in bringing scholars' attention to non-human actors and entities; there is no hard correlation between ecostudies and posthumanist theory, but there is clearly an alignment. What we have usually called the new materialism, the turn toward ontology and beyond constructionism, has been an equally influential theoretical

methodology. The group of thinkers who “belong” is itself already diverse: Karen Barad, Rosi Braidotti, Elizabeth Grosz, Jane Bennett, Vicki Kirby, and Manuel DeLanda are all very different kinds of new materialists. All problematize the ways we have investigated and evaluated matter, critiquing the dismissal of objects as inert, passive, without significance. Likewise, Object-Oriented Ontologists like Graham Harman and Ian Bogost may not directly identify as posthumanists, but their work certainly inspires many of us. Those who deal with nonhuman animals have borrowed not only from Derrida, Haraway and Wolfe, but from Deleuze and Guattari, and from Mel Y. Chen, but we might equally find the writings of Steve Best, John Berger, Anat Pik, and others useful in our approach. If a posthumanist scholar started out being interested in cybernetics, then their lineage would look very different: they might have been reading Hans Moravec (the transhumanist futurist whose work provoked Hayles’s response in *When Did We Become Posthuman*); they’d certainly have read Hayles, and other second-order cybernetics figures like Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela. If concepts having to do with the body, sexuality, or language have been a starting place for a critic, they might have been reading about zoopoetics or have picked up Merleau-Ponty and been inspired—or they might equally have already been using queer theory, or disability studies and simply become “posthumanista” without taking up the descriptor or the full scope of the theory. I think these days talking about schools of thought as if they’re coherent groups with well-defined borders is impossible. That aligns perfectly with the theory’s resistance to binarism and hierarchy.

MS:

Can we perceive Shakespeare as a proto-Posthumanist?

KR:

This brings up the problem of the “post” in posthumanism—which is not really about a historical divide. Yes, the more self-conscious versions of posthumanist theory date from the mid-to late-20th century, and yes it mainly engages with Enlightenment philosophy, and responds to some anti-humanist theory of the 1970s and after, but as several writers have pointed out, it is an approach, not a historical fact. Any author of any period can offer more (or less) posthumanist moments or insights. Shakespeare, because he writes well before Enlightenment Humanism carves the standards of humanist philosophy in stone, offers a flexible set of criteria for what “humanism” actually involves and how it fails to congeal a consistent answer to the question “what is a human?” Is the perfectibility of the human most important? Do Shakespeare’s tragedies or histories really bear out that version? Not at all. Is the masterful authority and agency of the individual definitional? The comedies surely don’t think so. As Rob Watson puts it, they undo the individual ego in favor of multiple sources of

agency.¹ In many ways, Shakespeare's deep skepticism makes him fertile ground for posthumanist thinking; but we could say the same (and some day I assume we will) about high-humanist authors like Erasmus, for instance, or later poets like Milton (Joe Campana and Scott Maisano point out that if anyone was doubtful about how smug humans should be, surely it was Milton!).² My position on Shakespeare is that his plays and poems should do the work we need them to do now. Even historical anachronism has its place for our purposes, just as much as it did for Shakespeare himself: speculative work interrogating the queerness of the plays, finding patterns of trans identity in the plays, imagining posthumans here and there in the mix of characters, turning a poem into a defense of ecological diversity, using his characters to think about how technology dismantles humanism—all this serves us well in no small part because Shakespeare carries such weight with our students (and their parents, and administrators and the general public). Perhaps we can renew Shakespeare in the service of what I think are ethical ends by exploiting the same aspects of his reputation and cultural power that have been turned to uglier, more culturally violent ends in the past and even undo some of the harms Shakespeare has been used to inflict.

At a minimum Shakespeare's unshakable place in the study of the liberal arts can act as a bulwark against political suppression. It is easier to ban Critical Race Theory than to ban Shakespeare—but Shakespeare can be an extremely useful tool in advancing Critical Race Theory. The same is true for post-humanism's transformation of "the human" into something that can redress the social and environmental catastrophes of our time, a transformation that would raise hackles in some political circles. Shakespeare is a great vehicle for smuggling contraband into a curriculum.

MS:

What direction do you anticipate posthuman literary criticism to take in the future?

KR:

The first likely challenge to posthumanist theory in Shakespeare studies is already under way in the field's response (or lack of it) to the issue of race. Shakespeare studies has been energized, as have other fields, by Black Lives Matter and the wider academic engagement with Critical Race Theory. Brilliant work is being done on racialization in early modern texts and culture; scholars like Kim Hall, Margo Hendricks, Ian Smith, Imtiaz Habib, and Ayanna

¹ See Watson's essay "The Ecology of Self in *Midsummer Night's Dream*." *Ecocritical Shakespeare*. Eds. Lynne Bruckner and Dan Brayton, Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2011. 33-56.

² See their introduction to *Renaissance Posthumanism*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2016. 1-37.

Thompson have demanded Shakespeareans take account of race, and now a whole new generation is galvanized by our current political climate into asking even louder and more provocative questions. But how does this development articulate with posthumanism and posthumanist theory?

One answer might be that posthumanism has failed to recognize and so honor its Black forebears. For example, Alexander Weheliye's 2014 *Habeas Viscus*, which "recalibrates" and "rectifies" (his words) biopolitical discourse to take account of race, racialization, and the human, cites its roots in the work of Black Studies theorists Hortense Spillers and Sylvia Wynter.³ In his introduction, Weheliye specifically calls out Cary Wolfe for a subtly racist set of comments on Toni Morrison in Wolfe's *Animal Rites*, pointing out that Wolfe's remarks on Morrison are "spiteful" and not unlike other animal studies thinkers who "brandish" comparisons of enslaved humans to nonhuman beings, comparisons that lead, unimaginatively, to the conclusion that Black emancipation can only come at the cost of the further exploitation of animals (10). Weheliye, whose work deals with racializing "assemblages" and "flesh" harmonizes with posthumanist theory. But he is committed to the proposition that Black subjects should not bear the unique burden of relinquishing liberation (which has usually been coded as becoming fully human) in order to rectify the abuses or failures of humanism. What he advocates is not the extension of the category "human" to include others, but the radical rethinking of "human" to address the way in which suffering is inherent to it, rather than a weight some groups must bear. Critical Race Theory in general also implicitly and explicitly rejects exceptionalism; yet it does not entirely toss out a version of humanism that has admittedly never yet been achieved, but which might look very different from the tarnished fantasies of liberal humanists. To be fair, Wolfe pursues many of the same ethical ends as Weheliye. But the difference between them points to a failure: posthumanist theory has been predominantly white, oriented toward the concerns of white, Western practitioners, and slow to see its own biases. How, for instance, do we talk about the place of technology and science without also thinking about the social exclusions in and of that discussion? Who gets to embrace or dismiss the option of transhumanist transcendence in favor of a more diffuse posthuman being in the world? Who gets to speak, and whose speech is remembered, cited, recirculated, in academic circles? And how do the underlying assumptions of the theory disenfranchise whole sectors of the globe and its populations even as they suffer more acutely from the failures of humanism?

³ Zakkiah Iman Jackson has offered the same rebuke to posthumanist studies, likewise citing Wynter as well as Aimée Césaire and Frantz Fanon who all "challenge the epistemological authority of 'man'" well before posthumanism's advent in the 1990s. See her "Animal: New Directions in the Theorization of Race and Posthumanism." *Feminist Studies* 39.3 (2013): 669-683.

I think we must also worry that ecological crisis will outrun us, in the sense that emergency and catastrophe will drown out the more nuanced “slow” critique that has developed in the field. The COVID pandemic might be a warning sign: while in one sense the pandemic should have been a humbling experience of our global and environmental interdependence, any such insight has been muted by the disaster’s practical effects, and the speed at which theory causes change seems outpaced by cascading events. How do we talk about the leveling, decentering aspirations of some posthumanisms while taking responsibility for immediate change? Who do we reach with our writing and speaking, and how effective are we? I am fully convinced by Rob Nixon’s description of “slow violence”⁴—but slow violence now requires a fast-paced political/governmental response as well as a massive collective shift of focus and action. How does theory accomplish that, or can it?

RS:

What do you see as the connection between politics and posthumanism?

KR:

There are a number of dimensions and levels involved in that question. When Bruno Latour describes a “politics of nature” which includes a “parliament of things” (*We Have Never Been Modern*, 1991; *Politics of Nature*, 1999) it is clear that his sense of “politics” is meant to describe more than the limited workings of government, although his vision includes that too—he is proposing a radical new way to imagine relationships on a planetary scale. For someone like Jane Bennett (*Vibrant Matter*, 2010) the goal is to “explore social hegemonies” but to add to them a sense of “thingly power, the material agency of natural bodies and technological artifacts” (xiii). Bennett too wants to reimagine how traditional concepts of political theory might be transformed by a consideration of material entities as actants (she uses Latour’s term) in the world. At the end of her chapter on political ecologies she poses the question “Are you ready, and at the price of what sacrifice, to live the good life together” (109)—a question redolent of terminology familiar to us from the history of political writing from Aristotle to Marx and beyond. What is different in Bennett’s and Latour’s view is that the idea of “together” must extend beyond the human, and requires a kind of humility and profound abnegation not necessarily accounted for in past political thought.

Many posthumanists interested in affect theory also implicitly or explicitly reject the Platonic model of the rational citizen, given the proposition that affect—emotions understood as somatic effects that precede the forms of social and other interpretation that categorize, justify, or elaborate them—is the origin and target of much of what we call politics. This kind of work often

⁴ See his *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*. Harvard University Press, 2011.

addresses the way capitalism, gendered ideologies, and other structures of identity and attachment obscure the role of bodily processes in determining political choices, fictions, or movements. Here I'm including a huge range of thinkers in the big bucket of "posthumanists," ranging from Lauren Berlant to Sarah Ahmed to Brian Massumi and many others. All are engaged in one way or another in dethroning humanist descriptions of and prescriptions for political life and ideas about natural law and human sovereignty.

But at the level of current political movements and individual commitments, we also see a range of those represented in the theory. Cary Wolfe is clearly concerned with the way animals suffer the consequences of anthropocentrism, as are Donna Haraway and Mel Y. Chen, for instance, and all are clearly committed to an activist politics beyond academic philosophizing. Many of the scholars who bring a posthumanist methodology to their work on Shakespeare are likewise moved to imagine post-anthropocentric political options in our future that might have unique roots in overlooked aspects of Renaissance literature and culture. Bennett says she embraces a non-Marxist tradition of materialism, reaching back to a Lucretian version of monism: who would understand better the implications of such a position and the politics it enables than someone working with Renaissance literature and Shakespeare? Hamlet, at Wittenberg at the turn of the seventeenth century, would have been steeped in Lucretianism, and thus encouraged to examine matter itself in ways not unrelated to Bennett's investigation.⁵ Posthumanist politics, like the theory, thus includes an element of *déjà vu* for Renaissance scholars. Take for example Laurie Shannon's brilliant *The Accommodated Animal* (2013), which has plenty to teach Wolfe or even Latour about a historical moment when "cosmopolity" could include zoopolity. Shannon demonstrates the ways that animals could be imagined as political subjects until Descartes renegotiated their status, making them scientific objects instead. Shannon's own background as a constitutional lawyer is central to the way she re-reads Genesis and discovers its (non-hexameral) potential as a kind of legal template for zoopolity. If Latour imagines a future parliament of things that could encompass non-human animals represented in a new post-modern constitution, Shannon shows us that such a prospect is not necessarily futurist utopian fantasy, but was once thinkable as a religiously sanctioned version of God's creation. What else have we forgotten that Shakespeare and the Renaissance can teach us? What "new" political relations can we uncover in old texts? Whatever Shakespeare's own politics might have been, the plays and poems thus yield some pretty radical possibilities for the politically-oriented posthumanist.

⁵ There's a vast literature about Lucretianism in the Renaissance, too vast to cite here, but for this argument about Hamlet, see R. Allen Shoaf. *Lucretius and Shakespeare On the Nature of Things*. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014.

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Lisa S. Starks*

Kabbalah, *Dybbuks*, and the Religious Posthuman in the Shakespearean Worlds of *Twin Peaks*

Abstract: In the series *Twin Peaks*, Mark Frost, David Lynch and others create a mythological framework structured by and filtered through Shakespeare in a post-secular exploration of the posthuman. *Twin Peaks* exemplifies a cultural postsecular turn in its treatment of the posthuman, taking the religious and spiritual perspectives to new—and often extreme—heights in its use of Kabbalah and other traditions. *Twin Peaks* involves spiritual dimensions that tap into other planes of existence in which struggles between benign and destructive entities or forces, multiple universes, and extra-dimensional, nonhuman spirits question the centrality of the human and radically challenge traditional Western notions of being. *Twin Peaks* draws from Shakespeare's expansive imagination to explore these dimensions of reality that include nonhuman entities—demons, angels, and other spirits—existing beyond and outside of fabricated, human-centered worlds, with the *dybbuk* functioning as the embodiment of the postsecular religious posthuman.

Keywords: *Twin Peaks*, *Twin Peaks: The Return*, *Fire Walk with Me*, *Twin Peaks: The Missing Pieces*, *The Secret History of Twin Peaks*, *Twin Peaks: The Final Dossier*, David Lynch, Mark Frost, Kabbalah, religious posthuman, Shakespeare, *Pericles*, *The Tempest*, *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*.

In the hybrid-genre television series *Twin Peaks* (1990-1991; *The Return*, 2017), Mark Frost and David Lynch use Shakespeare to create a mythological framework from multiple religious and spiritual mystical traditions in a post-secular exploration of the posthuman. This exploration continues in additional works that interface with the television show's three seasons—the films *Twin Peaks: Fire Walk with Me* (Lynch and Robert Engels, 1992) and *Twin Peaks: The Missing Pieces* (Lynch and Engels, 2014); the novels *The Secret Diary of Laura Palmer* (Jennifer Lynch, 1990), *The Secret History of Twin Peaks* (Mark

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Frost, 2016) and *Twin Peaks: The Final Dossier* (Mark Frost, 2017); and the audiobook *Diane: The Twin Peaks Tapes of Agent Cooper* (Scott Frost, 1990). These materials collectively comprise the canon of the series, along with tangential or extracanonical materials by Frost and others, all of which circulate around the continually expanding orbit of *Twin Peaks*.¹

Shakespeare surfaces in uncanny ways in *Twin Peaks*, with *Hamlet* providing the Shakespearean undercurrent that propels the series. Major Garland Briggs (Don Sinclair Davis), a visionary who travels between two worlds and serves as the archivist in Frost's novels, echoes Hamlet in response to the mysterious supernatural occurrences in this fictional small town in the Pacific Northwest: "There's more in heaven and earth than is dreamt up in our philosophy" (E16). Tellingly, Briggs uses the pronoun "our" of the Folio, rather than "you" of the Second Quarto, in his paraphrase from Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (1:5:863-864)² to suggest that there are meanings and possibilities that cannot be conceptualized via human constructs of knowledge or understood empirically via human means of perception and experience. In Frost's novel *The Secret History of Twin Peaks*, President Nixon, discussing the possibility of extraterrestrial life with Twin Peaks character Douglas Milford in the 1970s, exclaims, "Only stands to reason that—to paraphrase the Bard—out there lies far more than we've dreamt of in our philosophies" (285). In the following decade, now in *Twin Peaks*, Briggs follows Milford to discover that the mysterious incidents suggest extradimensional rather than extraterrestrial worlds.

In the context of *Twin Peaks*, the word "philosophy" in these paraphrases of Hamlet's famous lines noted above denote scientific inquiry, philosophical theories, and various religious perspectives and spiritual practices, both Western and Eastern—even though all of these systems of knowledge and

¹ After this point, the title *Twin Peaks* or "the series" will refer to these materials as a variable, collective entity. Individual texts will be identified as such by episode or part. (I will follow the Blu-ray numbering system to document references from the show. Citations from the original series [1990-1991], Seasons One and Two, will be indicated by consecutively numbered episodes, i.e., "Episode 16" (or E16); citations from the limited series *The Return* [2017], Season Three, will be denoted by parts, i.e., "Part One" (or P1.) For brevity and clarification, specific titles provided in the text above will be abbreviated in citations as *TP* (whole series), *S1* (Season One), *S2* (Season 2), *TPR* (*Twin Peaks: The Return*), *FWWM* (*Fire Walk with Me*), *TPMP* (*Twin Peaks: The Missing Pieces*), *SDLP* (*The Secret Diary of Laura Palmer*), *SHTP* (*The Secret History of Twin Peaks*), *TPFD* (*Twin Peaks: The Final Dossier*), and *DTPTAC* (*Diane: The Twin Peaks Tapes of Agent Cooper*).

² Line numbers here are taken from Internet Shakespeare Editions, *Hamlet*, Second Quarto: https://internetshakespeare.uvic.ca/doc/Ham_Q2/scene/1.5/index.html. Other Shakespeare act, scene, and line citations refer to *Shakespeare: The Complete Works*, revised edition, edited by Richard Proudfoot, Ann Thompson, and David Scott Kastan (London and New York: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 2011).

belief do factor in navigating the complex worlds unfolding in the town of Twin Peaks and beyond. Scientific discourses inform and enable the examination of evidence (forensics, for example); fringe scientific inquiry, especially on UFOs, provides a backdrop against which the show's supernatural entities emerge; and, importantly, Eastern and Western mysticism allows for glimpses into posthuman worlds beyond "our philosophy". Some religious and spiritual mystical beliefs, rituals and practices are rebuked and condemned, such as the occult Thelema and conspiracy theorist "brotherhood" Illuminati (as opposed to Freemason). Conversely, others form the postsecular vision of the show and its mythology, such as Transcendental Meditation, Tibetan mythology, Buddhism, Hinduism, Nez Perce Native American mythology, Theosophy, Christianity, and—the subject of this study—Kabbalah.³ In his newfound quest for enlightenment, Ben Horne (Richard Beymer) signals this multiplicity of religious and spiritual traditions in *Twin Peaks* quite literally by gathering several books—the *Koran*, the *Bhagavad Gita*, *Talmud*, the Hebrew Bible and Christian New Testament—and presenting them to his daughter, Audrey, at his hotel, the Great Northern (E28). The series itself expands this religious canon to include other traditions as it proceeds, interweaving them with appropriations of Shakespeare, which are deeply implicated in the series' exploration of mystical experience and posthuman, extradimensional realities.

Twin Peaks is unique in its often jarring, grotesque, humorous and moving treatment of religious and spiritual worlds, but the series nevertheless could be viewed as part of a larger cultural movement since the late twentieth century away from the secular to the postsecular. In her examination of religion and posthumanism, Elaine Graham identifies a "shift from a secular to a 'postsecular' sensibility" in science fiction film and television, which has contributed to a "'postsecular culture'" in which "new and enduring forms of religiosity coexist, albeit in certain tension, with secular atheist world views" (361-362). *Twin Peaks* exemplifies this postsecular turn in its treatment of the posthuman, taking the religious and spiritual perspectives to new—and often extreme—heights in its use of Kabbalah and other traditions. In *Twin Peaks*, Lynch, Frost, and others create spiritual dimensions that tap into other planes of existence in which struggles between benign and destructive entities or forces, multiple universes, and extradimensional, nonhuman spirits question the centrality of the human and radically challenge traditional Western notions of being. Like Major Briggs, *Twin Peaks* draws from Shakespeare's expansive imagination to explore these dimensions of reality that include nonhuman

³ Others have discussed the series' investment in Eastern traditions. See especially Brett H. Butler, "Thousands of Miles and Many Centuries: Eastern Mysticism and Spiritual Possession in *Twin Peaks*." *Supernatural Studies* 5.2 (2019): 120-144.

entities—demons, angels, and other spirits—existing beyond and outside of fabricated, human-centered worlds.

Importantly, it is *Twin Peaks*' investment in Eastern and Western spirituality that opens up perspectives beyond empirical reality and negotiates existence between the two worlds the series dramatizes, intersecting with Shakespearean perspectives, themes, motifs and characters.⁴ Among other religious and mystical frameworks, *Twin Peaks* draws from Kabbalah and Jewish folklore in its exhumation the *dybbuk* as an embodiment of the posthuman. *Dybbuks*, along with *golem*-like beings, demons and angelic forces, engage in a cosmic struggle while traveling between their dimensions and ours in the series. This representation of the religious posthuman, drawn from Kabbalah as well as other religious and spiritual traditions, is articulated through or infused with the spirit of Shakespeare.

Fittingly, Shakespeare's presence in *Twin Peaks* is spectral, flitting in and out of the series, taking many guises and haunting many of its plots and characters. Generally, discussed more specifically below, the series draws from Shakespeare's tragedies for its overall outlook and vision; the romances or tragicomedies for much of its plot and thematic content; the comedies, sonnets and histories for themes, motifs, and character development. *Hamlet* provides a thematic and narrative framework for *Twin Peaks*, underpinning the show's mysteries, uncanny occurrences and supernatural dimensions; *Julius Caesar*, *Macbeth*, and *Romeo and Juliet* offer additional points of insight and thematic interest. Besides the tragedies, the romances or tragicomedies—*Pericles*, *The Winter's Tale*, *Cymbeline* and *The Tempest*—all contribute profoundly to *Twin Peaks*' overall structure, informing various plots threads, themes, motifs and, as others have noted, its use of time. The comedies, primarily *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, factor in the dream motif, use of mythology, and spiritual world of the forest; and *The Sonnets* and histories (*Richard III* and *Henry V*) influence character, particularly Ben Thorne's offbeat behavior and energetic literary imagination in Seasons One and Two.

Shakespeare's spectral presence promotes alternative kinds of thought and knowledge, creating transformative, mythic worlds and modes of being often structured around trauma and passion. As Briggs' appropriation of Hamlet's lines implies, Shakespeare functions as a gateway to imagining what lies beyond empirical perception, scientific reasoning, and everyday experience of reality. As examined below, *Hamlet* offers the possibility of this exploration

⁴ Franck Boulège analyzes parts of *TPTR* according to *sefirot* in the Tree of Life in—Trees of Life and Death in *Twin Peak: The Return*.|| Lapsus Lima. 11 May 2020. <https://www.lapsuslima.com/the-trees-of-life-and-death-in-twin-peaks-the-return/> 24 August 2021, but the influence of Kabbalah in *TP* has not yet been examined in-depth.

that continues throughout the series; *Julius Caesar* opens a pathway into thinking about the destructive forces it uncovers; *Macbeth* examines the suffering, violence and despair such exploration into these dark forces can invoke; and *The Tempest* negotiates how to handle and manage ethically the knowledge and magical power such insights into the unknown might enable.

The glimpses we see of the unknown and the traffic between the spirit worlds (The Red Room, Black and White Lodges, the demons' meeting place above the convenience store, the Fireman's theatre, and so on) and the material world are characterized by a mythic sensibility hinged on incessant change. This mythos of *Twin Peaks*, which seems particularly Ovidian—and thus, by association, Shakespearean—undergirds the series' narrative structure and propels its creative energies, driven by the unending metamorphic possibilities of Shakespeare's plays, particularly *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Tempest*.⁵ The series' exploration of pain and desire, loss and redemption is woven into plotlines and characters appropriated from *Pericles*, *Cymbeline* and *The Tempest*; and its emphasis on interlocking drives of love and death surfaces in references to *The Sonnets* and *Romeo and Juliet*. Consequently, through Shakespeare, *Twin Peaks* enters into strange worlds inhabited by posthuman demons and angels who exist in extradimensional realities and engage in the dualistic cosmic struggles found in Kabbalah, as well as other traditions. Significantly, the existence of other dimensions, with their spiritual inhabitants, decenter and displace human beings.

Posthuman Kabbalah, Shakespeare, and *Twin Peaks*

Twin Peaks fully invests in Jewish Kabbalah, both in its earliest forms and later versions to the present, and intertwines it with Shakespeare and Christian Cabala, which influenced figures and authors in the early modern period, such as Christopher Marlowe and, most likely, Shakespeare, as explained below. Although Kabbalah should not be considered the only key to understanding all the religious and spiritual meanings in the series, it does provide an important perspective, one that is compatible with the series' other Eastern and Western theological belief systems and spiritual practices. Kabbalah, in all its variations and in concert with Shakespeare, provides a foundation for much of the series' mythology, its depiction of posthuman elements, demonic and angelic forces.

Kabbalah refers to the mystical or spiritual core of Judaism that is woven through its rituals and practice, in varying degrees or levels, from past

⁵ Elise Moore discusses the show's metamorphic qualities (not citing Ovid); and Lucas Mazintas explores Ovidian mythology in *Twin Peaks*. – Laurel Palmer: The Ovidian Influence on David Lynch's *Twin Peaks* Universe.‡ Unpublished paper.

centuries to the present day.⁶ The word itself in Hebrew means “to receive,” and Kabbalah is thought to encompass the wisdom and spiritual truths received from Jewish sages. In all its variations, Kabbalah stresses the need to repair the world to recover its connection to the Divine, which resides in and outside of all things. Kabbalah posits a multidimensional world powered by opposing forces, or *sefirot*, ten “emanations,” that interact with each other in the Tree of Life (*Eitz Chayim*)—a tree that is structured upside down, with its roots shooting upward to the Divine and its “tree top” manifesting in the human material world. The roots of the Tree extend past the highest *sephirah* to the *Ayn Sof*—the endless, expansive, wholeness of God that elides any materialization or manifestation. Below the *Ayn Sof*, the tree offers spiritual paths or tracks—up, down, and across—with each trajectory a different distinct significance or goal. The movement through these interconnected paths functions like energy transmission—not unlike the electrical currents that crackle and speed along wiring in *Twin Peaks* (especially in *FVWM*, *TPMP*, and *TPTR*). Importantly, the number of these paths—twenty-two—corresponds to the number of characters in the Hebrew alphabet. Numbers and letters carry symbolic meanings in Kabbalah; the two are connected in *gematria*, the practice of transposing Hebrew letters into numbers and then adding them up to discover secret meanings. This aspect of Kabbalah surfaces in *Twin Peaks* with the backwards speaking in the Red Room and especially in its obsession with numbers, particularly coordinates (*FVWM*, *TPMP*, and *TPTR*), for instance. And, perhaps coincidentally, the total number of parts in *TPTR* is 18, the number that corresponds to *chai*, “life” in Hebrew.⁷

When the *sefirot* on the right and left sides of the Tree are balanced, all is well; they depend upon each other to function. When the left and right side of the Tree become imbalanced, however—triggered by the malicious or destructive acts of humans—the left emanations can harness too much power, which then unleashes malevolent forces into the universe, potentially resulting in

⁶ It is impossible to describe Kabbalah adequately within the scope of this paper. For those interested in accessible, scholarly introductions to Kabbalah, I recommend these sources: Lawrence Kushner, *The Way Into Jewish Mystical Tradition* (Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2001) and Daniel C. Matt, *The Essential Kabbalah: The Heart of Jewish Mysticism* (Edison, NJ: Castle Books, 1998). Many thanks to Rabbi Michael Torop for these suggestions, among others, that helped me learn about Kabbalah.

⁷ Interestingly, Mark Frost’s 1995 novel *The 6 Messiahs*, published on the heels of Seasons One and Two, includes the character Rabbi Jacob Stern, whose expertise is in Talmudic explication and Kabbalah. The novel contains numerous references to Kabbalah, a ceremony similar to *gematria*, a subplot dealing with the Zohar, demons, and an anecdotal reference to the *golem* (88-92). Another subplot involves a Shakespearean actor performing *Hamlet* (383-384).

horrific, devastating effects. Corresponding to different *sefirot* in the Tree, two other perspectives or maps form the complex mystical vision of Kabbalah: The Four Worlds and The Five Levels of the Soul. Significantly, on one hand, Kabbalah's expansive, multidimensional view of the universe decenters the human being in an expansive view of divine forces and entities, thereby generating a posthuman religious sensibility; on the other hand, it moves or compels humans to adopt a more compassionate view of each other, animals, the natural world, and even objects.

Kabbalah has changed and developed since the medieval era, with thinkers and communities in different geographical locations and time periods developing, emphasizing and modifying aspects of it. It remained isolated in specific communities until 1492, when Jews were expelled from Spain. At that time, as Harry Freedman explains, the Florentine Giovanni Pico della Mirandola lifted it from Judaism and appropriated it for Christianity, claiming Kabbalah to be a "universal science" (5). This appropriation initiated two independent strands of Kabbalah: Jewish Kabbalah and Christian Cabala. The latter evolved into a belief system that incorporated magic, Hermeticism, natural science (alchemy) and other occult practices (6).

Importantly, Christian Cabala became intertwined with magic and played a significant role in early modern English courts of Henry VIII and Elizabeth I, literature and theatrical representations of the occult, influencing poets Edmund Spenser and John Milton, as well as playwrights Christopher Marlowe and, most likely, Shakespeare.⁸ Magi Cornelius Agrippa and John Dee, who both considered themselves only practitioners of benign Cabala or "white magic", ended up being vilified, demonized, and reviled as European culture shifted its views to construe Cabala mysteries as demonology. Both Agrippa and Dee ended up influencing early modern plays. When Marlowe's Doctor Faustus vows to practice the dark arts, he turns to the Cabalist Agrippa's book, and he employs a perverted version of Cabalist ritual to summon Mephistaphilis. And when Shakespeare creates his powerful magician Prospero in *The Tempest*, he draws from magic practices and knowledge for which Dee, a scholar of mathematics and Christian Cabala in the court of Elizabeth I, was famous, then infamous during the reign of James I.

Shakespeare's *Tempest* explores the thin, tenuous line distinguishing "good" from "bad" magic that had characterized conceptions of Cabala through the magus Prospero. Prospero positions himself against the black magic of the "witch" Sycorax, yet his own practice of magic has come dangerously close to the dark arts for which he condemns her. Prospero's powers emanate from the Christian Cabalist rituals he has garnered from his books, which are therefore

⁸ Besides Freedman, see Dame Frances Amelia Yates, *The Occult Philosophy in the Elizabethan Age* (London: Routledge, 1979).

bent on the power of angels, not demons. Nevertheless, when he traces a circle to perform the rites and ceremony to “drown his book”, he paraphrases from Ovid’s healer-witch Medea and, through her, confesses to having raised the dead—an act that crosses the boundary between benign and malevolent magic (5.1.33 – 57). Prospero thus surrenders his powers and leaves off his practice of magic, but the play concludes with a double-edged, ambivalent representation of Cabala.

This dual perception of Christian Cabala, both its creative power and its dangerous proximity to the dark arts, continued long after the early modern era. Although it was often condemned as witchcraft, Cabala nevertheless had a tremendous influence on European thought in various ways: as a natural science, leading to the Enlightenment in the eighteenth century; as an occult pseudo-science, culminating in nineteenth-century spiritualism; as an offshoot of the dark arts championed by the notorious Aleister Crowley (who figures prominently in Frost’s *Twin Peaks* novels) in twentieth-century occult subcultures; and currently, often in combination with Jewish Kabbalah, as popular esoteric philosophy of twenty-first century postsecular culture (Freedman 9).

Twin Peaks harvests from these various strands of Kabbala—including Jewish folklore, Christian Cabala and various off-shoots—in a multilayered mythology that revolves around the posthuman cosmic struggle between demonic and angelic forces and, following Jewish Kabbalah, ultimately urges more ethical relations in the material world. In Frost’s novel *The Secret History of Twin Peaks*, FBI secret agent Tammy Preston (also a character in *TPTR*, played by Chrysta Bell), uncovers ancient roots that may explain the supernatural findings she has been examining with FBI Director Gordon Cole (David Lynch in *S2* and *TPTR*). When exploring the mysteries of the events that have occurred in Twin Peaks, she examines documents compiled by an anonymous archivist (later identified as Major Briggs), which trace the supernatural findings—first thought to be extraterrestrial, then later confirmed as extradimensional—back to the nineteenth century and then much earlier, finally to ancient cultures as recorded in the Hebrew Bible and Sumerian/Mesopotamian mythology. In the compiled papers, the archivist includes a modern translation of Ezekiel 1:4-1:21, the famous passages describing the Chariot of Ezekiel (Frost, *SHTP* 180-181). These passages form the basis for one of the earliest Kabbalistic texts and remain a core piece of Kabbalah mythology; moreover, they uncannily correspond to the past and present-day bizarre, mysterious sightings and occurrences surrounding the town of Twin Peaks. Elsewhere in Frost’s novels, variations on Kabbalah, especially Hermetic Qabalah (an offshoot of Christian Cabala), surface with the series’ interest in Theosophy, the esoteric teachings of Helena Blavatsky and the Hermetic Order

of the Golden Dawn, along with other spiritualist and occult philosophies and practices.⁹

These varieties of Kabbalah are bound up with Shakespearean characters, ideas and insights in *Twin Peaks*. Richly inflected with Christian Cabala, as noted above, *The Tempest* figures not only as a text informing the series' emphasis on the benign yet potentially malevolent power and danger of Cabalist mysteries, but also its development of character in terms of contemporary postsecular Kabbalah-inspired spiritualism. Reflecting on Dr. Lawrence Jacoby's life, his "new age" spiritual practices and recent transfiguration as "Dr. Amp", Preston observes that the shaman-like Jacoby exhibits "an air of the tarot's 'Magus'," one that reminds her of "a character like Prospero", who is "a man in the last act of life who's survived the 'tempest' of human turmoil and by doing so gained the ability to see beyond its commonplace illusions" (Frost, *TPFD* 113).¹⁰ Preston then describes Jacoby as someone who, "at one with nature and its pagan 'spirits,' basically lives out his spiritualist beliefs, and in doing so, has cultivated a keen sensibility that can penetrate the "'veil of existence' and leave him able and willing to share the wisdom one mines from such hard-earned territory" (Frost, *TPFD* 113)—like Prospero, whose tragic corollary, she notes, would be King Lear. Shakespeare, here, becomes a means by which Preston describes the ability of a character like Jacoby to overcome adversity and see beyond appearances by living a life, albeit an offbeat one, that aligns with his spiritualism.

Preston's thoughts on *The Tempest* and *King Lear* cause her to question the process of the mission that she, Gordon Cole and others have undertaken with the Blue Rose Project's examination of extradimensional realities, realizing that it requires both outward and inward awareness. She asks, "Is that the secret at the heart of the Blue Rose and the work we do? To identify root causes of human misery and evil, do we first have to find them in ourselves?" (Frost, *TPFD* 113). The series explores these questions, which parallel those raised in many of Shakespeare's plays and Kabbalah, in its supernatural, extradimensional elements: manifold realities, cosmic forces battling with themselves and human beings, demon possession, demonic and angelic entities and the transmigration

⁹ Blavatsky's esoteric philosophies are mentioned repeatedly throughout the *Twin Peaks* canon and in ancillary materials. The occult movements in *SHTP* are embodied by a character based on the real life Thelemite occultist Jack Parsons, who based his movement on the infamous English occultist Aleister Crowley. In the novel, Parsons' experiments, his efforts to summon "the mother of all destruction," appear to be linked to the arch-demon Judy in the series.

¹⁰ On a different note, Mat Cult refers to both Lynch and character Gordon Cole as Prospero-like figures in – "This Rough Magic": Comparing *Twin Peaks: The Return to The Tempest*. | Twenty-five years Later. 2017. <https://25yearslatersite.com/2017/09/12/this-rough-magic-comparing-twin-peaks-the-return-to-the-tempest/> 22 August 2021.

of souls. Importantly, the interplay between Kabbalah and Shakespeare enables an examination of the postsecular, religious posthuman in the series' fictional worlds, which are replete with entities that compete for power beyond human mastery or full understanding.

Posthuman Demons, *Dybbuks*, and *Golems* in the Shakespearean Worlds of *Twin Peaks*

Strangely and profoundly, the series appropriates Shakespeare in its exploration of the posthuman through Kabbalah, reviving not only angels and demons from centuries-old Jewish mysticism but also exhuming other phantoms of Jewish legend and superstition—such as the *dybbuk* and, to a lesser extent, the *golem*—to examine sacred and profane mysteries of transcendence and otherworldliness. FBI forensics specialist Albert Rosenfield (Miguel Ferrer) appropriates Shakespeare in an effort to grapple with what or who “BOB” is, to explain what force or reason could motivate the horrific murders that have been committed. After searches for BOB (Frank Silva) prove futile, FBI Special Agent Dale Cooper (Kyle MacLachlan), Sheriff Harry S. Truman (Michael Ontkean), Briggs, and Albert question whether or not killer BOB (Frank Silva) actually exists as a material being. In response, Albert quotes Antony from Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar* (3:2:76) in describing BOB as a manifestation of “the evil that men do” (E16). On first viewing, it appears Albert is suggesting that BOB does not exist literally, but rather figuratively as the malevolence inside Leland Palmer (Ray Wise) and other human beings. Albert’s reading is valid at this moment in the series, providing a psychological layer to the representations of BOB and the painful trauma that Laura Palmer (Sheryl Lee) had experienced. The series carries forward this psychological layer of meaning as it progresses, but then it moves beyond this interpretation, circling back in the opposite direction to represent BOB as, indeed, something very literal—a variation of the *dybbuk*.

As a *dybbuk*, BOB functions as an embodiment of the posthuman, a nonhuman entity who attempts to fuse with, consume, and therefore destroy human beings.¹¹ The *dybbuk*, with its roots in Castilian then early modern Lurianic Kabbalah, refers to a troubled spirit of a deceased sinful person who roams until finding a vulnerable person to possess. The spirit itself derives from demonic sources that originate from the realm of dark forces in Kabbalah, the

¹¹ Although BOB has not been discussed as a *dybbuk* in-depth, Seth Rogovoy notes that BOB “resembles a latter-day *Dybbuk*” in *The Forward*, November 7 (2014): 14; and Greg Olson, citing author Carlos Clarens, also refers to BOB as a *dybbuk* in *David Lynch: Beautiful Dark* (Scarecrow Press, 1998), p. 46.

sitra ahra (or the “other side”), an “inversion of the divine world” (Freedman 148). These dark forces spring free when *Gevurah*, the *sefirah* of “judgment or strength” (associated with the left shoulder or arm) from the left side of the Tree of Life, acquires more power than its companion *sefirah*, *Chesed*, the *sefirah* of “lovingkindness” (associated with the right shoulder or arm) from the right side. When this imbalance occurs, *Gevurah* becomes a deadly, violent force, ushering forth demons that cause destruction of the material world. Sometimes these evil spirits morph into animals—the owl (the most important to *Twin Peaks* mythology), black dogs or other animals—and even objects, as when Josie Packard’s (Joan Chen) soul is trapped in wooden drawer knob (E23). Like the early modern *dybbuk*, BOB, as an evil spirit, houses itself in human beings as well as animals, especially the owl (S1, S2, *SDLP*) and black dog (*FWWM*). Most typically, demons parasitically attach themselves to souls of the dead who were unable to transmigrate into new bodies because of their sinful past lives, directing that possessed dead soul into a susceptible living person to host it.

As a posthuman *dybbuk*, BOB exists in a parallel dimension with other demons from the Black Lodge, congregating in a room above a convenience store. Like the other demons in *Twin Peaks*, BOB thrives on *Garmonbozia*, or “pain and suffering,” which takes on the material form of canned creamed corn. Bent on destruction and violent acts, BOB can only be seen by those who have the gift to see into other dimensions, or those who are victimized by it. The *dybbuk* BOB possesses its host, Leland, through whom it murders Teresa Banks (Pamela Gidley), repeatedly rapes Laura for years before brutally killing her because she refuses to let BOB possess her, and then brutally murders Laura’s cousin Maddy Ferguson (Sheryl Lee) (S1, S2, *SDLP*, *FWWM*, *TPMP*). Later in the series (*TPTR* and *TPFD*), BOB inhabits Cooper’s evil double, which escapes from the Black Lodge in the final episode of Season 2 when the good Cooper travels to the Black Lodge to rescue his girlfriend, Annie Blackburn (Heather Graham).

The plots involving *dybbuk* BOB and host Leland strangely echo incest motifs from Shakespeare’s plays, especially *Pericles*, revealing the transgressive desires and violence that lie buried in the magical, restorative plot of Shakespearean romance. Leland’s continual abuse and rape of his daughter Laura while possessed by BOB recall the incestuous relationship of King Antiochus and his daughter, which serves as the backdrop to Shakespeare’s play and the impetus for Pericles’s travels. The reality of this relationship emerges when Leland plans to engage in a four-way sexual encounter with Teresa Banks and her friends but then backs out when he recognizes Laura as one of three. Leland/BOB then murders Banks, who had threatened to blackmail him; later terrorizes Ronette Pulaski (Phoebe Augustine), the third friend; and, of course, brutally murders Laura. At Laura’s funeral, in a scene that somewhat comically gestures at Laertes’ and Hamlet’s response to Ophelia’s burial in *Hamlet* (E3),

Bobby Briggs (Dana Ashbrook) pushes his way in and proceeds to accuse the townspeople of hypocrisy, causing his foil James Hurley (James David Greenblatt) to attack him. They fight, like Hamlet and Laertes, at Laura's open grave. To top it off, Leland jumps onto Laura's coffin in a moment that combines humor with the tragic, grotesque with the sublime, in the manner of Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*.

This Shakespearean juxtaposition of the comic and tragic is further exemplified by the juxtaposition of the violent, traumatic incest plot of Leland/BOB and Laura with a more comic, parallel *Pericles*-inspired plot involving Ben Horne and his daughter, Audrey (Sherilyn Fenn). The latter plot suggests some elements of Pericles's later encounter with his daughter Marina, whom he assumes dead, before he discovers her true identity (Act 5). In this subplot, Ben, the owner of the casino/brothel One-Eyed Jacks, almost has sex with the "new girl", who—unbeknownst to him—is his own daughter, Audrey, a virgin who has gone undercover as a prostitute to investigate clues concerning Laura's murder. When Ben approaches Audrey, who wears a mask to hide her face while avoiding her father's advances in bed, he gestures to another Shakespearean romance, featured throughout *Twin Peaks*, *The Tempest* (4:1:156-157): "Close your eyes. This is such stuff that dreams are made of" (E7). This line consciously signals the play on Shakespearean romance in this subplot, grafting together *Pericles* and *The Tempest*, both of which deeply involve father-daughter bonds.

Throughout Seasons One and Two, Ben Horne spouts out Shakespearean lines like this one, infusing the show with fragments of Shakespeare's spirit that speak to the series' themes and his relationship to them. Besides his *Tempest* reference above, he greets Blackie O'Reilly (Victoria Catlin), the madam of One-Eyed Jacks whose name resonates with the trope of blackness and beauty in Shakespeare's later sonnets, by reciting the earlier, famous Sonnet 18, "Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?" in full (E2). This recitation underscores not only Ben's role as a charming seducer, but also his role, at this point in the series, as a two-faced conniver who is plotting with Jean Renault, the criminal who double-crosses and murders Blackie. As in his dealings here, Ben early on resembles many of Shakespeare's villains in their cutthroat dealings and realpolitik. Ironically, however, he appropriates from one of these villains, Richard III, when he seems to be rejecting that life, not when he's plotting to gain power and money through intrigue and deception—uttering the first three lines of Richard's monologue from *Richard III* (1:1:1-8), "Now is the winter of our discontent....", when waxing sentimental while viewing home movies from his childhood (E18). And when suffering from a mental breakdown, he cites the St. Crispin's Day speech from *Henry V* (4:3:60), "We few. We happy few. We band of brothers" (E21), during his delusional American Civil War reenactment. Ben's appropriation of Henry V's inspirational, manipulative rhetoric at this

moment—in the context of his reenactment in which the American Confederacy wins, rather than loses the Civil War—further that irony, comically showcasing Ben’s efforts to recuperate his losses and the futility of his former dealings in business and life. In these scenes, Ben almost functions as a Shakespearean *dybbuk*, a character who hosts Shakespeare’s spirit and literalizes its spectral presence in the show.

This spectral presence haunts other scenes in Seasons One and Two, interconnecting Shakespeare with disparate characters and various themes that run throughout the series. The show’s theme of love and romance, commented on and parodied by the clips of a Shakespearean-style show-within-the-show soap opera *An Invitation to Love*, appear in Seasons One and Two. This theme is punctuated by a comic moment that features *Romeo and Juliet*. Characters watch Dick Tremayne (Ian Buchanan) spontaneously embody Romeo, bursting forth with the line “O, she doth teach the torches to burn bright!” (1:5) in praise Lana Budding Milford’s beauty, with Doc Hayward (Warren Frost), Truman, Hayward, Andy (Henry Goaz) and Hawk (Michael Horse) standing around as a tableau of smitten admirers (E19). Although this scene furthers the comedic depiction of romance in *Twin Peaks*, when juxtaposed with the series’ obsession with the union of love with death and the aestheticized depiction of death—the almost necrophilic, erotic images of Laura’s corpse—the scene resonates with the darker edge of lovesickness represented in *Romeo and Juliet*. In that same episode, Dwayne Milford makes the offhand remark at his brother’s death: “what a falling out was here” (E19), echoing the Ghost in *Hamlet* (1:5:47), a brief comment that foregrounds the rivalry between these two brothers and the extended appropriations of *Hamlet* in the series. Not only Ben, but also these characters, major and minor, seem to be possessed by Shakespeare in *Twin Peaks*. This comic play on demonic possession serves as a literary foil to the terrifying role that demonic possession, the *dybbuk*, and dark forces play in the Shakespearean posthuman worlds of *Twin Peaks*.

Consequently, Albert’s brief Shakespearean citation from *Julius Caesar*, “the evil that men do,” allows the series to engage both inward and outward, via Kabbalah, into otherworldly territory with the *dybbuk* as an embodiment of the religious posthuman. Seen within this framework, BOB and the other demons take on the cosmic dimension that is expanded even more fully in *Fire Walk with Me*, *Twin Peaks: The Missing Pieces*, *The Return*, and Frost’s two *Twin Peaks* novels. As beings that exist between two worlds and that blur the distinction between human/nonhuman, human/almost human, *dybbuks* may be seen as the quintessential embodiment of the religious posthuman as described by Graham (366). Although there is not a clear indication that BOB or Judy (see below) originated or ever emerged from a deceased person, as is typical of a *dybbuk*, they seem, nevertheless, to be variations on it, especially in light of their emergence in *The Return*, Part 8. And, like the early modern *dybbuk*,

BOB can only be extinguished through a kind of exorcism. In Part 17, that exorcism involves a young British man Freddie Sykes (Jake Wardle), who finally smashes the grey orb of BOB's spirit by wearing a magic, superhuman strengthening green gardening glove as advised by The Fireman (Carel Struycken)—the Gabriel-like, the angelic entity from Part 8 (*TPTR*). As Freedman notes, in early modern Kabbalah, the exorcism of a *dybbuk* was more than the act of freeing a human body from the demon that possessed it; the ritual became “a battle in a cosmic war” between dark and light forces—as it is in *Twin Peaks* and in a play like *Macbeth*.

Although BOB is exorcised and supposedly banished to the Black Lodge, the force of demons unleashed by the left emanation's power continues beyond the end of the series, developing its later emphasis on *Macbeth*. The Black Loge spirits uncannily appear and disappear, similar to the Weird Sisters in *Macbeth*, which Shakespeare created from the dark imagination of Cabala as refigured in the time of James I as demonology and damned witchcraft. Like Shakespeare's witches, the spirits are both otherworldly and seemingly material, haunting dreams and initiating havoc in earthly realms. The extradimensional, posthuman spirits or demons who emanate from “pure air” may travel or “have intercourse between two worlds,” as The Man from Another Place or The Arm (Michael J. Anderson) exclaims in the room above the convenience store. A posthuman entity, The Arm sprung from the left arm (the body part associated with left emanation *sefirah*, *Gevurah*) that the spirit Mike (Al Strobel), possessing the body of human Phillip Gerard, amputated in an effort to sever the demon BOB from its body after seeing the face of God. The Arm runs its hand over the Formica table, perhaps miming the practice of using a reflective surface to reveal the evil spirit inside the *dybbuk*'s host in early modern Kabbalah, and harps on *Garmonbozia*—the pain and suffering of human beings on which the entities feed (*FWWM*, *TPMP*). Later, in *The Return*, The Arm metamorphoses into The Evolution of the Arm, a nonhuman entity that resembles a bare tree topped with a fleshy mass that serves as a talking head. The Evolution of the Arm's strange appearance underscores the connection of these spirits to the Tree of Life in Kabbalah; the bare but luminescent object seems to function more as an emanation than a character, even when it appears to warn Cooper about his evil double and when it enables Cooper, though a vision, to defend himself when faced with a gunman (*TPTR* P2, P7).

Twin Peaks thus shifts from *Hamlet*, which opens up questions of posthuman mysteries; to *Julius Caesar*, which probes the sources of malevolent behavior; and then to *Macbeth*, which expounds on the despair that results from an exploration into the dark forces. After examining humankind from the extradimensional, posthuman perspective, Preston ruminates on “wonder” and what she sees as its “Flipside”—“fear”. She likens the anxieties humans experience to *Macbeth*, who sees life as “a tale of sorrow and suffering” (*TPFD*

175), as she ponders the traumatic consequences of facing the dark forces. Nevertheless, Preston acknowledges the necessity of delving into that realm, of confronting and pushing beyond one's terror. For, she asks, "What if the truth lies just beyond the limits of your fear, and the only way to reach it is to never look away?" (*TPFD* 175).

She links this question, via *Macbeth*, to the commonplace Shakespearean metaphor of theatricality, musing that humans are like players who "fret upon a stage" in life (*TPFD* 176). This theatrical metaphor morphs into the Shakespearean dream motif that runs throughout the series, with the "stage" synonymous with the "dream" in Preston's notes (*TPFD* 177). This reference to the dream motif recalls the extradimensional beings and worlds of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* that undergird the series, replete as it is with spirits who live parallel lives with mortals who experience that world though a collective "dream". It also hearkens back to Ben Horne's paraphrase from *The Tempest*, "This is such stuff that dreams are made of"; recalls Cooper's quotation of Hamlet in his tapes to Diane, "To sleep, perchance to dream" (*DTPDAC*, E17); and directly connects to Cooper's superimposed image chanting "we live inside a dream" in Part 17 of *The Return*. In *Twin Peaks*, theatrical illusion thus corresponds to created fictions, fabricated universes. In this sense, the Shakespearean theatrical/dream motif reinforces the Kabbalist notion that human beings, and all of creation, spring from ideas of God (rather than the other way around, the notion that God is a human construct or idea), thereby decentering the human in the order of things.

This posthuman religious perspective underscores the series' depiction of cosmic battles between demonic and angelic forces and the permeable boundary between two worlds. In traveling from their world to earth, these demonic forces seek to possess vulnerable living beings, who then act as their hosts—like BOB, who emerged from an even stronger, more mysterious demonic force called "Judy" or "Jouday". Judy is introduced into the series in the films *Fire Walk with Me* and *Twin Peaks: The Missing Pieces*, enigmatically mentioned by Phillip Jeffries (David Bowie) and whispered in conjunction with images of the masked Pierre (Jonathan J. Leppell) and a monkey, then fully developed in *The Return* and Frost's *Twin Peaks: The Final Dossier*.

The rebirth of Judy (perhaps also the identity of "the experiment" in *TPTR* P1)—or rather the moment when the destructive spirit, the "mother of all abominations," is unleashed in the material world (*TPTR* P8)—may be interpreted in Kabbalistic terms. In *The Return*, the atomic bomb, which epitomizes "the evil that men do", hearkening back to Albert's appropriation of *Julius Caesar* in Season One, causes an imbalance in left and right pillars of the Tree of Life and unleashes dark forces from the left emanation. The July 16, 1945 "Trinity" nuclear test in White Sands, New Mexico results in the materialization of Judy (a grey, shadowy, earth-goddess figure) who then

“births”—or, rather, regurgitates—grey, bulbous spheres, one of which contains the image of BOB. Judy’s spirit exists along with other posthuman demonic forces, such as worker-type demons called Black Lodge Woodsmen. These dark beings, like the Weird Sisters in *Macbeth* or spirits that one imagines may exist in the underbelly of the fairy kingdom in *Midsummer*, cause create deadly havoc once they are energized by the bomb. But Judy is the “mother” of them all—a kind of perverse, evil Titania from *Midsummer* or more potent, demonic version of Sycorax, whose absent presence haunts *The Tempest*.

In *Final Dossier*, Preston claims that the demon Judy, a *utukku* (a roaming demon) that is linked with her companion demon Ba’al, dates back to 3000 B.C.E. in ancient Sumerian mythology (*TPFD* 158). No Sumerian demon by the name of “Judy” exists, though, historically speaking. Nonetheless, the figure of Judy in *Twin Peaks* does align closely with the demon Lilith from the incubi and succubi trio *Lilû, Ardat Lili, Lilitu* of Mesopotamian mythology, perhaps akin to a figure like Shakespeare’s less-powerful Sycorax. Often linked to the screech owl, the mythological figure *Lilith* emerged from both ancient Sumerian and Semitic origin; and the figure of Ba’al, in the context of *Twin Peaks*, corresponds most closely to the archangel of Death, Samael (Stamhouis). In ancient mythology and, notably, in early Kabbalah, Lilith and Samael are dark entities or forces which, if or when married, can be unfathomably disastrous for all in the material world (see Dan). In *Twin Peaks*, Lilith corresponds to Judy and Samael to BOB, and these demons’ hosts—Leland and Sarah Palmer (Grace Zabriskie)—are married, thus forming a union that results in horrific deaths and chaos.¹² Seasons One and Two focus on the former, Leland; then Season Three, *The Return*, shifts its focus to the latter, Sarah, tracing her descent into a posthuman *dybbuk* back to its origin. In this sense, both Leland and Sarah Palmer become *dybbuks*, hosts to evil spirits—BOB/Samael and Judy/Lilith, respectively.

Judy/Lilith therefore emerges as the most powerful and intriguing posthuman entity in *Twin Peaks*, set up against the White Lodge and its “chosen one,” Laura, a Cordelia-like figure in a Kabbalah-like cosmic struggle between left and right emanations that remains unresolved at the end of the series. *The Return* gives the history of Judy’s materialization and existence on earth. Once Judy is unleashed by the bomb in Part 8 of *The Return*, it mutates into a strange, frog/bug creature that breaks out of its shell and crawls into the mouth

¹² Although no clear explanation for the name “Judy” rather than “Lilith” is provided, the names may refer to the hosts themselves, rather than their possessing spirits. Lilith possesses Sarah Palmer, whose middle name is “Judith”; and Mike possesses the one-armed man, Phillip Gerard, whose middle name is “Michael.” Samael as BOB is less clear, since Leland Palmer is not given a middle name, but Leland mysteriously associates BOB with “Robertson.”

of a teenage girl who has just returned from a date. This girl most likely is Sarah Novack, later Sarah Palmer, Laura's mother and Leland/BOB's wife. Consequently, Judy possesses Sarah as a girl, but the parasitic demon apparently stays in remission until later in the woman's life. In *The Return*, an older Sarah descends into a violent *dybbuk* when Judy's demonic spirit returns in full force. The *dybbuk* Sarah/Judy binges on violent television shows while drinking heavily; converses with its human host in the liquor store; and commits a brutal murder. When accosted in a bar by a rude man, the Sarah/Judy *dybbuk* removes its mask-like face to reveal a left hand with a darkened ring finger, which morphs into an eerily open mouth encircling an interior black abyss that then bites out the man's jugular, resulting in his gruesome death (P14).

In Part 18, when Cooper travels back in time to save Laura, Sarah-as-*dybbuk* flies into a rage, violently stabbing the famous photo of her daughter as homecoming queen; she smashes and shatters the glass but, importantly, cannot penetrate the photo of Laura, who is "the one" sent to contest the dark forces of both Judy and BOB. Judy's efforts to eliminate Laura continue to the series' end. The ever-powerful demon apparently fabricates another universe in which to place Laura when Cooper travels back in time to save her from being murdered at the hands of the *dybbuk* Leland/BOB. The series ends with Cooper and the alternate universe Laura, named Carrie Page, experiencing a nightmarish reality in which the Black Lodge has overtaken her family's house in Twin Peaks. Standing in front of the Palmer residence with Cooper, Carrie relives past trauma from her alternate existence as Laura when she hears the *dybbuk* Leland's ghostly voice cry out, "Laura! Laura!" (TPTR P17).

These posthuman *dybbuks* exist alongside and, in the case of Cooper's evil double, intersect with nonhuman manufactured beings, *golem*-like doubles, *doppelgängers* or *tulpas* (a being created through imaginative powers), as they are often referred to in the series. These doubles take on various guises and interface with the mythologies of other traditions that pervade *Twin Peaks*. Both *golems* and *dybbuks* in the series stem from the human in some way: the doubles are manufactured from the "seed" of a living person; the demons are released by humankind's destructive actions. But, the latter, demons, are more closely aligned with the nonhuman, a variation of the posthuman, because they do not have a human origin (on the nonhuman, see Clarke). Doubles can overlap with the *dybbuk*, as with Cooper's evil *doppelgänger*, a manufactured double possessed by BOB in the Season 2 finale and in *The Return*. Preston debates the nature of Cooper's evil double, whether or not they are *tulpas* or "Dwellers on the Threshold".¹³ She discounts both theories, though, and instead ponders

¹³ Hawk explains that the "Dweller on the Threshold," or the "Shadow Self" in Nez Perce legend, refers to the evil that resides in everyone that each person must confront at the end of life's journey (E18). Preston discusses it as well (Frost, *TPFD* 148).

whether or not evil Cooper was “similarly possessed” as was Leland with BOB, for which an “exorcism might have been more efficacious than a criminal trial” (Frost, *TPFD* 149). In light of the entire series, evil Cooper might be considered a hybrid posthuman being, a crossing of the *golem* with the *dybbuk*. Conversely, doubles in *Twin Peaks* can simply be non-malevolent manufactured, *golem*-like beings, like Cooper’s benign double, Dougie Jones, who was created to save the place for the good or real Cooper to return from the Black Lodge.

Alternately, a double may fall somewhere in-between the *dybbuk* and *golem*, and in *The Return*, Diane Evans’ (Laura Dern) double complicates this dichotomy of evil/benign *golem*-like beings in a Shakespearean-inflected subplot that furthers the series’ investment in the late romances—this time, *Cymbeline*. This subplot marks a return to Shakespearean romance to explore the bittersweet experiences and Ovidian/Shakespearean transformations of the character Diane, who only exists silently at the other end of Agent Cooper’s handheld tape recorder in Seasons One and Two. In *The Return*, Diane, who suffered trauma when Cooper’s evil double raped her, is housed in the body of Naido (*gematria*-like play on the name “Diane”), an unworldly-looking female being with patched-over eyes that makes strange, bird-like sounds instead of speech. Similar to Imogen in *Cymbeline*, who hides out in the Welsh mountains disguised as Fidele, real Diane takes refuge in the body of Naido, at first living in a limbo space between the Black Lodge and the material world, where she ushers the good Cooper to earth and then later to Twin Peaks. Like Imogen, Diane increasingly feels trapped and frustrated when she—enclosed within Naido—cannot communicate directly to warn others about Cooper’s violent double.¹⁴ Meanwhile, Diane’s double stands in for meetings with Gordon and other FBI agents. Diane’s double spies for evil Cooper, so it cannot be seen as a benign creation like Dougie Jones, but its presence may serve to protect the real Diane until she is able to emerge from Naido. Once she does, the real Diane follows good Cooper to the parallel-time world, where she is split and transformed once again into another identity. As with other appropriations of Shakespeare’s romances, this one from *Cymbeline* situates the other-worldliness of Lynch and Frost’s imaginary worlds within the story arch of loss, redemption, and forgiveness—although one with a mysterious and ambiguous ending for the real Diane/Imogen.

¹⁴ In her discussion of time and Shakespearean romance, Moore links Diane and Naido to Hermione in Shakespeare’s *The Winter’s Tale*; and Valerie M. Fazel and Louise Geddes connect the use of time in *Twin Peaks* to *The Winter’s Tale* in *The Shakespeare Multiverse: Fandom as Literary Praxis*. London: Routledge, 2021.99-108.

Posthuman Angels in *Twin Peaks*

The worlds of *Twin Peaks* are filled not only with posthuman demons, *dybbuks*, and *golem*-doubles, but also angelic entities. In response to the question whether or not he believes in angels himself, Lynch echoes Briggs and, consequently, Hamlet: “There are many things I think that are out there that we don’t know about. But you get, you know, certain feelings” (Lynch, “Scene by Scene”). Angels, of course, figure in many faith traditions, and they resonate in more than one way in *Twin Peaks* (see Hurley 20). Seen from the perspective of Kabbalah, though, the angels participate in the mythic, cosmic struggle dramatized in the series. Figuring prominently in *Twin Peaks*, angels counter the entities of the Black Lodge and work to fulfill Kabbalah’s mission—or, rather, its never-ending goal—of healing a broken world.

This goal, embedded in the creation myth of Kabbalah, underpins and drives the ethical vision of *Twin Peaks*. In the creation myth of Kabbalah, the Divine, which first covers everything, contracts or withdraws to allow for the existence of the universe, including both good and evil potentialities, in an act called *tsimtsum*, which leaves remaining traces of God in the absence created by this contraction (*reshimu*). God then fills vessels with primordial Divine light, which causes them to shatter (*shevirat ha-kelim*), resulting in sparks of light (*netzuzot*) that become encased in shells (*k’lipot*) in the physical world. The goal for humans is to repair these shattered vessels, to bring forth the sparks of light into the world. However, every time a person commits a malevolent act, the shattering repeats itself. Although this goal of *Tikkun Olam* (repairing the world) is elusive and virtually impossible to reach, the Kabbalist strives for it nevertheless, following *mitzvot* (God’s commandments) and working towards a balance in the universe’s *sefirot*. Once again, the series explores this Kabbalistic cosmic order through imaginative Shakespearean worlds.

Like the spirits that inhabit Prospero’s island in *The Tempest* or the forest outside of Athens in *Midsummer*, Angelic entities and benign spirits of various sorts appear throughout *Twin Peaks*. In Seasons One and Two, the Giant (Carel Struycken) and Old Man Waiter (Hank Worden), spirits considered to be “one and the same” (E29), appear in *Twin Peaks* locations and the Red Room (the bridge between the Black and White Lodges). Like Ariel in *The Tempest*, who shapeshifts and exists in a parallel dimension with human beings, The Giant (played by the same actor as the Fireman in *The Return*) and its double, the Old Man Waiter, may be considered spirits or angelic beings from the White Lodge. These spirits appear to engage with others less benign, like The Arm (see above), who at times seems to be a trickster, like *Midsummer*’s Robin Goodfellow—a Puck who is sometimes apparently malevolent, in league with BOB and other demons, but other times, especially later as The Evolution of The Arm, benign and helpful, in coming to good Cooper’s aid.

References to Angels in the series are inflected with Shakespeare's ghost as well, particularly through Catherine Martell (Piper Laurie), who is often referred to in Shakespearean terms. Continuing the spectral presence of *Hamlet* in the series, Catherine echoes Hamlet's rescue from pirates when she describes her miraculous escape from murder in the sawmill fire and disguised return to Twin Peaks. Retracing how she stumbled upon shelter, she explains to Sheriff Truman, "I believe an angel saved my life" by directing her to the cabin of her childhood (E17). The association of Catherine with Shakespeare extends into Frost's novels. In one of the documents collected by the archivist in *The Secret History of Twin Peaks*, a book by Robert Jacoby (Dr. Lawrence Jacoby's brother), Jacoby describes to Catherine's courtship with Pete Martell (Jack Nance in the show) as a *Romeo and Juliet* rivalry between the two houses, the Packards and Martells (Frost 233); and he refers to Catherine as "Lady Macbeth of the sawmill" (Frost 234), thus foreshadowing the series' turn to *Macbeth* and linking Catherine's memory to it, even though she does not appear as a character in *The Return*.

The role of angels in *Twin Peaks* plays on the religious posthuman even more fully in the films *Fire Walk with Me* and *Twin Peaks: The Missing Pieces*, setting the stage for their integration into the Kabbalah creation myth in *The Return*. Both Ronette Pulaski (Phoebe Augustine) and Laura are visited by angels at traumatic, critical moments. Ronette is saved by an angel in the train car where Leland/BOB hold both her and Laura captive. Angels figure in a more extended way for Laura, who becomes a Cordelia-like figure in the series. She glances often at a child's painting hung in her bedroom, in which an angel serves a meal to children. Laura is greatly saddened to see the angel disappear from the children's picture when she prepares to go out on February 23, 1989, the night of her murder. When her best friend Donna Hayward (Moira Kelly) asks Laura what it would be like to fall through space, Laura responds, with a look of despair, that you would fall "faster and faster", eventually bursting into flames, "And the angels wouldn't help you, because they've all gone away" (*FWWM*). Laura fears that the angels have deserted her, but she is given hope by Doc Hayward, who sends her a secret message that "the angels will return, and when you see the one that's meant to help you, you will weep with joy" (*TPMP*). His message proves true when an angel appears to Laura, post-death, while she sits at a table in the Red Room, Cooper standing next to her with his hand on her shoulder. The scene, shot in slow motion, figures as a tableau with no dialogue, only swelling music—Cherubini's *Requiem in C Minor* (See Diaz 143). When the angel appears, Laura's expression changes from deep sadness to profound joy. This angelic vision may at first signal forgiveness and hope, as the one does for Ronette, but it carries a more extensive meaning for Laura when interpreted in light of *The Return*.

In *The Return*, the posthuman angelic entities from the earlier seasons and films are connected to the White Lodge and participate in a cosmic battle with the Black Lodge in the series' mythology. These entities—like Shakespeare's fairies in *Midsummer*, the spirit Ariel and "witch" Sycorax, or the Weird Sisters in *Macbeth*—exist in a dimension parallel but often invisible to the human world. The major figure of the White Lodge, The Fireman, lives in a black and white room, with 1930s décor that includes a giant, metal bell-like electrical object, which is nestled inside the top of a tall fortress, or factory, built on rocks in the purple sea. The Fireman apparently stays there with Senorita Dido (Joy Nash) until summoned through electrical currents that run through a giant metal bell to appear in his theatre, a classic old-time motion picture house. The theatre provides a mirror to the world, projecting occurrences on a movie screen for The Fireman and Dido to view. The Fireman is explicitly linked with angels (and Laura), for when Andy is taken to the White Lodge, he sees a vision of angels on each side of Laura's photo in The Fireman's room (TPTR 14).

In the context of Kabbalah, The Fireman takes on the role of the angel Gabriel: the strongest angel, associated with both fire and water, who manages the Tree of Souls and shepherds souls to their material existences. Part 8, the most Kabbalah-inspired scene of the series, stages the Tree of Souls in The Fireman's theatre. The theatre itself functions as a kind of transit station between worlds and a room of transport for souls, set in a fortress that may suggest the Chamber of *Guf* (a construct that houses a "Treasury of Souls" in a birdhouse-like structure). After watching the atomic bomb test explosion and the manifestations of Judy and BOB on the movie screen in his theatre, The Fireman transforms into a Gabriel-like angel to generate *gilgul* (or the transmigration of souls), when a sparkling, golden tree, blooming with encircling golden orbs blossoming at its top, sprouts out of his head. The glistening light corresponds to sightings that appear elsewhere in the series, representing the innocent or good souls, such as the golden aura emanating from the child (Hunter Sanchez) who is killed in the hit and run by sociopath Richard Horne (Eamon Farren), son of Audrey and evil Cooper (TPTR P6). One of the golden orbs from the Fireman's tree top contains the photo of Laura, which Dido (an angelic entity similar to Layla or Lailah, a figure that is directly opposed to Lilith in the Kabbalah myth), ushers Laura's soul to its destination on the map, directing it to the Pacific Northwest for birth in Twin Peaks (P8).

Laura's golden orb, which the Fireman and Dido send to earth, also appears as the overriding central image in *The Return's* opening credits. This image signifies that Laura's soul, emanating with *ohr*, the light, sharply contrasts with BOB's spirit, encapsulated in the dark grey, clouded orb that Judy has just vomited out into the universe. This scene also hearkens back to a pivotal moment when, in the Red Room, Laura peels off her mask to reveal pure,

pulsating light (P1) —a moment that sharply contrasts with Sarah’s later demonic face reveal in Part 14. All of these scenes corroborate the statement that Margaret Lanterman (Catherine E. Coulson), often referred to as “the Log Lady”, makes to Hawk over the phone that “Laura is the one” (P10), the series’ Cordelia in Shakespearean terms, the force sent to earth to resist BOB and combat the destructive forces headed by Judy.

Conclusion: The Posthuman Ethics of *Twin Peaks*

Margaret, a shaman-like character, speaks for and emblematically represents the deep-seated ethical underpinnings of *Twin Peaks*. Played by the late, renowned Shakespearean actor Catherine E. Coulson, the part often resonates with visionary Shakespearean characters—Cassandra in *Troilus and Cressida*, the Soothsayer in *Antony and Cleopatra*, Calpurnia in *Julius Caesar*, among others. Margaret speaks for herself and her log—the seemingly oracular, magical log cut from a Douglas Fir found at the site where her late husband, a volunteer fireman, fell into a ravine, was killed in a blaze directly following their wedding, and then was whisked up in a vortex of wind and flames (Frost, *SHTP* 421-423). She and her log function as a unit, comprising an interesting variation on the series’ engagement with the posthuman.

Like other representations of the religious posthuman noted by Graham, they “serve as bearers of sacred or religious insights” (368). In the original television series, Margaret, holding her log, provides brief introductions to each episode: words of spiritual, visionary and sometimes practical wisdom that resonate with the series’ religious and spiritual perspectives. In one introduction, for instance, she speaks about “balance”, which forms the heart of Kabbalah and other spiritual practices featured in *Twin Peaks*, as well as the Renaissance ideal of “temperance”—the ideal that Hamlet preaches but fails to practice. She explains, with her log, that “balance is the key to many things”. As she also points out, “The word ‘balance’ has seven letters”, commenting on the number seven as “difficult to balance” (E15). Of course, the number seven is extremely important in Kabbalah, as is the numerical significance of words, *gematria*. Other introductory commentaries like this one (S1 and S2), her conversation on owls and other matters with twelve-year-old Laura Palmer (*SDLP*), her heartfelt warning and compassionate blessing on the head of the grown Laura (*FWWM*), her warm yet prophetic telephone conversations with Deputy Hawk in her final days (*TPTR*), and her speech composed for Hawk to read at her funeral (Frost, *TPFD* 124-126) all create a spiritual sensibility and ethical calling grounded in both Kabbalah and Hawk’s Nez Perce tradition. These moments epitomize how the series, filtered through and shaped by Shakespeare, demonstrates and reinforces the ethics of posthumanism.

In the speech that Margaret prepares for Hawk to read at her funeral service, she sums up the ethical charge of *Twin Peaks*, which corresponds to views of Kabbalah and the other spiritual traditions highlighted in the series. Focusing on the separation of day and night, light and darkness, she writes, “There are forces of darkness—and beings of darkness—and they are real and have always been around us”, so “hold on to the light inside you”, and eventually “you will learn to recognize the light, in yourself and others”. For, she continues in a statement that resonates with Kabbalah, “This truth I know as sure as the dawn: Darkness will always yield to light, when the light is strong” (Frost, *TPFD* 124-126). Although this message may seem at odds with Shakespeare’s tragic vision, especially in tragedies like *Titus Andronicus*, *Hamlet*, *Macbeth* and *King Lear*, it does point to the only way out of their dark, violent, cruel worlds. Margaret’s words thus gesture towards Shakespeare’s late romances, which are featured so prominently in *Twin Peaks*, emphasizing the need to reject the violence and cruelty inherent in the tragic imagination, to overcome difficulties, to forgive, to reconcile, to experience joy—even if it is tinged with pain. And although the last part of *The Return* ends with Cooper and Laura (as Carrie) suspended in Judy’s frightening universe inhabited by *dybbuks* and other demons, the final voice of the series—Tammy Preston’s in *Final Dossier*—falls in line with Margaret’s message. Having explored the religious posthuman through the mysteries of *Hamlet*, the questions of *Julius Caesar* and the trauma of *Macbeth*, the series’ last note ends like the Shakespearean romance, stressing resilience and urging hope. As Preston puts it in her “Final Thoughts”:

We mustn’t give up.
Ever. (Frost *TPFD* 177).

These are the last five words of *Twin Peaks* to date.

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Seth Lewis*

The Myth of Total Shakespeare: Filmic Adaptation and Posthuman Collaboration

Abstract: The convergence of textuality and multimedia in the twenty-first century signals a profound shift in early modern scholarship as Shakespeare's text is no longer separable from the diffuse presence of Shakespeare on film. Such transformative abstractions of Shakespearean linearity materialize throughout the perpetual remediations of Shakespeare on screen, and the theoretical frameworks of posthumanism, I argue, afford us the lens necessary to examine the interplay between film and text. Elaborating on André Bazin's germinal essay "The Myth of Total Cinema," which asserts that the original goal of film was to create "a total and complete representation of reality," this article substantiates the posthuman potentiality of film to affect both humanity and textuality, and the tangible effects of such an encompassing cinema evince themselves across a myriad of Shakespearean appropriations in the twenty-first century (20). I propose that the textual discourses surrounding Shakespeare's life and works are reconstructed through posthuman interventions in the cinematic representation of Shakespeare and his contemporaries. Couched in both film theory and cybernetics, the surfacing of posthuman interventions in Shakespearean appropriation urges the reconsideration of what it means to engage with Shakespeare on film and television. Challenging the notion of a static, new historicist reading of Shakespeare on screen, the introduction of posthumanist theory forces us to recognize the alternative ontologies shaping Shakespearean appropriation. Thus, the filmic representation of Shakespeare, in its mimetic and portentous embodiment, emerges as a tertiary actant alongside humanity and textuality as a form of posthuman collaboration.

Keywords: André Bazin, Posthumanism, Cinema 3.0, Shakespeare, Database Cinema, Gender, Florence Pugh, Object Oriented Ontology, Reality, Post-Cinema, Post-Shakespeare, Collaboration.

On 12 March 2021, the Royal Shakespeare Company broke new ground with the inaugural performance of *Dream*—a digitally immersive rendition of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in which the boundaries of humanity and technology

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seemingly dissipate. Directed by Robin McNicholas of the London-based art collective Marshmallow Laser Feast, *Dream* signals a profound moment in Shakespearean production as the technologies of film making and gaming coalesce with the theatre to create a new understanding of what it means to experience Shakespeare. The fifty-minute production follows a digital Puck (played by EM Williams) through a simulated Athenian forest as he engages with the virtual avatars of Peaseblossom, Cobweb, Moth, and Mustardseed, each appearing as an onscreen assemblage of various items. Audience members also take part in this virtual Athenian world. For the fee of ten pounds, viewers can appear live, on-screen alongside Puck and the other fairies as a virtual firefly. Digital clusters of fireflies interact with Puck, directing his path throughout the forest by having audience members click the trackpad on their laptop, roll their mouse, or simply touching their screen in the direction they wish to travel. *Dream* is the first production to virtually render all aspects of performance—audience, cast, and set—in a digital space of interaction, and the simulated world of Shakespeare’s play is made possible through a myriad of technological means.

The visually captivating world of *Dream* hinges upon its extensive multicamera set up and the gaming technology of the Unreal Engine developed by Epic Games. *Dream* utilizes forty-seven cameras set up on a 360-degree rig to capture every angle of movement of the actors and the audience. At the same time, the Unreal Engine is rendering these images into the digital Athenian forest almost simultaneously. Such immediacy between cast and audience illuminates the interactive possibilities between new technologies and performance. And although it is seemingly impossible to predict future iterations of Shakespeare, recent productions, specifically those on film and those which utilize film technology, indicate a trajectory best understood through a contemporary lens of film theory. *Dream*, for instance, exemplifies the diffuse presence of Shakespeare in modern media ecologies by highlighting the proclivity of filmic representations to meticulously engage with Shakespeare’s life and works without fully engaging with his text. As Alexis Soloski points out in her review of *Dream* for the *New York Times*, “Shakespeare is the pretext, not the point” (*NYT*). The conceptualization of a Shakespearean adaptation devoid of most elements of Shakespeare’s text forces us to reconsider how Shakespeare is enacted, embodied, and understood in an age of pervasive technology and digital instantaneity. The question arises, then, how can we, as scholars of early modern literature and culture, reconcile the Shakespeare of the past with the filmic Shakespeare of the digital future?

Film theory suggests that a continuity between cinema, textuality, and reality is not only possible, but actualized throughout history. André Bazin’s 1946 essay “The Myth of Total Cinema” articulates the dialectical tension between the artistic and technological histories of cinema by exploring the

human desire to replicate reality. Bazin argues that more than a technological revolution of the photographic image, cinema is “an idealistic phenomenon” which exists throughout history in the artistic pursuit of realism and predates the technology which makes possible film making (17). As such, the foundational function of cinema, according to Bazin’s theory, is one of duplication and representation. That is, the concept of the cinema emerges out of the desire for “a total and complete representation of reality” which reconstructs “a perfect illusion of the outside world in sound, color, and relief” (20). Thus, the technology of modern cinema raises ontological questions about humanity, industrialism, and agency. For if the foundational pursuit of realism is based in the desire to replicate the world through a technological lens which privileges human existence, can reality ever be truly expressed on film? And if so, what does this mean for the digital interplay between humanity, textuality, and film?

Post to Post: Shakespeare, Cinema, and Humanism

The prefix “post” in terms such as posthumanism, post-cinema, and post-Shakespeare underwrites an ontological fallacy of continuity. Of course, certain iterations of this triad do concern themselves with the inevitable thereafter, the period when existence moves beyond the need for the human, the cinema, or a Shakespeare. My argument, though, recuperates a sense of transition and extension in the age of “posts.” Rather than focusing on the cessation of humanism and its various forms, the “posts” at work in this article reveal a sustained evolution of the human ideal and the possibilities inherent in the cybernetic shifts of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Ihab Hassan is one of the first critics to engage with posthumanism in this manner. He writes:

We need first to understand that the human form—including human desire and all its external representations—may be changing radically, and thus must be re-visioned. We need to understand that five hundred years of humanism may be coming to an end, as humanism transforms itself into something that we must helplessly call posthumanism. (843)

Posthumanism, as Hassan conceives of it, is a natural relocation of the human ideal in regard to the technological world. As such, posthumanist theory continues to evolve alongside the advancements of technology, materializing through N. Katherine Hayles’ concept of technogenesis: in her words, “the idea that humans and technics have coevolved together” (10). In a similar fashion, I argue that the posthuman shifts of the twenty-first century are indicative of the imbrication between the human subject, film technology, and the digital world.

The concept of a post-cinema, for instance, is not unlike Hassan's postulations. New Media theorists Shane Denson and Julia Leyda argue that post-cinema, more than an eradication of contemporary cinema, signifies "the collection of media, and the mediation of life forms, that 'follows' the broadly cinematic regime of the twentieth century—where 'following' can mean either to succeed something as an alternative or to 'follow suit' as a development or a response in kind" (2). Post-cinema, then, can be understood as both the digitally attuned heir to the cinema of the twentieth century as well as the culmination of two centuries of technological advancement and artistic desire.

Bazin foresaw the technological transformation of the cinema as an inevitable outcome set in motion by the inception of film technology. Articulating an infinitely regressive feedback loop between film and reality, Bazin posits: "Every new development added to the cinema must, paradoxically, take it near and nearer to its origins. In short, cinema has not yet been invented!" (21). And indeed, the cinema as we know it in the twenty-first century is profoundly different from that of Bazin's age. The digitization of modern cinema, for instance, is bringing film closer and closer to the totalizing ideal Bazin describes, and productions such as the Royal Shakespeare Company's *Dream* are reconfiguring the balance between the human and the digital, reality and film. Lev Manovich argues that technology is pushing humanity towards new forms of realism, specifically through the ability to digitally render simulated three-dimensional spaces. Manovich writes:

Bazin's idea that deep focus cinematography allowed the spectator a more active position in relation to the film image, thus bringing cinematic perception closer to real life perception, also finds a recent equivalent in interactive computer graphics where the user can freely explore the virtual space of the display from different points of view. And with such extension of computer graphics technology as virtual reality, the promise of Bazin's "total realism" appears to be closer than ever, literally within arm's reach of the VR user. (172)

The realism Manovich anticipates is uniquely modern and explicitly technological. Using virtual reality technology, media in the twenty-first century is breaking away from the illusory tactics characteristic of *trompe l'oeil* art, and film making is blurring the lines between the human and non-human. To phrase it differently, the realism of twenty-first century-cinema exists in a feedback loop between humanity and technology, and the reality being displayed on screen is inseparable from the technology rendering it possible.

Kristen Daly puts forth a similar treatise in her germinal essay "Cinema 3.0: The Interactive Image." The sequential heir to Gilles Deleuze's *Cinema 1: The Movement Image* and *Cinema 2: The Time Image*, Daly's essay proposes a new understanding of cinema concurrent with modern technology and digital

cultures.¹ Daly argues that “a new way of making sense of the world is being represented in our contemporary cinema—a new form, which better represents the new economies and systems of work, play, and violence of the digital networked society” (81). Of the newly defined cinematic age, Daly proffers three aspects which redefine what it means to produce and consume cinema in the twenty-first century: first, to define modern cinema as a product of technological advancement is to acknowledge the new ontological networks between the audience, the cinema, and the digital world; second, the constructions of linearity, continuity, and narrative are increasingly giving way to fragmentary modes of reception which privilege digital technologies; and lastly, cinema is moving towards a database model which invites viewers to engage in digital and neurological forms of navigations as a means of interpreting the pluralities of modern film (90). These three postulates serve as an ideal buttress for examining the posthuman potentiality of film to replicate reality and textuality in that they represent both a succinct overture of the object oriented ontologies of the twenty-first century as well as the nascent media ecologies of the digital humanities. As Hayles points out, the digital humanities is “envisioning the future as it may take shape in a convergence culture in which TV, the web, computer games, cell phones, and other mobile devices are all interlinked and deliver cultural content across as well as within these different media” (52). Thus modern, post-cinema can be understood as an ideal conduit through which Shakespearean scholarship reaches its posthuman potential.

The conceptualization of a posthuman Shakespeare, or post-Shakespeare in this sense, is not a novel idea. As Christy Desmet brilliantly reminds us, the movement away from liberal humanist subjectivity is “first discussed in Shakespeare studies by materialist writers” such as Catherine Belsey in her 1985 publication *The Subject of Tragedy* (1). Recent publications such as Karen Raber’s monograph *Shakespeare and Posthumanist Theory* and Stefan Herbrechter & Ivan Callus’ collection *Posthumanist Shakespeares* are indicative of such materialist origins while remaining distinctly modern in their attentiveness to digital culture. And while these two publications are vital to comprehending the posthuman shift in Shakespearean studies, I situate Shakespearean appropriation as the locus of the post-Shakespeare movement. Engaging in the ongoing debate regarding Shakespearean fidelity, the convergence of post-cinema and post-Shakespeare provides a critical perspective

¹ Daly situates her intervention as the natural successor to Deleuze’s cinematic volumes and their respective conceptions of cinema. She describes *Cinema 1* as being defined by “rational and stable representations” of images; whereas *Cinema 2*, responding to World War II, presents “seemingly irrationally linked images” which coincide with the postwar world (81). *Cinema 3* is thus initiated by modern technology changing worldviews on film.

regarding the representation of Shakespeare's "authenticity" in twenty-first century-media ecologies.² The question is no longer whether film making has altered cultural and scholarly perceptions of Shakespeare; instead, we must now ask how Shakespeare is embodied and understood across a post-cinematic, digital society, and what this might mean for his text.

Critical responses to the fidelity of Shakespearean appropriation in the twenty-first century are deeply enmeshed in the tenets of posthumanism and the digital age. Douglas Lanier proposes an approach to cognizing the post-human shift in Shakespearean adaptation by reading Shakespeare through Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the rhizome. The most basic philosophy of the rhizomatic approach, according to Lanier, "is an emphasis upon differential "becoming" rather than Platonic "being"" (28). A rhizomatic approach to Shakespearean adaptation therefore warrants an ontological shift in the fidelity debate:

If we conceive of our shared object of study not as Shakespeare the text but as the vast web of adaptations, allusions and (re)productions that comprises the ever-changing cultural phenomenon we call "Shakespeare," the rhizome can offer a compelling theoretical model. A rhizomatic conception of Shakespeare situates "his" cultural authority not in the Shakespearean text at all but in the accrued power of Shakespearean adaptation, the multiple, changing lines of force we and previous cultures have labeled as "Shakespeare," lines of force that have been created by and which respond to historical contingencies. (29)

The networked approach central to a rhizomatic reading of Shakespearean adaptation is paramount in understanding how Shakespeare is remediated and reconstructed throughout history, yet, as Desmet points out in "Alien Shakespeares: 2.0," the rhizome model isolates certain elements of the non-human world by adhering to "an organic model rooted in the familiar world of human beings" (2-3). To mitigate the anthropocentric implications of a rhizomatic model, Desmet extends Ian Bogost's theory of alien phenomenology. Bogost's theory, as Desmet understands it, "reworks object oriented ontology... to emphasize ever smaller objects and specifically to incorporate the computer into its theoretical purview" (3). In summation, the theoretical framework of alien phenomenology, "which weaves a path between material objects and networks as models for posthuman relations," best represents the digital

² D.J. Hopkins et al. first discuss post-cinematic Shakespeare in their chapter "Nudge, Nudge, Wink, Wink, Know What I Mean? A Theoretical Approach to Performance for a Post-Cinema Shakespeare" (2003). Their understanding of post-cinematic Shakespeare, though, is limited to the ways in which film actors are encouraged to express agency when playing a Shakespearean role, ultimately making it their own.

Shakespearean networks of the twenty-first century by functioning “as the computational counterpart to Deleuze and Guattari’s rhizome” (3).

To dutifully represent the post-cinematic realities of Shakespeare on screen, my argument focuses on where Lanier’s and Desmet’s converge. Arguing that Shakespearean discourse in the twenty first century is infinitely bound in the digital networks of filmic representation, I illustrate how the (post)human desire to replicate reality manifests itself throughout modern Shakespearean adaptations. Bazin’s theory of totalizing cinema enframes the current shift in Shakespearean studies, and the posthumanity of twenty-first-century-film-making is creating waves in two major areas: our understanding of Shakespearean authorship and the gendered embodiment of Shakespeare’s female roles.

Post-Stratfordian? A Digital Debate

John Madden’s critically acclaimed film *Shakespeare in Love* (1998) engendered a wave of Shakespearean entertainment that would take form throughout countless remediations in the post-cinematic universe of the twenty-first century. Carving a space for future directors to have their way with Shakespeare, as it were, Madden’s imaginative and at times romanticized world of Elizabethan England refashioned the possibilities of filming Shakespeare: more than just resituating Shakespeare at the end of the twentieth century, Madden sought also to converge the allegedly oppositional spheres of Hollywood entertainment with early modern literary culture. In many ways, though, the film’s greatest influence is its engagement in the Anti-Stratfordian debate. Madden’s creative liberties immersed Christopher Marlowe (played by Rupert Everett) into the public spheres of popular culture and American filmmaking, calling into question Shakespeare’s authorship through revisioning the relationship between the two literary figures. The most notable moment of revisioning comes in the scene in which Marlowe refines Shakespeare’s ideas into the plot that would become *Romeo and Juliet*. This scene, according to Robert Sawyer, reflects the cultural milieu of the late twentieth century by transforming Shakespeare and Marlowe “into congenial, and even collaborative, rivals” (*The Critical Rivalry* 289). More importantly, however, this transformative depiction of Marlowe and Shakespeare instigates a large-scale cultural rupture in the contemporary understandings of Shakespeare’s life and works by foregrounding a sense of plurality that would become intrinsic to Shakespearean construction in the digital age. Concurrent with this shift, the post-cinematic representations of Shakespeare on screen materialize an Anti-Stratfordian reality in which Shakespeare is disembodied and reconfigured.

The new configurations of Shakespeare in the digital age are akin to the cybernetic shift in genealogical constructions, both in the humanities and in the cinema. Similar to Lanier's rhizomatic approach to Shakespearean adaptation, the digital networks of modern epistemology are forcing us to grapple with the new, multifaceted Shakespeare of post-cinema by embracing digital genealogies and moving away from ontological certainness. Stefan Herbrechter avers that a genealogical rendering of posthumanism is integral to maintaining a critical interrogation of anthropocentrism. Working through Foucault's cognizing of genealogies,³ Herbrechter emphasizes the shared focus of posthuman and genealogical critique:

Critical posthumanism understands itself as a critical denaturalization of (liberal) humanist subjectivity or as an "ongoing deconstruction of humanism". In doing so, genealogy and critical posthumanism both "explore the conditions of possibility of contemporary beliefs and practices" and "uncover the historical contingencies that made it possible for people today to think and act as they do." (*Critical Posthumanism*)

Herbrechter's connecting of posthumanist thought with genealogical construction establishes the framework for shaping Shakespeare in the post-cinematic age without centering humanity. Equally important, a posthuman genealogical rendering of Shakespeare allows us to understand how films such as *Shakespeare in Love* dictate and differentiate Shakespearean scholarship and adaptation.

Roland Emmerich's 2011 film *Anonymous* engages in the posthuman genealogical reconstruction of Shakespeare by presenting the Oxfordian Theory of authorship through a post-cinematic lens. The film broaches the Stratfordian debate by disrupting the spatial and temporal borders between modernity and the early modern age while simultaneously blurring the distinction between film and reality. For example, the film's establishing shot opens with Derek Jacobi, playing himself, stepping out of a taxi in a busy New York City street before walking into a theatre where he is set to perform a production of *Anonymous*—the purportedly true account of Shakespearean authorship. On stage, Jacobi incredulously recounts a brief history of Shakespeare's life, remarking that "Our Shakespeare is a cipher; a ghost"; and to reclaim the works of Shakespeare, he puts forth "a darker story, of quills and swords, of power and betrayal, of a stage conquered and a throne lost" (Emmerich). That is, Jacobi proffers an enterprising story aimed at restitutions for the 17th Earl of Oxford. Halfway

³ For Herbrechter, genealogies, in the Foucauldian sense, are constructed networks which focus upon the "social and historical production of systems of knowledge, power and discourse" (*Critical Posthumanism*).

through Jacobi's monologue, though, the onscreen stage divides, and shots of Ben Jonson preparing to take the early modern stage converge with the famed Shakespearean actor. In an apparent act of sharing the stage, Jacobi's and Jonson's joint presence disrupts conventions of cinematic continuity, ultimately inviting the audience to engage with the film's "meta-construction and intertextual linking," a fundamental aspect of Cinema 3.0 and the post-cinematic age (Daly 92).

For viewers, *Anonymous* engages with the posthuman constructions of Shakespearean genealogy and totalizing cinema in two ways. First, *Anonymous* explores the plurality inherent to the digital age by forcing audience members to place the film within their own respective networks of understanding. Daly identifies this trend as symptomatic of the nexus between technology and media. She reveals that many modern directors have a tendency "not only to allow but also to encourage plural and uncontrolled discourses and independent relationships between characters, situations, and audiences outside of authorial control" (92). In this sense, then, the networked approach to crafting narrative in the post-cinematic age is akin to the digitalized spheres of technology and media in terms of profuse ontological origins. Thus, the narrative focus of *Anonymous* operates through the audience's ostensible willingness to accept plurality within their networked understanding of Shakespeare. This is, of course, not a new concept for viewers of *Shakespeare in Love*. Just as Madden's film before it, Emmerich's largely inventive interpretation of early modern literature, history, and culture encourages a post-Shakespearean future hinged upon pluralities.⁴ Second, Emmerich's film engages with its viewers by acting upon the affective powers of Jacobi's celebrity status. In playing himself in *Anonymous*, Jacobi engenders an ontological tension between his filmic embodiment and that of the physical world. In this regard, Jacobi's ethos as one of the most decorated Shakespearean actors is, at times, oppositional to his Anti-Stratfordian stance in the film. Yet, as Daly explains, "Interactions with digital media have made [viewers] familiar with a disordered, hybrid, and unhierarchical navigation of information" which makes possible the reconciliation of the Jacobi of the real world with the Jacobi of *Anonymous* (92). Jacobi's celebrity status therefore extends the diegetic layers of interpretation in *Anonymous* by forcing audience members to reckon with Shakespearean constructions across reality and film.

In a similar fashion, Jim Jarmusch's 2013 film *Only Lovers Left Alive* conflates the spheres of reality and inhumanity to reconfigure Shakespeare. Starring Tom Hiddleston and Tilda Swinton as vampiric versions of Adam and Eve, *Only Lovers Left Alive* portrays the intricacies of non-human romance in

⁴ Concurrent with its Oxfordian theory, *Anonymous* alleges that Marlowe is murdered because of his knowledge of the business dealings between Shakespeare and Edward de Vere.

the twenty-first century. Hiddleston's and Swinton's characters, being vampires, require human blood as sustenance, and Jarmusch reimagines Christopher Marlowe (played by John Hurt) as their supernatural drug dealer. Marlowe's characterization in the film as a 500-year-old vampire who fakes his own death and now sells drugs to other vampires is one of the more creative reconfigurations of the early modern playwright; yet the Shakespearean implications of this film supersede Marlowe's reinvention. In several moments throughout the film, Marlowe casts aspersions on the idea that Shakespeare penned the works attributed to him, insisting that he is the sole author of the entirety of Shakespeare's texts. For example, Marlowe expresses that he wishes he had met Adam before writing *Hamlet* as Hiddleston's character would have provided him an excellent "role model" for the prince of Denmark (Jarmusch). And after drinking tainted blood by mistake, Marlowe makes a dying declaration of resentment for having never received his accolades for writing Shakespeare's oeuvre.

The Anti-Stratfordian stance encoded in *Only Lovers Left Alive*, albeit grounded in the supernatural belief in vampires, is but another variation of the Marlovian theory of authorship. Jarmusch, however, complicates theorizations of authorship by proffering the notion that such questioning is irrelevant to the twenty-first century-viewer. Embracing the cultural uncertainty and the inherent multiplicities of the digital age, Jarmusch assumes what I define as a post-Stratfordian demeanor towards Shakespeare's life and works. For instance, when asked if he believes in the Anti-Stratfordian theory, Jarmusch answers "Yeah, I'm a definite total Anti-Stratfordian completely. And yet, in the end, it doesn't really matter at all who wrote it ... I think it's fascinating, fun and interesting," he continues, "But in the end, like I said, it doesn't matter. Whoever wrote those sonnets and those tragedies, specifically—wow, I don't care who it was" (*Vulture*). Jarmusch, rather than placing a critical focus on the fidelity of Shakespeare's oeuvre, understands that Shakespeare in the twenty-first century is not limited by humanist borders. He makes certain to note that the idea of Shakespearean authorship is "one of the greatest conspiracies ever perpetrated on humans" (*Vulture*). That this theory, according to Jarmusch, is happening "on humans" raises the ontological question of how Shakespeare is understood across the mediated spheres of humanity, reality, textuality, and digital screens. Such convergent ideals, in this sense, invite posthuman interventions, and film making is bringing about new ruptures in Shakespearean discourse.

Textual criticism is also moving towards a posthuman understanding of authorship which privileges multiplicity and technology. The 2016 publication of the *New Oxford Shakespeare*, for instance, exemplifies a post-Shakespearean shift in early modern studies. Moving beyond previous understandings of authorship, Taylor et al. credit Marlowe with co-authorship of the three parts of *Henry VI*. The establishment of authorship in this edited collection, Sawyer

avers, can be seen as analogous to the digital identifiers inherent to the technologies of bitcoin and blockchain technology. Sawyer grounds his comparison in the five criteria outlined in Steve Pannifer's understanding of digital identity⁵ ledgers: "1. many writers; 2. immutable history; 3. degree of transparency; 4. limited trust; 5. transactional nature" ("Bitcoin, Blockchains and the Bard" 66). Elsewhere, Petr Plecháč utilizes artificial intelligence programs to analyze the text of *Henry VIII* to reveal potential collaborators, namely John Fletcher. Analyzing specific scenes through the "combined analysis of vocabulary and versification and modern machine learning techniques," Plecháč concludes that "We can thus state with high reliability that *H8* is a result of collaboration between William Shakespeare and John Fletcher" (1, 9). Both the efforts of the *New Oxford Shakespeare* and Plecháč's computer analysis are indicative of the direction in which the digitally mediated Shakespeare of the twenty-first century is headed. Foregrounding the posthuman efforts of the films and publications listed in this section, we can begin to understand how non-human actants are moving scholarship towards a post-Stratfordian age in which technology, fidelity, and reality seemingly converge. As such, the state of the Stratfordian debate in the twenty-first century is inseparable from the filmic realities which reflect Shakespeare's diffuse, digital embodiment.

Shakespearean Databases and Gendered Realities

When discussing the nuances of embodiment and the critical differentiation between the terms non-human and inhuman, Rosi Braidotti and Maria Hlavajova raise the salient point that "Gender and sexual difference, race and ethnicity, class and education, health and able-bodiedness are crucial markers and gate keepers of acceptable 'humanity'" (2). In early modern studies, too, these same terms are used to demarcate accessibility, propagate whiteness, and promote the unfettered afterlife of "The Bard."⁶ The recent shift towards a post-cinematic Shakespeare, though, has engendered a new reality in which the digital networks of mediation and indexicality are pushing against Shakespearean historiographies to recuperate a sense of awareness regarding the treatment of gender, sexuality, and race, both in his text and in the appropriations which extend his canon.

⁵ Steve Pannifer specializes in the fields of cryptocurrency and the identification of digital currency users.

⁶ See, for example, the introduction to Harold Bloom's *The Western Canon*. Titled "Preface and Prelude," Bloom signals that his authority on culture, theory, and literature are above reproach. Bloom's positionality and his aesthetic assertions exemplify the tenets of Charles Mills' publication "White Ignorance." The reading of these two texts in tandem stems from Reginald A. Wilburn's pedagogical approach to navigating whiteness in the reading of early modern texts.

Daly's theorizing of a database model of cinema brilliantly captures this moment by explicating how collations of information are subtly overtaking narrative functions while simultaneously forcing viewers to undertake an agential approach to watching films. According to Daly, "the database," which she understands as a product of digital technologies, "implies a form of cinema less concerned with storytelling and visuality and more interested in cognitive and navigational processes" (90). In this sense, the digital restructuring of cinematic forms instigates a paradigm shift in which audience members gain a greater role in determining how a film is experienced and mediated by revealing the intersections of gender, embodiment, and databases. Simply put, the database model of cinema generates posthuman interventions which are mapping new realities onto Shakespeare's characters.

The highly mediated and globalized medium of database cinema conflates the realities of the internet and the screen, inviting audience members to extend and complicate the diegetic layers of films they watch. Much like the discussion in the previous section which examined the implications of Derek Jacobi playing himself on screen, the digital processes of database cinema are enacting a posthuman shift in the depiction of women in Shakespearean films by creating semiotic networks mediated and enfolded into one another. Actor Florence Pugh, for instance, is blurring the boundaries between Shakespearean embodiment and folk-horror feminism due in part to her burgeoning celebrity as well as the mediated networks of database cinema. Her roles in William Oldroyd's *Lady Macbeth* (2016), Richard Eyre's *King Lear* (2018), and Ari Aster's *Midsommar* (2019) are not simply in conversation with one another; rather, the discursive networks of the internet, the cinema, and reality are constantly remediating the respective narratives of each film in which she appears. Daly understands this newfound trend in narrative revisioning as indicative of the technological world and the pervasive mediation between the digital and the human. She posits that the construction of narrative on film is more complex and intertextually linked than ever before largely because of online communal spaces and digital immediacy (85). To understand the posthuman impact of Pugh's roles, then, requires a cognizance of the ways in which the technology of the twenty-first century is altering film, and subsequently, Shakespearean appropriation.

The genealogical construction of Oldroyd's *Lady Macbeth* situates the film as an exemplary starting point for this case study regarding Shakespearean embodiment and remediation across multiple databases. The film's remediated history is as follows: Oldroyd's 2016 film is adapted from soviet director Roman Balayan's film *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District* (1989); Balayan's adaptation builds upon Andrzej Wajda's film *Sibirskia Ledi Magbet* (*Siberian Lady Macbeth*) (1962); both Balayan's and Wajda's films remediate Nikolai Leskov's 1865 novella *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk Distric*; and finally,

Leskov's novella is a derivative of the character Lady Macbeth in Shakespeare's play *Macbeth*. Such heightened levels of remediation and revisioning at work across history prefigure the digital interplay between modern cinema and internet databases, and we gain a greater sense of how female embodiment is constructed across various mediums, digitally and (inter)textually. Pugh's role as the film's protagonist Katherine Lester, then, can be understood as both the culmination of the character's evolution throughout various mediations as well as a new entry into the digital database of Shakespeare on screen. For example, Lester's development throughout the film conjures the archetypal characterization of Lady Macbeth by undertaking an agential position which threatens the male dominated spheres of the film. The differentiation, however, occurs when Lester materializes her agency into subversive actions against the limiting strictures of the patriarchy by poisoning her father-in-law, murdering her controlling husband, and smothering her adulterous lover's alleged child. The murderous and vindictive depiction of Lester germinates new digital actants across the databases of modern cinema and Shakespearean studies by exacerbating the characterization of Lady Macbeth. As a result, both Pugh and Lady Macbeth assume a transformative disposition which opposes patriarchal dominance with the same violence historically associated with the restriction of womanhood.

Pugh further ruptures notions of female embodiment in Shakespearean films with her role as Cordelia in Eyre's *King Lear*. Set in a militarized version of London in the not-so-distant future, the realistic tendencies of *King Lear* invite audience members to locate the film within their own temporal place, emphasizing the reality of a digitally modern Shakespeare. Accordingly, Pugh, whose character has been described as the "millennial Cordelia," embeds the uncertainty and angst of the twenty-first century into Shakespeare's text with brilliant indifference and meticulous subversion (*The Hollywood Reporter*). In this sense, Eyre's decision to adapt the movie into a military state further politicizes Cordelia's resistance to adhere to King Lear's demands of flattery by calling into question her status as an ostensibly unmarried and apolitical figure. On screen, this translates to Cordelia literally standing up for herself as her sisters remain seated, reifying Kent's questioning of Lear: "Think'st thou that duty shall have dread to speak / When power to flattery bows?" (1: 1: 144-145).⁷ The resulting rupture of Cordelia's onscreen refashioning in this scene is one of political and gendered agency akin to that of Lady Macbeth. Manifesting across cinematic and internet databases, Pugh's new take on Cordelia grounds itself in the affective powers she garnered in her role as Katherine Lester, and when viewed in conjunction, Pugh's fusing of Cordelia and Lady Macbeth highlights the posthuman capability to reclassify female embodiment in Shakespearean

⁷ These lines are cited from a combined text in *The Norton Shakespeare*.

films by filtering Shakespeare's characters through new algorithms of inter-textuality.

Presenting an aggregate reality of technology, genre, and posthumanity, Shakespeare on screen is no longer confined to the dichotomy of fidelity versus infidelity; instead, Shakespeare is now encoded through and reconstructed by the linking mechanisms which constitute the digital interplay between humans and databases. In this regard, Aster's film *Midsommar* — which follows a group of friends as they attend a Swedish festival that devolves into a violent ceremony hosted by a pagan cult—further accentuates the reconfiguration of Shakespearean embodiment through Pugh's role as the film's protagonist, Dani.⁸ Throughout the film, Dani suffers a series of traumatic losses, and these events culminate with her being crowned May Queen, the matriarch of the movie's titular festival. In this role, Dani must choose the ninth person to be sacrificed as part of a ceremony, and she chooses her ex-boyfriend Christian, who is sedated, disemboweled, and stuffed into a bear carcass. In a series of cross shots between Dani and Christian, we see the protagonist's disposition alter from tears to a faint smile as she watches him burn alive.

The film's conclusion and Dani's subsequent portrayal as a murderous heroine of the folk-horror genre engages with the databases of modern cinema to reconfigure Pugh's on-screen embodiment across previous and future films. More specifically, Pugh's roles as Katherine Lester in Oldroyd's *Lady Macbeth* and Cordelia in Eyre's *King Lear*, when mediated through the contextual database of *Midsommar*, undergo a genealogical transformation which further rejects the dominance of patriarchal suppression and governance. That is, in the viewer's perception, the database model of cinema obfuscates the differentiation between Pugh's role in *Midsommar* from those in *Lady Macbeth* and *King Lear* by working through a form of posthuman collaboration across film and reality, intimating a new sense of filmic identity and embodiment for female roles in Shakespearean texts and films.

Conclusion: Total Shakespeare

In Act 3 Scene 2 of *Hamlet*, the Danish prince instructs the visiting players on how to accurately portray the play he commissions by intoning, "For anything so o'erdone is from / the purpose of playing, whose end both at the first and now / was and is to hold as 'twere the mirror up to nature, to / show virtue her feature, scorn her own image, and the very / age and body of the time his form and

⁸ The title *Midsommar* also playfully gestures to Shakespeare's comedy *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

pressure” (3.2:18:21).⁹ Encoded in these instructions is Hamlet’s belief that a totalizing representation of reality would conjure feelings of guilt in Claudius by laying bare the nature of his humanity. Such realistic acting, Hamlet believed, had the potential to cross the boundaries of the stage and affect reality. Two centuries later, this same desire to render an authentic realism becomes the basis for the development of the cinema. As André Bazin reminds us, the notion of representing reality has a sustained presence throughout history, and its emergence at the end of the 19th century is one of mere coincidence.¹⁰ In this sense, then, we can view *Hamlet*’s play-within-a-play as a precursory effort pushing towards the idea of a total cinema — that is, the convergence of film and reality.

In terms of Shakespearean cinema, the idea of a Total Shakespeare, one which tethers the realities of the early modern age and our own through film, is evolving and reconfiguring alongside the realignment of the liberal humanist subject. In the twentieth century, films such as Laurence Olivier’s *Hamlet* (1948) and Renato Castellani’s *Romeo and Juliet* (1954) attempted to occupy a liminal space between reality and screen through fusing elements of the two. *Hamlet*, for instance, features shots of the real ocean transposed alongside a fabricated Elsinore, and *Romeo and Juliet* was shot on location in Verona, Italy and advertised as being “Superbly filmed in its actual setting” (Castellani). The efforts of these films, however, failed to render Shakespearean reality in the eyes of realist critic Siegfried Kracauer. In his monograph *Theory of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality* Kracauer conceives of these films as more aesthetic than realistic; in doing so, he argues that these films represent “an unnatural alliance between conflicting forces” of filmic and Shakespearean reality (37). It makes sense, given the nature of cinema in the twentieth century, that Kracauer could not locate reality in the filmic dissonance between Shakespeare’s age and his own. The evolving nature of epistemology and cinema in the twenty-first century, though, affords new frameworks which allow for the comprehension of the coalescence of Shakespeare, film, and reality.

Looking at the post-cinematic age of the twenty-first century, which is defined by multiplicities and ontological uncertainty, the emergence of a Total Shakespeare is no longer escapable. As Shakespeare’s text is no longer separable from the diffuse presence of Shakespeare on film, we are bearing witness to the convergence of textuality, reality, and film. Pervasive technology and posthuman interventions across film databases and genealogical constructions are altering the way Shakespeare is understood both inside and outside of the academy by engaging in new forms of collaboration with his life and texts.

⁹ These lines are cited from a combined text in *The Norton Shakespeare*.

¹⁰ Bazin argues that “The photographic cinema could just as well have grafted itself onto a phenakistoscope foreseen as long ago as the sixteenth century” (19).

The transformation of the cinema, too, plays into the creation of a Total Shakespeare. Bazin explains, “Today the making of images no longer shares an anthropocentric, utilitarian purpose. It is no longer a question of survival after death, but of a larger concept, the creation of an ideal world in the likeness of the real with its own temporal destiny” (“Ontology of the Photographic Image” 10). Accordingly, understanding the posthumanity of modern Shakespearean appropriation proffers the chance of creating an equitable future for Shakespearean discourse couched in the synthesis of the human and non-human world.

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James Tink*

Horrible Imaginings: Jan Kott, the Grotesque, and *Macbeth, Macbeth*

Abstract: Throughout Jan Kott's *Shakespeare Our Contemporary*, a keyword for the combination of philosophical, aesthetic and modern qualities in Shakespearean drama is "grotesque." This term is also relevant to other influential studies of early-modern drama, notably Mikhail Bakhtin's idea of the carnivalesque, as well as Wolfgang Kayser's psychoanalytic criticism. Yet if this tradition of the Shakespearean grotesque has problematized an idea of the human and of humanist values in literature, can this also be understood in posthuman terms? This paper proposes a reading of Kott's criticism of the grotesque to suggest where it indicates a potential interrogation of the human and posthuman in Shakespeare, especially at points where the ideas of the grotesque or absurdity indicate other ideas of causation, agency or affect, such as the "grand mechanism" It will then argue for the continuing relevance of Kott's work by examining a recent work of Shakespearean adaptation as appropriation, the 2016 novel *Macbeth, Macbeth* by Ewan Fernie and Simon Palfrey which attempts a provocative and transgressive retelling of *Macbeth* that imagines a 'sequel' to the play that emphasises ideas of violence and ethics. The paper argues that this creative intervention should be best understood as a continuation of Kott's idea of the grotesque in Shakespeare, but from the vantage point of the twenty-first century in which the grotesque can be understood as the modification or even disappearance of the human. Overall, it is intended to show how the reconsideration of the grotesque may elaborate questions of being and subjectivity in our contemporary moment just as Kott's study reflected his position in the Cold War.

Keywords: Jan Kott; grotesque; absurd; *Macbeth*; adaptation and appropriation; *Macbeth, Macbeth*; Ewan Fernie; the posthuman.

Jan Kott is one of the great modern instigators of the Shakespearean grotesque. If this fact is not always readily acknowledged, it is because of the impact of other memorable concepts in *Shakespeare Our Contemporary* (1964): the

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“Grand mechanism” of history with which the tragedies and history plays were said to explore royal politics as secular violence, the existentialist reading of *Hamlet* as Cold War dissident intellectual, and the comparison of *King Lear* to the work of Samuel Beckett. These provocative interpretations served to refashion Shakespeare from early-modern England to post-war Poland. Nevertheless, one of the recurrent critical terms of that book (in the influential English translation) is the idea that Shakespeare is our contemporary because of an aesthetics of the grotesque and the uncomfortable, rather than an ethos of decorum or the classical: “The downfall of the tragic hero is a confirmation and recognition of the absolute; whereas the downfall of the grotesque actor means mockery of the absolute and its desecration” (132). The “grotesque quality” that was said to be a “striking feature” (131) of contemporary theatre such as *Endgame* was held to be the revisioning of a Shakespearean version of the grotesque.

The impact of Kott’s work on theatrical productions in the UK and English-language productions in the second half of the twentieth century was indisputably immense (Taylor 181). This originally stemmed from the Royal Shakespeare Company’s celebrated 1963 production of the history plays by John Barton and Peter Hall, *The Wars of the Roses*, which incorporated ideas and even stage designs inspired by Kott (Jowett 101). More generally, Sukanta Chaudhuri asserts that Kott influenced global Shakespeare studies by encouraging an “inversion politics” that challenged hierarchies of gender, class and identity in the canon (105). This essay will consider a contemporary example of such inverted and experimental Shakespearean criticism: the novel *Macbeth, Macbeth* (2016) by Ewan Fernie and Simon Palfrey.¹ I will argue that this work, an erudite adaptation of *Macbeth* that provides a thoughtful reflection on the play by way of a fictional sequel, explores ideas of the posthuman in Shakespeare through a mode of the grotesque that is in fact indebted to the example of Kott. Therefore, this essay will first consider the posthuman implications of Kott’s criticism, then the idea of the Shakespearean grotesque, before a consideration of the novel in these contexts.

Kott and the Posthuman

In the twenty-first century, how might Kott help us to better think about nature/culture and human/non-human in Shakespeare? The “Grand Mechanism” itself, for example, implies a destructive and uncaring machine of History that may resemble not so much a cosmic hierarchy as an idea of an impersonal

¹ Ewan Fernie and Simon Palfrey, *Macbeth, Macbeth*, Bloomsbury Academic, an imprint of Bloomsbury Publishing Plc. All rights reserved.

network: “But what is this Grand Mechanism which starts operating at the foot of the throne and to which the whole kingdom is subjected?”, Kott asks, “A mechanism whose cogs are both great lords and hired assassins; a mechanism which forces people to violence, cruelty and treason; which constantly claims new victims?” (38). As with Actor Network Theory (ANT), it imagines totality as series of connections between agents, with the implication that subjects are best understood within this circuit: “The earth moves round the sun, and the history of the Renaissance is just a grand staircase, from the top of which ever new kings fall into the abyss” (40).

This also serves a dehumanising and unheroic approach to politics in Shakespeare as “tragic farce” (40) or the idea of the grotesque: “The notion of the absurd mechanism is probably the last metaphysical concept remaining in modern grotesque” (133). The grotesque in Kott can certainly have idealist connotations of the anti-tragic or what was popularised by Martin Esslin in the 1960s as the Absurd: “The grotesque is a criticism of the absolute in the name of frail human experience, That is why tragedy brings catharsis, while grotesque offers no consolation whatsoever,” Kott suggests in his essay on *King Lear* (132). Yet this grotesque also invites less humanistic possibilities, as in a later comment on the play: “There are no longer kings and subjects, fathers and children, husbands and wives. There are only huge Renaissance monsters, devouring one another like beasts of prey” (153). According to Alan Sinfield, this idea of the bestial was *the* popular reception of Kott’s work at the RSC, as in Peter Hall’s comment, ““Shakespeare always knew that man in action is basically an animal”” (162). Yet there are other forms of the non-human at play, as in this rumination on reading tragedy from the inhuman vantage of the mole (inspired by Hamlet’s “Well said, old mole” (*Ham.* 1:5:161):

A mole digs in the earth but will never come to its surface. New generations of moles are being born all the time, scatter the earth in all directions, but are themselves constantly buried by the earth. A mole has its dreams. For a long time it fancied itself the lord of creation, thinking the earth, sky and stars had been created for moles and promised them a mole-like immortality. But suddenly the mole has realized that it is just a mole, that the earth, sky and stars had not been created for it. A mole suffers, feels, and thinks, but its sufferings, feelings, and thoughts cannot alter its mole’s fate. (37)

This target here is Hegelian tragedy via Marx (Kott 36). The mole is the protagonist who discovers she or he is in fact neither the subject of history nor the inheritor of the earth. Thus, we infer, Shakespeare resisted the allure of politics of grand narratives and “great men”. And yet this may also have environmental implications: the earth and the elements are not in fact a domain under the sovereignty of the mole, who undergoes a displacement from heaven

to a more modest status as dethroned ontological subject. We might, albeit with some licence, even wonder if the mole suggests an idea of the Anthropocene, whereby the thinking subject does not in fact ultimately correlate with the outside world, as in Timothy Morton's idea of the environment as a super-massive "hyperobject" (164), or Quentin Meillassoux's "great outdoors" of the non-human universe (7). The Otherness, or indifference, of the non-human world is evoked through Kott's playful literary figure.

Kott even has something to say about the human relationship to AI and the algorithm. This is where he imagines the difference between the tragic and the grotesque in terms of free will and playing chess against a computer. If classical tragedy, he argues, idealises fate and choice as an opportunity for grandeur, then modern grotesque drama exposes the futility of individual choice against the system. "A man must play chess with an electronic computer, cannot leave or break the game, and has to lose the game" (136). This is a fable of the absurd "tragi-grotesque" (137), which is said to differ from tragedy as well as provide a debased idea of the end of history: "The Christian view of the end of the world, with the Last Judgement and its segregation of the just and unjust, is pathetic. The end of the world caused by the big bomb is spectacular but grotesque just the same"(137).

Kott writes from an earlier era of cybernetics and Mutually Assured Destruction, of the terrible, preposterous bomb at the climax of *Dr Strangelove*, in which Shakespeare was held to be both prophet and critic through his drama of a desacralized world. What was ultimately at stake in Kott's Shakespeare was the question of the future: what sort of subjectivity did Shakespeare suggest as an enduring form of human life for those living in the grotesque time of the twentieth century? This is the question that must be asked again in our century: Clare Colebrook suggests that posthuman thinking considers what sort of collective future is possible in which "the question of just 'who' we are remains open" (206). To investigate Kott, Shakespeare and the posthuman, we should look further at the meaning of the grotesque.

The Grotesque

Bruce Clarke claims that the "posthuman per se is a mythopoetic production" (141) that begins whenever the presentation of the human is disrupted; as he states, "the posthuman event does not issue directly in a discourse but in an aesthetic production, an image or narrative that may then become the theme of a discourse that can start to make that call" (142). This notion of an aesthetic refiguration of the human resembles an aesthetic of the grotesque. Among the many definitions of the term, Phillip Thomson's remains apposite: the grotesque is "*the unresolved clash of incompatibles in work and response*" (37; italics in

original), That is to say the grotesque is the undoing or suspension of an assumed idea of the proper in representation and that this irresolution is itself productive; as Justin Edwards and Rune Graulund suggest, “a grotesque body that is incomplete or deformed forces us to question what it means to be human” and that this experience of dislocation “acknowledges the possibilities of an open structure in which there can be no certainty, no exclusive or permanent state of something which does not already contain within it something else”(3). Indeed, the origin of the term “grotesque” in renaissance Italian criticism of *la grottesca* was a description of the non-human figures and obscurely decorative ornamentation found on newly excavated Roman paintings (Thomson 13). From the sixteenth century onwards, the grotesque was a recognition of whenever the representation of the human or animal form was assumed to have somehow broken down, with discombobulating effects. Montaigne, for one, reflected on the grotesque in the opening to his essay “De l’amitié”, referring to the “crotresques et corps monstreux” (qtd. in Clayborough 3) of ornamental painting as a metaphor for his own writing: what John Florio translated as the “antique works and monstrous bodies, patched and muddled up together of diverse members without any certain or well-ordered form” (Greenblatt and Platt 40). The word’s English usage postdates Shakespeare, emerging in the 1640s (Clayborough 2); Ben Jonson, for example, comments in *Discoveries* of artists “painting chimeras, by the vulgar unaptly called grotesque,” (552), which reiterates how discussion of the grotesque effect involves an idea of the chimerical or monstrous as imaginative activity.

In the renaissance literature, therefore, the term generally refers to the representation of the body (Rhodes 68). A history of the grotesque is a way of imagining alternatives to the human, either as disagreeably monstrous, or revealing greater creativity and difference. Infamously, Hegel in his 1820s lectures on aesthetics denounced as grotesque the failure of the earliest era of symbolic art in world history to adequately picture the idea of intellectual freedom as an image (83). The figurative art of Asia was therefore dismissed as inferior to European classicism (Harpham 183). In contrast, in his preface to the play *Cromwell* (1827), Victor Hugo described the grotesque as a positive form of realism and variety in modern literature (Fuller 128-29). Yet arguably the most influential modern discourse of the grotesque in renaissance literary studies is that of Mikhail Bakhtin. In *Rabelais and His World* (first English translation 1968), the representation of the scatological body was held to be evidence of an entire pre-modern culture of “grotesque realism” (25-26). The medieval human body was imagined as the contest of a dignified upper stratum versus a common lower stratum, and from this dichotomy the human form at its neediest and leakiest was in fact said to symbolically partake in an entire cosmic scheme of life and renewal (21-25). The grotesque was thus associated with rituals of carnival –feasting, excess, laughter, purging –as a social phenomenon of the

body, whereby pre-modern, agrarian society was said to imagine its own cycle of life, death and renewal. (324). Shakespeare was a bystander in this study, but it became influential in author studies in the same period as the reception of Kott's grotesque, as Kott later acknowledged (*The Bottom Translation* 132-33). The reception of Bakhtin's model of the carnivalesque complemented existing studies of festivity and ritual in Shakespeare by C.L. Barber, Northrop Frye, and Francis Cornford (Stott 25-32), but also inspired more socio-economic and materialist accounts of early-modern theatre than the broader life-principle in Bakhtin's own work (Bristol 6-7): it remains an influential notion of the grotesque as a form that is part of the folkloric.

However, Bakhtin's was not the only poetics of the grotesque; other critics developed formalist approaches that complicated the idea of the human. In the work of Wolfgang Kayser, drawing on the artistic legacy of German Romanticism, the grotesque reflects both a structural principle in works and a response by a viewer (180). The irresolution of the grotesque is an experience of estrangement from the familiar, which is said to provoke feelings of "suddenness and surprise" (184) that "is primarily the expression of our failure to orient ourselves in the physical universe" (185). This is said to be symptomatic of the irruption of the unconscious *Es* into the security of the familiar, a psychological effect that Kayser provocatively calls the "demonic." Thus, the grotesque is ultimately defined as the attempt to invoke and subdue the demonic aspects of the world (188). This is a negative definition of the grotesque as something momentarily uncomfortable and uncomic and was thus criticized by Bakhtin as a modern misreading of the medieval, affirmative grotesque (Bakhtin 48). Yet it also reinforces the idea of the grotesque as a process, event or affect that disrupts existing categories of the human world. This is developed in the work of Geoffrey Harpham who defines the grotesque as the "paralysis of language" (6) which confounds the reader. The grotesque is a "non-thing" (4) that is never fixed but "always a process or progression" (14) and so occurs as the interruption of the same: "Grotesque figures seem to be singular events, appearing in the world by virtue of an illegitimate act of creation" (5). Without fully endorsing the demonic mode of Kayser, Harpham explores the consequences of the grotesque as a process of world-making that creates the uncanny impression of "a remote sense that in some other system than the one in which we normally operate some system that is primal, prior, or "lower", the incongruous elements may be normative, meaningful, even sacred" (69). Harpham's idea of representation contiguous to a larger, stranger system may even anticipate ideas of the "weird" in literature (Fisher 10).

Kott's criticism therefore contributed to this longer legacy of the grotesque. In modern Shakespeare criticism, an antecedent was G. Wilson Knight's influential essay "Lear and the Comedy of the Grotesque" (1930), which claimed that the combination of royal tragedy with scenes of desperate

comedy in *King Lear* produced a grotesque quality of leading “the tightrope of our pity over the depths of bathos and absurdity” (184-58). Other critical approaches to a Shakespearean grotesque have studied the representation of physical bodies, with Sir John Falstaff as arguably the most famous grotesque body of appetite, as well as an implied presence in Bakhtin’s study of festive excess (Farnham 50; Bakhtin 275). More problematically, Richard III has also been traditionally interpreted as a markedly grotesque figure of inward villainy and deformed outward show (Edwards and Grauland 52), although this representation of disability as a synecdoche for political corruption surely requires a more sensitive critique (Houston Wood 135). The grotesque has also provided a means to question the distinction of human and non-human: Caliban, for example, has been frequently presented in theatre and criticism as a grotesque hybrid (Edwards and Grauland 49-50; Farnham 154), which, according to Marjorie Garber, also sustains *The Tempest’s* inquiry into what a “man” is (7). Moreover, one of the provocations of Kott was to suggest that the romance and intimacy of Titania and Bottom in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (4:1) was not so much a charming fantasy as a monstrous nightmare, “closer to the fearful visions of Bosch and to the grotesque of the surrealists” (*Shakespeare Our Contemporary* 229). In this instance, the grotesque provides something like a taboo image of physical life, and thus another suggestion of the posthuman.

One further development in Shakespeare and the posthuman has been the study of ideas of presence and event around the themes of ghosts and spectrality, especially following Jacques Derrida’s commentary on *Hamlet* in *Spectres of Marx*. In this work, Shakespeare was read by Derrida (via Marx) to explore a notion of the spectre or ghost as provisional and multiple alternative to the absolute Hegelian world spirit. The future and past are apprehended in the present in the form of the ghost as *l’arrivant* (Derrida 122). Could not Hamlet’s complaint, “The time is out of joint; O cursed spite /That ever I was born to set it right!” (1:5:186-7) also be another idea of the grotesque? It is an unresolved clash of incompatibles twisted “out of joint”, a paradox and paralysis of thought, a breach of the comfortable by the unknowable, and an event that requires a response. That the grotesque might involve an apprehension of the future as difference or alteration of the human returns us again to themes of temporality and the sense of the contemporary that concerned Kott. This will now be explored through the example of the novel *Macbeth, Macbeth*.

Macbeth and Macbeth, Macbeth

Macbeth is a play of the grotesque and the posthuman in which the protagonist steps outside the bonds of loyal kinship and encounters an increasingly frightening, uncertain and deadly state of existence. Although the drama’s most

visible grotesques are arguably the androgynous weird sisters who “should be women, / And yet your beards forbid me to interpret / That you are so” (*Mac.* 1:3:45-47) (and perhaps the Hecate scenes in 4.1 tend to a more comic grotesque), the sense of alarm is conveyed largely through suggestions of sight and sound, of Macbeth’s “horrible imaginings” whereby “nothing is, but what is not” (1:3:40; 43) until the entire country “cannot/ Be called our mother but our grave,” and “where violent sorrow/ Seems a modern ecstasy” (4:3:165-66; 169-70). According to Kott, these were signs of the Grand Mechanism understood as nightmare: “There is only one theme in *Macbeth*: murder. History has been reduced to its simplest form, to one image and one division: those who kill and are killed” (87). Intriguingly, he also identifies a non-human presence: “In this tragedy there are only two great parts, but the third *dramatis persona* is the world...Macbeth’s world is tight, and there is no escape. Even nature in it is nightmarishly impenetrable and close, consisting of mud and phantoms” (89). The tragedy of *Macbeth* is said to be a manifest image of an entire world.

In this world, humans are in contact with the nonhuman supernatural. Protagonists are captivated by fantastic suggestions from elsewhere: Macbeth “seems rapt withal” (1:3:57) at the first summons of the witches, while Lady Macbeth also claims that dark thoughts “have transported me beyond / This ignorant present, and I feel now / The future in an instant” (1:5:56-57). Kiernan Ryan argues that in their rush to realize the future in the present, the Macbeths are condemned to a fatal fantasy of proleptic thinking, in which they believe the future can be forced to come true (53). Whereas Hamlet feels compelled to wait and repair a broken present, Macbeth decides to take a leap “upon the bank and shoal of time” and “jump the life to come” (1:7:6-7). Ewan Fernie has explored the non-human potential of this leap of faith as the sign of the “Demonic” in literature. In *Macbeth*, regicide is “at once a killing and thrilling thing” (*The Demonic* 64) that draws Macbeth from conformist subjectivity to a more intense sense of existence whereby he is “so very much in love with life as to refuse its equation with mere being” (68) which is why he chooses destruction. The demonic seems to stand here for both intensity as a form of affect as well as a radical evil that is labour of the negative. The posthuman ramifications of this have been identified elsewhere by Bruce Clark as the historical deconstruction of the human image into inhuman parts of the “bestial, the daemonic, or the divine” (141). This trinity is also the borderland region of *Macbeth*.

Fernie has developed this demonic reading of the play in the experimental novel, co-written with Simon Palfrey, *Macbeth, Macbeth*. This work is notable as an example of what Julie Sanders calls an appropriation rather than an adaptation (37), in that the fiction is both a critical reflection on and an imaginative sequel to Shakespeare’s drama. Whereas other novelizations of Shakespeare have modernized the plays into modes of realism, this is outlandish

and fantastic: “Visceral, florid, grotesque,” according to the back-cover blurb. Although the authors nowhere acknowledge him, the novel is arguably a test case of how Kott’s grotesque is an influence on contemporary Shakespeare studies, and testament to its posthuman implications. Edwards and Graulund claim that “grotesque forms complicate, but also complement, theories of the ‘non-human’ and the ‘post-human’” (87) and so the novel explores ideas of life from *Macbeth*. In so doing, it is also evidence of Bruce Clark’s suggestion, mentioned above, that the posthuman emerges in an aesthetic production that challenges received ideas (142).

Kott claimed that “the grotesque is a criticism of the absolute in the name of frail human experience” (132). *Macbeth, Macbeth* imagines a sequel to the play that explores the endurance of experience in the face of power after victory. Macduff had declared “the time is free” (*Mac.* 5:8:55) and let Malcolm take the throne: in the novel, Malcolm proves infantile and useless, and Macduff is the embittered, sanctimonious and increasingly despotic new face of authority in Scotland. Ross abandons hope in the new order, traumatised by the fate of Macbeth (in this case, his father) and has become a wretched vagrant among the poor named Sod. The Porter lives in Dunsinane castle with his three sons, Fyn, Grim and Lu, which in the novel’s main innovation becomes a reimagining of Dostoevsky’s *The Karamazov Brothers* when they conspire to murder their father out of competition for the attentions of a young woman, Grunoch or Gru (allegedly the name of the historical Macbeth’s mother (Ferne & Palfrey viii) but also an echo of Grushenka, the equivalent female character in the scenario of Dostoevsky’s novel). Over the course of the novel, the memory of Macbeth’s first murder of Duncan is the nightmare from which characters cannot awaken, as “the dead haunt the living... Nothing and no one is safely dead” (281), which is repeated in the eventual parricide of the Porter. Eventually, the memory of Macbeth becomes the rallying point for an uprising against Macduff by the youngest brother, Lu. The early-modern regicide plot is thus conflated with nineteenth-century bourgeois tragedy to explore a common fascination with murder as a violation of ethics and an act of terrifying, morally grotesque self-assertion. If this combination of texts seems unlikely, a precedent can actually be found in Wilson Knight’s offhand comment that “Lear is analogous to Tchekov [*sic*] where Macbeth is analogous to Dostoevsky [*sic*]” (175).

The narrative technique of the novel is to intersperse modern-idiom, third person narration with citations from Shakespeare, mostly in the form of subtitles for chapters (e.g. “Told by an Idiot”, “Light Thickens” etc.). This intertextuality can seem the “clash of incompatibles” in a work of the grotesque, particularly so in the scenes that are anachronistic. In the chapter “The Sticking Place”, the son Fyn is indeed screwing his courage as he plans his father’s murder:

Fyn started towards the stairs but was arrested by a book lying open on the table, one of Grim's he could tell by the furious underlining. He flicked a page or two and found a passage boxed avidly in ink:

The being of Spirit is a bone.

Fyn laughed out loud. The being of spirit is a what? His brother really was a sad maniac. He laughed again mirthlessly and flicked another page

The true being of a man is his deed; in this the individual is actual. (160)

The book is presumably Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Macbeth's "deed without a name" is associated with Hegel's process of negation and self-actualization, closer to the mindset of Dostoevsky's agonized protagonists, and an exercise in ethics. That "[t]he individual is what the deed is" (160) is realised by Grim's eventual murder of their father: "He had leapt beyond the ethical. He had done it not for marriage, but for the absolute" (220). This is in keeping with Fernie's comments in *The Demonic* that *Macbeth* should be read as a study of allure of radical negativity in literature: "Duncan's murder acts as a ritualistic induction into a new existential or spiritual state, which is at one a state of death but equally and more troublingly a more vivid life. To that extent, Macbeth's original act does have the quality of the absolute he wishes for it" (61).

Like Kott, the novel explores the Hegelian notion of history, the future and the absolute, in which ideas of progress or reason have devastating effects. Indeed, it could be understood as the conflict between Macduff and Sod / Ross. Macduff personifies History as progress, being a modernizing dictator who forces Scotland to mass-produce white bread (recalling Dostoevsky's story of the Grand Inquisitor and the despot who gave the people their daily bread so as to enforce human happiness (Dostoevsky 309-31): "Don't you see?", Macduff boasts, "This is the promised end, the end of struggle, the end of history, my chronicle the very last. Everyone is happy!" (102). Like the Grand Mechanism, it promises an automated or even post-historical existence. Sod, however, personifies the ongoing labour of the negative as he abjures his previous identity: "Ross was a death dealer... he could live better as Sod. Sod at least knew he was lost, and broken, and begging for unlikely repair" (68). His new name is also a suggestion of him burrowing underground like Hamlet's mole: "He looked at a mole hole and pretended a great surge of wistfulness at the blind misanthropic buried in the soil [...] Time to burrow" (49-50). To this extent, the novel rehearses a dialectic between the Enlightened state of Macduff and the wretched of the earth by Sod, Gru, and the brothers, which is also a dispute about the dialectic of the spirit: is it understood as the triumph of the state or in the power of transgressive revolt?

Furthermore, the novel is also a study of the spectral and ghostly haunting of human identity. At one level, this is a matter of narrative style: the text's citation of Shakespeare's words suggests a sense of what Julian Wolfreys

calls the haunting of literature by the *revenance* of other texts as a trace of writing (163). One example is the chapter “Secret man of blood” where Fyn asks Lulach about the memory of Macbeth: “Do you know the secret’st man of blood?”

‘Blood?’

“He treads in our blood, he wades in it, Lu. Have you not felt him?”

Fyn was leaning forward, hugging himself.

“Have you not felt the pull upon the heart, as the secret man, very secret, wades in the corridors of your veins? It is a heavy thing, Lulach?” (150)

This is a re-citation both of Macbeth’s claim that “Augures and understood relations / Have by maggot pies and choughs and rooks brought forth / The secret’st man of blood (3.4.122-24) and “I am in blood / Stepped so far, that, I should wade no more” (3.4.136-7). The novel thus creates the experience of being haunted by Macbeth. For Fyn, this captivation also challenged his sense of being human, as he tells his brother:

“But of course, Lu-boo! Who else? I tell you, once your insides are scorched away, and you realize you really are just a vessel, a nothing, a vehicle—it is a wonderful thing, quite wonderful. The world is like a –like a mime—a mime, without feeling, almost disembodied—it is beautiful. No angelic, the word is angelic.” (151)

Presumably, this also alludes to the disembodied “walking shadow” and “poor player” of Macbeth’s late speech (5:5:24); here it suggests a state of intensity and feeling posthuman. In fact, throughout the novel the physical presence and identity of people and animals is confused in the narrative or misrecognized by characters: Macduff appears to see a woman’s gaze in the eyes of a dog; Grim sees a three headed ghost and cries “Never shake thy gory locks at me!” (218), yet it turns out to be his brother carrying two babies. In these incidents, the grotesque image is a momentary failure to establish boundaries between the human and non-human, such that the encounter becomes a moment of decision about the Other, the sense of Derrida’s encounter with the spectre as *l’arrivant*. If this reworks the epistemological uncertainty of the play, the novel also extends agency to animals: a crow has a choric function in the novel, flying over Scotland (3-4): the subtitles identify this as Macbeth’s sentence “Light Thickens / And the crow makes wing to the rooky wood” (*Mac.* 3:2:50-51). All of these suggest an idea of the posthuman as such a state of “otherness” that is in proximity to the human. The strange imaginings of the play have inspired the novel to create its own image of a world on the threshold of strangeness. It could even be understood as grotesque in Kayser’s sense of the momentary invocation of the repressed (or “demonic”) trace of *Es* or “it” within the text (185): Macbeth

is the experience of the uncanny that the text evokes. The very title *Macbeth*, *Macbeth* can imply a repetition of *Macbeth* (as in the sequel) and an address to Macbeth that is like a conjuration of his ghost, just as the characters undertake.

By the end of the novel, uncertainty about the grotesque body and the spectral provides a reflection on the future and the posthuman. At one point, a decidedly Bakhtinian form of carnivalesque grotesque is suggested whereby the Scottish peasants follow Lulach to form a “kitchen army” (236): “‘For you are Lordlings, not beasts for grazing on bread! Exceed yourselves!’ ‘Hurrah!’ cried the mob as one” (240). Sod participates as a comic grotesque, “like a cockerel, his head jerking one way and the next, his upraised arms saluting the rebel army” (238). This moment of a festivity, however, is truncated when they are annihilated by Macduff. The carnivalesque, it seems, is not a sufficient life principle and no match for violence. Sod kills the King and is killed by Macduff, thereby repeating Macbeth’s fate. The landscape becomes “another Golgotha” (*Mac.* 1:2:40) of grotesque devastation: “As far as the eye could see were bodies, half-covered by the snow. The nearest was twenty feet way, a woman with an arrow in her back, and a posy in her hair. Next to her was a dog, its head severed, and next to its child that seemed entire but dead” (262).

An even more terrible grotesque is represented by Lulach’s eventual death, which is a parody of the Crucifixion. He first subsumes himself into Macbeth by wearing the dead man’s skull as a grisly helmet, “his burning eyes encased in the brainpan of Macbeth” (258). Lulach’s loss of a human shape symbolizes his becoming something aberrant, hybrid, and post-human so that when Macduff meets him, he does not see a human: “Macduff touched the monster and was horrified by the soft clammy tissue of its shoulder. Its breasts were white and round, with barely the memory of a nipple, and its breath was wheezing” (259). Macduff wins again and leaves Lulach crucified, but his eventual death is ridiculous: he is killed when a stray crow flies into his eye socket: “Two black feathers were flapping across Macbeth’s skull. A very black bird had its beak stuck in its eyehole. Its wings were flapping to escape and its talons were scratching Lulach’s throat” (274). This is absurd, and a grotesque human/animal chimera, but also in keeping with Kott’s idea of the grotesque as clownish. The entire novel, in fact, has an affinity with Kott’s Shakespeare, but in which the absurdity of characters goes beyond the human.

Conclusion

Macbeth, *Macbeth* is a provocation and challenge to good taste: it is also evidence of how Kott’s form of a Shakespearean grotesque continues to be seen in creative practice of disturbing audience expectations. This informs the posthuman implications of the novel: if *Macbeth* dramatizes an intensity that

goes to the limits of what is safely human, then this fictional sequel imagines a sort of Macbeth-effect that transforms characters through abject and transformed states of being. At the close of the novel, it is suggested that Lulach represents a commitment to intense life: "He had lived! It was far more than nothing!" (278). This affirmation of some form of life against the triumph Grand Mechanism in the world (personified in the victorious but unhappy Macduff) complements Kott's Shakespeare both at the level of affect (it is just as discomforting) and content by imagining existence as a form of the grotesque. Perhaps it also implies some Nietzschean idea of eternal recurrence whereby the tragedy of Macbeth is perpetually repeated as a form of intense experience. If so, this might also suggest, whatever the Hegelian tone of the novel, a notion of the future that surpasses any dialectical goal or completion but is instead an affirmation of repetition: Clare Colebrook has proposed this idea of recurrence as the properly posthuman thought of the future as open and beyond human calculation. (206). The overall significance of this is that both Kott, writing during the Cold War, and this novel of our century are using Shakespeare to imagine the potential forms of life and states of being that may survive the anxious sense of the present: what comes after the grotesque?


This sense of uncertainty in the novel is decidedly grotesque in a more formal sense, it being the clash of apparent incompatibles of sources and references to make a new work; we might call this a type of *catechesis*, or words put into the incorrect combinations for effect. This figure also illustrates the anachronism whereby medieval Scotland, Tsarist Russia and the contemporary combine in the narrative. Dipesh Chakrabarty has argued that anachronism is the method by which grand narratives of History (such as Hegel's) are exposed to the Other and especially the alternate temporalities and futures that are subsumed within the global order, so we see "a plurality of times existing together, a disjuncture of the present with itself" (109): as Macbeth says, "nothing is but what is not" (1:3:44). The grotesque is the mode with which Shakespeare is imaginatively reassembled to complicate any historical context, to become "Our Contemporary" when contemporaneity is itself understood as a plural and open condition that is at odds with itself. To imagine Shakespeare as "Our Posthuman" is to think of the body out of shape and the time out of joint.

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An Unexpected Journey “from the naves to the chops”: *Macbeth*, Animal Trade, and Theatrical Experience

Abstract: The paper proposes to appreciate the play’s butchereries as an incision into the unstable character of the category of the human. The vividness of the “strange images of death” is thus analysed with reference to the cultural poetics of Elizabethan theatre including its multifarious proximity to the bear-baiting arenas and execution scaffolds. The cluster of period’s cross-currents is subsequently expanded to incorporate the London shambles and its presumed resonance for the reception of *Macbeth*. Themes explored in the article magnify the relatedness between human and animals, underscore the porosity of the soon to turn modern paradigms and reflect upon the way Shakespeare might have played on their malleability in order to enhance the theatrical experience of the early 17th century. Finally, the questionable authority of Galenic anatomy in the pre-Cartesian era serves as a supplementary and highly speculative thread meant to suggest further research venues.

Keywords: *Macbeth*, posthumanism, early modern animal trade, historical phenomenology.

Introduction

Time and time again Shakespeare comes across as our notorious presentist. We bring him to life in a deadlift-like manner snatching his works from the pre-arranged stillness, then for a moment we hold the burden of his plays close to ourselves only to put the weight of the Bard down again, somewhat abruptly, perhaps hoping the floor will shake a little. Striving at the greatest results possible we are ready to dare even the greatest tendon-ripping leaps.

If Jan Kott was correct in his assertion that *Hamlet* absorbed any contemporariness like a sponge, then in the time of well-deserved agency of the microbes the absorption should not remain a metaphorical one. Instead, we ought to appreciate the intricate processes behind bacterial composition. But the

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attempt to reconcile some hundred years old Shakespeare with the struggle to force-feed ourselves the humble pie of flat ontologies and other-than-human ethics does not bode well for the future of time-travelling and its anti-anachronistic terms and conditions of use. Perhaps not at first glance. As many early modern scholars remind us, the questions are in plenty—from a gentle breaking wheel interrogation of the straw Vitruvian Man (Raber X)¹ through fostering awareness of the “numerous lateral nonhuman actants that underpinned, informed, and sustained models of ‘the human’ in this period” (Ferrick, Nardizzi 4). And, as Campana and Maisano (8) remind us, these

gestures, neither erroneous nor outmoded, might be just the beginning of a conversation that leads, at least to our minds, to a larger conversation about what Renaissance humanism is, was, and could be in the future.

Additionally, much of what Campana and Maisano stand for in the discussion on Renaissance posthumanism—most importantly, perhaps, the urge to instigate a close reading of humanism removed from sweeping gestures of contemporary (also posthumanist) scholars—is also advocated by Margreta de Grazia in her *Hamlet without Hamlet* (2007). If there ever was a Shakespeare-made sponge affected by wet rot (to invoke Kott once again), causing the structure of the work to deteriorate (a promise of healthy and ecological transformation in itself), it has been probed by de Grazia whose seminal work delves into the well-nigh impervious critical coating applied to *Hamlet* over the centuries. Hamlet the proto-humanist, the Hamlet-in-all-of-us, Hamlet the romantic, or the prince and his opulent inwardness—all produce the repository of themes that envelop and determine our understanding to the point we deem it intrinsic to the play. While not denying the legacy of the play’s modern refractions de Grazia attempts at reconciling Shakespeare’s play with its initial reception and underscores the “importance of the realm to Hamlet [which] knits him into the fabric of the play” (2). Focusing then on the dispossession of the prince and the context of its sociohistorical discontents as well as Hamlet’s forced detachment from the land he was to inherit, de Grazia unsettles the iconolatry conferred on the play’s eponymous hero. Perhaps the scholar would oppose being included to the category of posthumanist thinkers, but I think there are at least two crucial aspects of her work that would warrant a warm invitation to the club: an unorthodox reading against the grain of critical monoliths and careful attention given to the material intersections between human and their land.

¹ Rosi Braidotti (*The Posthuman*) has been accused of falling victim to such an oversimplification of the Renaissance period (Campana and Maisano). Although the scholar rightly advocates the need for subversive thinking, she does not see that subversive potential within the period she portrays as irrevocably humanist.

Certainly, Shakespearean criticism did not take an equally burdensome toll on *Macbeth*, but this essay attempts to reproduce that same “un-modernising” investigative mode de Grazia applies to the early modern stage when she denies Hamlet’s “free-standing autonomy” from *Hamlet* and thinks on those themes immediately recognisable to the Elizabethan audiences.²

Of course, the ambitions of posthumanism do not end with unorthodox attitudes to the solidified identities of different plays. There is an anti-telos to it all, a wish to produce an alternative foundation for the precepts and concepts of our reasoning. As Raber (3) puts it

[p]osthumanism instead requires a sea-change, a radical revision of the nature and purpose of the category of the human and of the discourses that constitute it.

The advocated theory does not, however, do away with the repository of tools forged by the anti-humanist theories³ but it employs these tools to different ends. Although the older approaches—e.g. Marxism or feminism—had already set out to achieve more inclusive discourses, they rarely questioned the central position and the ways of producing the category of the human itself. Through posthumanist lenses Shakespeare’s plays present themselves as a vast rhizome of resonances which seems to award the Elizabethan playwright a different status all together. Together with his oeuvre, Shakespeare becomes this perfect storm for humanist surefootedness. Conflating various arguments for the Renaissance relevance to posthumanism Raber insists that

[p]rior to the disciplinary separation of science, political theory, religion and other ways of interpreting the world—before, that is Boyle and Hobbes, the figures Latour focuses on—the connections among human and non-human things could be a source of marvel at the rich interdependencies of life, or wonder at God’s great pattern for cosmos. Renaissance humanism did not (always) seek to extract humanity from the mesh beings in the world. (21)

Posthumanist readings of Shakespeare are not only a casefile of creative and ethically engaged interventionist analyses. More often than not the union of early modern studies and posthumanism requires the scholars to adhere to the

² Andreas Höfele would add that: “Habitually entrapped by [the Cartesian dualism], in looking at Shakespearean animals we must take a step back, seeking to attune ourselves to a mode of thought prior to the rigid Cartesian segregation of man and beast, resisting the temptation to recognise falsely what we see in terms of our own preconceptions” (25).

³ Raber invokes here the genealogy proposed by Rosi Braidotti: “Posthumanism, in Rosi Braidotti’s account, inherited the deconstruction of Man from the anti-humanist theories of the 1960s and 1970s” (3).

tenets of the archival and materialistic turns simultaneously allowing them to include objects or other-than-human animals to be actively engaged in the process of making history. In many cases posthumanist interpretations dislodge our presumptions and make us suffer this productive discomfort we are so quick to disregard for its ephemer(e)ality.

What Is at Stake—and What at the Scaffold

Macbeth's famous butcheries of the opening of the play draw the blood-stained path for this paper. As I would like to argue both the historical phenomenology of the play's language and the stage props used in the production connect the audiences and facilitate their response not only to the scene, but also to the streets of London. The focus will be put on the meat shops spread across London and, more importantly, on their animal constituents. Macbeth's sword then sinks deep into the flesh(es) of early modern England's capital.

To help us orientate in this journey, the analysis will go through three interrelated stages. Stages one and two provide a topography for various material points of convergence between human and animal in order to facilitate the argument that the analysed occurrences reverberate back onto the stage when Macbeth plunges through the body of his victims.

The discussion is to a large extent inspired by the work of two early modern scholars. Andreas Höfele's *Stage, Stake and Scaffold* (2012) adapts a new historicist approach and analyses the materiality of the Elizabethan theatre venues, but with an animal twist. Considering the scope of malleabilities between various forms of stage entertainment (be it plays, bear-baiting or public executions), Höfele argues for the inevitable role-reversal between the anthropomorphised animal and bestialised human (12).

The second scholarly guide for this paper is Erica Fudge who supplies us with detailed knowledge about animals in the early modern period.⁴ Presenting a great fluency of the archives and literary artefacts Fudge's research can be seen as the case in favour of the congruence between the posthumanist bend and the examining of the old documents and records. Adopting such a standpoint incentivises those handling the historical data to arrange the constellations of the archives in correspondence with the postanthropocentric ethics and vouch for a methodological turn-within-a-turn. Supplied by other essays on these topics, my hope will be to link Höfele's arguments with Fudge's

⁴ The vast corpus of Fudge's research on early modern animals fuels the assumptions of this paper from the very get-go. The limited scope of the article, however, did not allow me to delve further into the issues discussed by scholar, but I am greatly indebted to her work.

research in order to extend the human-animal reciprocity to the outside of the stage(s).

The third section will aim at transitioning the discussion towards far less tangible arguments. It might have caused some confusion to the people of 16th and 17th centuries to discover that the anatomical knowledge they derived from the medical books of Galen was based on animal viscera. The porosity of the bodily categories in the pre-Cartesian era was perhaps unjustly simplified and dominated by the discourse of the descendent epoch of Enlightenment. In a recuperative act, I suggest that the variety of incisions (cutting the flesh of animal or human) in *Macbeth* not only points to the Renaissance conceptualisations of acquiring scientific knowledge, but also reveal a subversive absorbency of Shakespeare’s plays.

Many posthumanist thinkers urge us to invent new terms⁵ to be able to grasp at these intricate issues more accurately while simultaneously reflecting upon their equivocality. Abiding by this incentive, I would like to reformulate the stakes of this paper by introducing a framework-term for the further discussion. *The grand mechanism of animal misery* is a rectification of the famous formula proposed by Jan Kott. Contrary to the argument of the Polish critic, this mechanism describes not the kings and tyrants, but the relentless slaughter of animals (mostly cattle) fuelling the pre-Capitalist economy of early modern London. Their silent misery shifts the focus of Kott’s nightmarish machine to the tragedies always already there to be followed and constituting the undercurrent of human brutality. The horror-like dream is also the very reality of the citizens tired of seeing the kine slaughtered, sick of the reek of the carcasses, encumbered by the preponderant animal physicality. Bloody flesh wounds, images of open bodies, cauldron full of human and animal limbs and skulls, wildlife feeding on wildlife and even the living dead body of Banquo adorning the table set with carnivore delicacies—all these elements of *Macbeth* may be seen to have been organised around this repulsive potential.

Anticipating some critical remarks, it has to be stated that the article offers first and foremost a mere run-up to proper and original research. As far as *Macbeth* is here concerned, my main argument for focusing almost solely on this play is the idea that the lines initiating the play perhaps resonate with the hurly-

⁵ As Rosi Braidotti (104) claims: “This posthuman and post-anthropocentric sensibility, which draws on deep affective as well as intellectual resources, also expresses my rejection of the principle of adequation to the *doxa*, or commonly received normative image of thought. The posthuman predicament, in both the post-humanist and the post-anthropocentric sense of the term, drives home the idea that the activity of thinking needs to be experimental and even transgressive in combining critique with creativity.” A great example of fulfilling that posthumanist tenet is Andrzej Marzec’s *Antropocien* [Anthroposhade], Warszawa: PWN 2019. See also Patryk Szaj’s review: <https://czaskultura.pl/artykul/myslenie-rzeczy/> [Accessed 22 June 2021].

burly of the street life the audience had experienced prior to arriving at the theatre. All the offshoots of early modern thought and cultural materialisms presented *via* the works of other scholars serve to facilitate the methodological eclecticism—itself a reflection of the tenets of posthumanist analysis.

Porousness and Proximity of the Elizabethan Stage

Macbeth humiliates his victims, there is no knight-like humbleness to his executions, only gore and blood. The future Thane of Cawdor tramples on the lifeless trunks and carves his way through the tendinous fabric of human flesh. These murders are pure kill and we observe them through the messenger who retells the story—the story that quite ironically never takes place on stage. But the blood welters through the scene. Reminding of the talking wounds of Shakespeare's Roman plays, the maimed Captain becomes a semiotic vessel for the victim and the sole survivor of the grim tale of Macbeth's deeds, its hero and the disdained.

Let us begin with the theatre facilities. As evidenced by Höfele (1-12), the 16th century theatres along with bear-baiting arenas, brothels and places of public execution were venues that organised the city's underbelly.⁶ The German Shakespearean shows that the same stages that hosted Richard Burbage's roles had also given room to bears, mastiffs and bulls thanks to its malleable construction (7). Within such a cauldron of different forms of entertainment there brewed

the vital spillover (semantic, but also performative, emotive, visceral) from the bear-garden and the scaffolds of execution [which] substantially affects the way Shakespeare models his human characters and his conception of 'human character.' (3)

Höfele's intuition led him to claim that this unique proximity between the stages provokes an interconnectedness of affects. The scholar explicates this argument further by invoking Yuri Lotman's "semiosphere" within which there occurs a porous mutuality among the three forms of entertainment.⁷ The porosity of that sphere allows, as I would like to argue, for other affects to enter the stage, too. It is the glut of animals in the streets of London which will be put in focus here. Of course, the early modern meat trade cannot be straightforwardly added as

⁶ Höfele draws here of course on the Foucault's study in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1975).

⁷ As Höfele later points out, the lessons from Foucault's *The Order of Things* (1970) should also be acknowledged here: "[...] as a habit of thinking, the forming of analogies remained ubiquitous in all areas of early modern culture" (Höfele 14).

a fourth compartment to Höfele’s equation. But I would like to propose that the animals and the different ways people interacted with them provide the undeniable reservoir of everyday experiences that might have enhanced the semiotic colloquy Höfele argues for. I believe that the proximity of the semiosphere to the biosphere offers here a proximity too compelling to just leave it be.

Bleeding from the guts, perhaps the messenger himself only narrowly escaped the faith of that Scottish traitor cut open by the tyrant *in spe*. The cover of Jonathan Sawday’s *The Body Emblazoned* (1996) presents a trunk of a cow carved and tied to a wooden pole. With its belly gaping and the front legs spread horizontally, the heifer in the image seethes with arrested violence, but its open wide carcass also tempts us to peer inside, seize the opportunity we are denied when staring into the mirror.

Could a picture similar to that of a dead cow accompany the Elizabethan playgoers when they heard of the valiant cousin’s deeds? Could it be associated with the objectifying, bestialising power of gore? Did the bodies of slaughtered cattle allow the early modern audiences to view *Macbeth* (and perhaps other plays, too) differently? Can we reach outside the stage and into the streets of the capital and witness there not baiting and mangling, but butchering and decay? Anticipating Höfele’s brilliant observations, I would like to add another source of the semiotic interrelatedness, namely the butchered carcasses of dead cattle to be found in London marketplaces and abattoirs.

Höfele argues that the conceptualisation of the theatre by the Elizabethan playgoer was altered by the interrelatedness (intermediality)⁸ of the stage, stake and scaffold. But the thought process he presents his readers to support the argument is itself porous, inviting other “physical and cultural environments” to the sphere of reciprocal influences:

The blood rituals of baiting and criminal justice would inevitably be part of [the playwrights’] physical and cultural environment and thus be incorporated in the store of every day experiences that their imagination drew on. (14)

In that case, the perception of the audience could be seen as ever moulding and attuned to the variable amalgams of “endlessly fungible signifiers” (Höfele 46). Ian F. MacInnes puts forward a similar observation and suggests that the animal network of early modern England

⁸ “With the print revolution making an ever larger impact and the Theatre being reinvented as professional entertainment and pervasive cultural model there was a proportionate increase in the possible cross-currents between various components of this early modern media landscape” (Höfele 14).

came to shape the country and particularly its capital city, not only economically and materially but imaginatively as well. (77)

MacInnes who traced the routes of cattle trains by i.a. scrutinizing the Map of Early Modern London (MoEML)⁹ makes a great case for the capital as the nucleus of the agricultural system of England where the large consummation of animal-derived goods governed the ever-changing attitudes towards non-human sentient beings. The scholar discerns four economy-related modes of correlation between humans and animals, starting with “generation, through transportation, processing, and consumption” (77). Similarly to the purpose of this paper, MacInnes also argues that this kind of cross-examination

allows us to see how its logic both underlies and causes the kind of persistently animal-centered textual discourse that has become so familiar to us in Shakespeare and others. (78)

In the next section I want to explore further the relevant processes of animal appropriation discerned by MacInnes and also bring the discussion closer to the archival research on animals as well as to some thought-provoking suggestions on Shakespeare’s embeddedness in the early modern animal trade proposed by Katherine Duncan-Jones.

The Images of Death We Live (Near)By

This “fruitful cross-pollination” (Ferrick & Nardizzi 5) between the domains of early modern animal trade and various forms of entertainment was also noticed by Katherine Duncan-Jones, though perhaps in a more speculative manner. Following John Aubrey’s moderately plausible reminiscence about John Shakespeare the butcher and his son exercising the father’s trade—“[who] when he kill’d a Calfe, he would do it in a *high style*, & make a Speech” (qtd. in Duncan-Jones 183, italicised in the original)—the British Shakespearean discerns a potential connection between Berger’s anecdote and what Samuel Schoenbaum later called

an obscurely disguised recollection of the boy Shakespeare taking part—with basin, carpet, horns and butcher’s knife and apron—in the Christmas mumming play of the killing of the calf. (qtd. in Duncan-Jones 183)

⁹ <https://mapoflondon.uvic.ca> [Accessed 21 June 2021].

The props were there to create an illusion, perhaps symbolically invoking the return of the Prodigal Son, a theme eagerly elaborated by artists (playwrights and painters) in the Tudor era and alluded to in several Shakespeare’s plays (Duncan-Jones 184). Importantly for us, however, Duncan-Jones extracts from Schoenbaum’s claim several threads that pertain to the matter at hand: the material relationship of whittawers and butchers to the early modern theatre, the distinctions between the two trades as well as the “images of butchery and calf-killing in Shakespeare’s plays” (184).

Pointing to the healthy relationship between whittawers and butchers, Duncan-Jones (185) proposes that the Shakespeare kids were accustomed to the sight of slaughterhouses, but the acquaintance with animal slaughter and the processing of their bodies would also be promoted by folklore romances and other forms of local drama Shakespeare himself might have taken part in (188). Setting aside the theory behind young Will’s career path,¹⁰ Duncan-Jones contemplates further the extent to which Shakespeare’s know-how of the leather trade might have influenced the content of his plays.¹¹ It is when the scholar considers a passage from 3:1 of *2 Henry VI*¹² that she comes to a riveting conclusion:

The simile [between the old Gloucester and a calf] is clearly calculated to tug at the heart strings of audiences who, whether they lived in town or country, were

¹⁰ It seems only natural for Duncan-Jones to further hypothesise that young William was drawn to the procedures of treating animal skins and perhaps also helped produce props for the different pageants. Moreover, accustomed to Warwickshire folklore, he would, according to Duncan-Jones’ hunch, acquaint himself with the local romance hero: Guy of Warwick, a medieval chevalier tasked with the slaughter of a mad cow (187). Perhaps Shakespeare might have even enacted the Guy and carried with him all the way to London the ill repute of a “killcow” from Warwickshire, one that Thomas Nashe scorns for “swaggering eloquence” in the preface of Greene’s *Menaphon* (1589).

¹¹ Duncan-Jones’s point of departure here is the biography by E. I. Fripp, *Shakespeare: Man and Artist*, London, 1938. The scholar goes on to list calf-related metaphors scattered in several Shakespeare’s plays, e.g. *King John* and *Hamlet*. The topic of the influence of craftsmanship on the early modern poetics is by MacInnes as well: “... during the sixteenth century, over 20% of the population of cities like Northampton and Chester worked in the leather trade. These processes were not neutral; they acted powerfully and persuasively upon people’s imagination. Each different stage in animal encounters, from generation through transportation, processing, and consumption, acted as a slightly differently form of persuasion” (78).

¹² “[...] as the butcher takes away the calf,/ And binds the wretch, and beat sit when it strains,/ Bearing it to the bloody slaughter-house;/ Even so, remorseless, have they borne him hence;/ And as the dam runs lowing up and down,/ Looking the way her harmless young one went,/ And can do nought but wail her darling’s loss;/ Even so myself bewails good Gloucester’s case [...]”

deeply familiar with the sight of calves being led off to slaughter—a sight from which modern farming methods protect almost all of us today. (191)

This leads the scholar to set the scene proper—outside the theatre:

There were several extensive arrays of butchers' stalls with 'shambles' just behind, for instance in Mountgodard Street, only a few yards north of St Paul's. Although, or because, the spectacle of animal slaughter was so hard to avoid, early moderns detested it. The great martyrologist John Foxe,¹³ for instance, wrote in 1548 that he could not pass near to a slaughterhouse 'but that my mind recoils with a feeling of pain.' (192, extension mine)

MacInnes too extrapolates the same passage from *2 Henry VI* and delves into the likely response of the audience:

The easy mixture of pathos and sympathy in the passage also suggests that the audience would have been prepared not only to authenticate the event through repeated experience, but to acknowledge that the animal stories played out on their streets were parallels to their own experience. (84)¹⁴

I would like to steep my reading of *Macbeth's* initial parts—so utterly permeated by butcher-like gore—in the image of London prompted by the observations of Duncan-Jones and MacInnes. Combining their reflections allows to see a spectrum of animal-induced responses: from pity to loathing with arguably a great variety of emotions in-between. Both scholars, moreover, acknowledge the importance of traffic—a term which when brought into the posthumanist paradigm must resonate with all its meanings.

An observation which may remain in accord with this discussion is the one proposed by Derrida in his famous essay on animality. The philosopher presents a discrepancy between *being* and *following* which constitutes the axis of his argument. Human being is subsumed under the act of following the animal. To tread on its heels is an accidental effort of relocation, a transposal that brings human to “the confines of man” (372) and forces him to traverse the boundaries “between man and animal” (372). This ontological translation of sorts is not unprecedented in Shakespeare. As Höfele rightly points out (35), although the case of *Dream's* Bottom may be the starkest case of that transition, “it also

¹³ Another early modern man of letters to pity the non-human animals was Thomas Dekker. See Höfele 59-60.

¹⁴ Höfele would perhaps second these observations: “And while the stage cannot remain untainted by its messy company [of stake and scaffold], this very taintedness, this being-close-to the renting, tearing, and killing, also offers a unique platform for mobilizing resistance to it, for evoking sympathy for the suffering fellow creature” (38).

captures the irreducible doubleness characteristic of that traffic in general” (35). The “human-animal border traffic” (Höfele 35) in early modern London would then consist of the trade, transport, congestion as well as the act of Derridean following.

Importantly, it is not only the ordinariness of the outside animal encounters that underwrites the spectacles. The animals pushed through the ontological boundaries from inside the playhouses too. In a synecdochic gesture their objectified and very much material presence provided for the spectators a multi-sensory experience. Blood, for instance, becomes an obvious source of preponderant onstage animality as it in some circumstances was obtained from sheep or calves (Munro 79-80). Along with other animal-made-objects it must have constituted a potent reminder of human-animal proximity:

Stage blood addresses the eye and, if animal blood was used, the nose, while a consistently developed rhetoric of blood addresses the ear; together, they create a multi-sensory impression of violence and bloodshed. (Munro 84)

The intensity of question that initiated Jan Kott’s response to *Macbeth*—Duncan’s famous “What bloody man is that?” (1:2:1)—expresses itself then not simply in the figure of a dying soldier, but also in the stark smell of animal blood, increasing the rankness of “filthy air” polluted by manure reeking squibs probably used in the “thunder and lightning” sequence that initiates *Macbeth*.¹⁵ By extension, the bleeding Captain’s “plight” becomes the memento of the non-human sentient creatures that bled at least twice now for the sake of human.

However, not every single staging of *Macbeth*’s second scene would have smelled of abattoir as blood was also derived from other substances like e.g. paint, vinegar, vermilion or ink (Munro 80-81). As Munro (80) additionally observes, stage blood (of whatever source) was hard to obtain and even harder to exploit economically. It might be a topic worth further consideration whether the story told by Captain in *Macbeth*’s opening is a deliberate choice Shakespeare made negotiating the budget of the play as the intensity of gore would have cost the company too much if it was to be staged with heed to each of *Macbeth*’s lacerations.

Nonetheless, the layering of subsequent odours reeking of a dead animal would still manifest itself due to the taint of tallow candles that was

unavoidable in a variety of indoor contexts and contributed ironic depth to the metaphor of the candle as human life, as in *Macbeth*’s “Out, out brief candle! Life’s but a walking shadow.” (MacInnes 86)

¹⁵ See Jonathan Gil-Harris 2007.

Macbeth's cut, then, the way he unseamed his foe "from the nave to th' chops" (1:2:22)¹⁶ becomes densely saturated with the faith of the animal actants touring the London semiosphere.

The scene usurps once more the multi-sensory tangibility of the stage blood. If there ever was any sympathy to be derived from the *Henry VI* despairing scenes of cows having their calves snatched from them by a human with a cutter, perhaps Macbeth's hacks and slashes might have been the moments of a regressive "bestialisation" of the human body. In that scenario, the everyday encounters of cattle-slaughter and the animal-made-objects (stage blood and tallow candles) would all have shattered the otherwise stubborn anthropomorphism and collapsed the binary gap. As suggested above, the view and the reek of the "unseamed" trunks of cattle¹⁷ could appear to the Elizabethan playgoers as *the* visualisation at hand—arguably much more contiguous, notorious and manifest than those with its origins in bear-baiting arenas or at the scaffold.¹⁸ This is not to say, however, that the image from the London street erase the one invoked on in the bear-garden—to borrow again from Höfele discussing the intermediality of early modern performance:

Rather than effacing their difference, the effect could be described as double vision or *synopsis*, in the literal sense of 'seeing together', of superimposing one image upon the other. What spectators perceived as human or as animal no longer exists in clear-cut separation; it occupies a border zone of blurring distinction where the animal becomes uncannily familiar and the human disturbingly strange. (14)¹⁹

¹⁶ Höfele too notices the borderline aporia of categories in the play's second scene. When discussing the "dagger of the mind" speech, he additionally notices that Macbeth "is trying to become an unconscious doer of deeds, which is how we first encounter him in the battle of the 'bloody man' in scene ii, where the grammatical confusion about who unseams whom 'from the nave to th' chops' bestializes both the celebrated butcher and his quarry" (57). As my focus stays with the "quarry," Höfele goes on to investigate Macbeth's collapse into "total bestialisation" (58).

¹⁷ Referring here again to the cover of Jonathan Sawday's *The Body Emblazoned*.

¹⁸ That spectrum is addressed by Erica Fudge in her chapter "Saying Nothing Concerning the Same: On Dominion, Purity, and Meat in Early Modern England". See below.

¹⁹ Höfele provides here an image of two synoptic physiognomies: of a bull and a man. See Höfele 16. Later in the discussion on *Macbeth* Höfele adds on this note: "Such border-crossing is at the core of the play's insistent questioning of the human. It surfaces in those instances where terms are shifted across the species boundary, for example, in Lady Macbeth's remark about the messenger [...] Or when the First Murderer's assertion, 'We are men, my liege', triggers Macbeth's casual slip into a taxonomy of dogs whose inflationary differentiation of canines elides the much more momentous difference between dog and man" (53).

Like a gavel, the truncated lines of the Witches (1:2:69-70) seem to corroborate the association of Macbeth’s axe-dancing with those chops one may witness at the abattoir:

- 1 Witch: Where has thou been, sister?
 2 Witch: Killing swine.

The laceration of people’s bodies would caricature the unnerving proximity between animal and human viscera. And what Ross calls the stuporous “Strange images of death” (1:3:88) could be an ill-boding sign of the strangest and most profound death image in the play. Strange but simultaneously inducing further uncanny occurrences, the murder of Duncan is precipitated by the sequence of butcheries that in consequence trivialises the very body politic of Scotland itself. The human-animal entanglement magnifies the very moment of unsettling the play’s recurrently threatened equilibrium, the “breach in nature/ For ruin’s wasteful entrance” (2:3:114-115).

Duncan’s murder trembles of the previous murders and the assumed juxtaposition of his corpse to the animal carcass echoes the paper’s main argument. Certainly, in this context Susan Zimmerman’s description of *Macbeth* as the play “obsessed with the *uncategorizable*, the marginal, the in-between” (339) strikes already familiar chords, but it is the scholar’s central line of reasoning that awards a new resonance to Duncan’s unresolvable embeddedness in the human-animal conundrum. In her essay, Zimmerman argues i.a. that Duncan’s corpse is a potent actant that serve “as a composite image for the representation of gender indeterminacy in both *Macbeth* and *Lady Macbeth*” (339). Moreover, its absence recites the theological tensions between the advocates and opponents of the agency of the dead (Zimmerman 342). Far from denying the power of the corpse proposed by Zimmerman, I want to see Duncan’s dead body as equally potent corpse of contention for the liminality between humans and animals. To “question this most bloody piece of work” (2:3:129) would mean to show its absent-presence at work with the most ubiquitous remains available in London—that of kine, sheep and swine.

“‘Tis said they eat each other”

In a chapter from a great collection of essays on *Renaissance Beasts*, Fudge states that contrary to our beliefs and habits, meat eating in early modern England was not warranted by the absence of the dead animal. In fact, killing them was part and parcel of everyday life of most of the citizens, much like in the rural areas (Fudge, *Dominion* 74).

Fudge examines the early modern meat eating from several standpoints. Deeply embedded in the theology of Reformation, eating meat was a *memento*

mori, a humiliation of the human forced to chew on the dead in order to remind oneself of the inevitable role reversal. However, it was not just a plain case of sackcloth and ashes as the consumption of meat was a sign of God-like, although earth-bound, dominion over the other-than-human animals (Fudge, *Dominion* 75).

There are at least three moments in *Macbeth* where the case of human carnivores may seem ambiguous. The, perhaps, all-too-eagerly discussed opening lines from 1:2 about Macbeth's "carv[ing] his passage" is both a well devised visual metaphor as well as an image that would strike another butchery note.²⁰ However, it is in the light of Shakespeare's earlier play that these words acquire an antithetical quality. In *Julius Caesar* Brutus urges his fellows to "Carve [Caesar] as a dish fit for the gods, / Not hew him as a carcass fit for hounds" (2:1:171-2). Besides noticing that the murderous act in both plays requires a great degree of industriousness, the Roman carving allows us to discern between the attitudes towards carcass and human cadaver. But though full of finesse it may be, Macbeth again collapses the two categories by carving not a splendid dish, but passages in the Scottish traitors and their treacherous allies. In fact we might presume that most of Macbeth's kills make one think precisely of hewing the carcass. As Lennox and another gentleman discuss the recent news, the former observes that "In pious rage, the two delinquents [Macbeth did] tear" (3:6:13). Tearing not only strikes resemblance with dismembering, but it would also perhaps allow the playgoers to travel through the semiosphere towards the bear-baiting arenas and their brutal spectacles.

The two men in 3:6 also talk about restoring piece to the land and the Lord's hopeful vision is put into quite peculiar words. He longs to the moment when nobles will again be able to "give to our tables meat, sleep to our nights" (3:6:34). The sense of order, when unsettled by Duncan's murder, unhinges the symbolical human command of animal flesh conventionally replayed at the meal table as well as the repentant *memento mori* of chewing the very meat one is inevitably going to become (Fudge, *Dominion* 77). Fudge argues further that eating meat complicates the human status as it constitutes another unstable semiotic reservoir. The tools available to the early moderns were necessary for establishing dominion over non-human animals, but simultaneously they betrayed its imperfect construction (77). The Lord's wish to restore order is a somewhat partial evidence for just that divulgence. It is the juxtaposition between sleep and meat as the respective *sine qua nons* of "nights" and "tables" that shows the significance of proper feast food for achieving social equanimity. Following once more Fudge's reasoning, the scholar asserts that "human status is not a given, constant thing but is something that entails certain conditions to be met and that, by extension, can be lost if those conditions are not met" (81).

²⁰ For further explication on early modern "life cooking" see Fudge *Dominion* 75-78.

Staying with meat consumption, Shakespeare presents in *Macbeth* another take on feasting, this time, however, hell breaks loose as the animals themselves are shown to be astray within their natural configurations. In the dialogue between Ross and Old Man there comes up the topics of night that “trifles former knowings” (2:4:3), the owl that killed the falcon (2:4:10-13) and the dead king’s horses that “would / Make war with mankind” (2:4:17-18) and kill each other in a cannibalistic act (2:4:19).²¹ The equine cannibals verge on the play’s supernatural, but the eeriness of the act lies primarily in that the horses simultaneously commemorate Duncan (they will not serve Macbeth or his noblemen) and fend off (literally and conceptually) their subservient role. “Contending ‘gainst obedience” (2:4:17) they establish an impenetrable opacity that lurks beneath the structure of the category of the human.

This obscurity anticipates the events of the banquet scene where noblemen gather around the table rich and plentiful with meat. Banquo’s blood carried onto the stage on the murderer’s face signifies his absence among the feasters and the mention of his sliced throat perhaps finds its signifiers among the platters. “[T]he sauce to meat” may well be “ceremony” (3:4:33-34), but the meeting is steeped in blood rather than any pre-eminent sign of courtliness. After entering the stage Banquo is a butchered slab of meat seating at the table, a palimpsestic flesh multiplying the meaning of the “you are what you eat” proverb. The carcass-spitting graves certainly constitutes a dramatic metaphor for Macbeth’s delusion (3:4:68-70), but it seems fitting to imagine here that Banquo’s reeking wounds smell of an abattoir where kine and swine hang open and spread the uncontainable rot. Significant is also the faith Macbeth puts in the “maws of kites” (3:4:70) to solve the issue of the excess number of guests at the feast as if the birds of prey may succeed in what the feasters are unable to accomplish by peacefully resorting to their meal.

Instead of a Conclusion

Following the evidence of the findings discussed above, I suggest we might reformulate the resonance pattern famously asserted by Greenblatt in *Will in the World* that “what principally excited Shakespeare’s imagination about London were its more sinister or disturbing aspects” (167). If the pikes garnished with lifeless heads of state criminals whispered their wicked charms to Shakespeare’s ear and inspired a reflection upon the brutality of the early modern England, I think that the ubiquitous presence of kine and other animals in London made

²¹ Apparently, eating horse meat was considered as a disgusting act. As Fudge states: “There are limits to the dominion of the meal table: horses exist on side of a conceptual boundary where they, alongside certain other animals, are not for consumption” (78).

manifest through the routes of animal trade and the stench of animals and their carcasses can all be seen as aspects of London's "sinister or disturbing" especially when viewed against the instability of the category of the human.

Moreover, as I have tried to show, in bestialising the bodies of his foes Macbeth becomes the "dismemberer of all values and order" (Fudge, *Dominion* 85).²² Pointing not only to the practice of butchers, but perhaps also to the methods the doctors were undertaking with growing interest, dissecting designated the early modern concept of acquiring knowledge. The way that the bodily paradigms fluctuated may further remind one of a tectonic shift causing a sense of instability and tossing the dogmas of previous decades into the newly formed crevices. These holes soon turned into chasms which grew only wider as the once unwavering ideal of Galenic body collapsed. The need to redeem the body from ontological and epistemological uncertainties grew as the Cartesian turn was approaching with its dualistic conclusions. The inside/outside and body/mind dichotomies can be thus seen to form firm boundaries able to help regain control over what the body is and what it is not. And yet, these categories are not stable either.

"Go get him surgeons" (1:2:43) says Duncan after the dying soldier cannot speak more. Thus, Shakespeare established a parenthetical medical framework for the play (Tomaszewski 186-189). In this light, the openings Macbeth makes in the bodies of the enemy soldiers is a daring vivisection and Shakespeare might have well seized the opportunity to infuse Macbeth's cuts not only with the pervasive images of animal slaughter, but also the scientific conflict that arose in the background, namely the clash between Galenic medicine and Vesalius' revolution. The latter famously revealed the faults of the ancient medic—the Greek speaking Roman dissected animals not humans so the images early moderns absorbed would not present the structure of their bodies. Unknowingly then, for a certain time they imagined themselves as being built like animals, animals dressed in human façade.

Not an absent-presence, but a haunting presence of the two kinds of incisions—the butcher's cut and the anatomist knife, the latter appearing at "the playhouses of organized violence" (Sawday ix), and possibly adding another component to Höfele's intermedial repertoire. The one performed unabatedly on animals, the other more and more daring, troubling the previously established taboos of trespassing the materiality of human corpus. The approximation of the two sharp flesh-intrusions underscores the anti-essentialist standpoint of posthumanist theories and presents instead a fragmented tissue of early modern London sociopsychology.

²² The phrase serves Fudge to describe Titus Andronicus and refers to the revenge he exercised against Tamora.

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Robert Sawyer*

“Forward and Backward”: Actants and Agency in Marlowe’s *Doctor Faustus* and Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*

Abstract: This essay presents a posthumanist reading of Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* and Marlowe’s *Doctor Faustus*, two plays which feature a scientist/magus who attempts to control his environment through personal agency. After detailing the analogy between the agency of posthuman figures and the workings of computerized writing machines, as Katherine Hayles has proposed, my essay shows how Kott’s writing, especially his notion of the “Grand Mechanism” of history, anticipates the posthumanist theories that are currently dominating literary assessments. His critique of *The Tempest* makes this idea perfectly clear when he disputes the standard notion that Prospero represents a medieval magus; he instead argues that Prospero was more akin to Leonardo DaVinci, “a master of mechanics and hydraulics,” one who would have embraced revolutionary advances in “astronomy” as well as “anatomy” (1974: 321).

Keywords: Posthumanism, Actant, Agency, Prospero, Doctor Faustus, Mephistopheles, Ariel, Caliban, Transmedial, entanglement, daemons, Robert Boyle, Thomas Hobbes, Aristotle.

There is little doubt that human control and agency are challenged by both animate and inanimate forces in *Doctor Faustus* and *The Tempest*. Although part of my focus is on Faustus’s chant in Act 1, Scene 3 of Marlowe’s play, where he has written God’s name “Forward and backward” in anagrams, a phrase that mimics computer developments in print capabilities, I go on to show that the phrase also encapsulates my argument that *The Tempest* looks forward to a posthumanist world, while also embracing and drawing on the past, again “forward and backward.” Indeed, Jan Kott felt the same tension between that past and the future when he pronounced that the era in which these two playwrights lived was “the last generation of humanists” (1974: 298). After

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a brief overview of posthumanist theory, I turn my attention to two of the key points of this theory, the “actants” in both plays, before considering the networked systems in *Doctor Faustus*, and then focusing on the human/animal hybrids in *The Tempest*.

Posthumanist Theory

Posthumanist theory borrows significantly from scientific analysis. Some critics trace its origins to the “new materialisms” of the 1980s such as those articulated by Catherine Belsey, in her 1985 book, *The Subject of Tragedy: Identity and Difference in Renaissance Drama*. According to Christy Desmet’s distinction between traditional Renaissance humanism and posthumanism, “liberal humanism proposes that the subject is the free, unconstrained author of meaning and action,” such as Harold Bloom might argue, and so, in short, “the origin of history” can be found in a political system “which guarantees freedom of choice,” such as Western democracy proposes to do. But posthumanism, as we shall see, attempts to “debunk the sovereignty of this liberal humanist subject,” not only by placing people on the same ontological level with other objects, also referred to as “actants” by many critics, but by also things that possess “many of the qualities previously seen as the sole property of people” (Desmet “Alien Shakespeares,” 2).¹

Less than five years after Belsey’s assertions, N. Katherine Hayles’s book, *How We Became Posthuman* (1999), connected these two philosophical conceptions: while she takes as her “reference point” the “human” in the phrase “liberal humanism,” she asserts that the “posthuman subject is an amalgam, a collection of heterogeneous components, a material-informational entity whose boundaries undergo continuous construction and reconstruction” (1999: 3). But she also adds that any version of posthumanism and its “rejection of the body [which] underwrites fantasies of uncurbed power, immortality and triumph over the very vulnerabilities that connect us to the non-human world” is a proclamation much too simple and too often overstated (7).

Before we respond that such creations bring to mind only late 20th-century hybrid models such as “Robocop” or the “The Bionic Woman,” Joseph Campana and Scott Maisano argue instead that posthumanism has existed long before our century and actually has “its roots in and remains an offshoot of ‘Renaissance humanism’” (2). They go on to suggest that such humanism was “never a coherent or singular worldview, much less a rallying cry

¹ For more detailed discussion of “actants” in narratology, see Algirdus Grejmas, and for “actants” in theatrical modes, see Anne Uberfeld’s *Reading Theatre* (both listed in the Works Cited).

for ‘man as the measure’—or the center—of all things” (2). It is also important to emphasize that while humanism for the early moderns, as we all know, was “an engagement with classical literatures of the past,” we should not forget that some of these classical texts included “Lucretian atomism” which “viewed all things human and otherwise as matter” worth exploring, such as the Pythagorean notion of metempsychosis, “which downgraded the supremacy of the human by claiming the soul could be reborn in the body of an animal” (Raber 170, n. 11). This theory is somewhat echoed not only in Act 5 of *Doctor Faustus* (as we will see) but also in the hybrid characters of Ariel and Caliban in *The Tempest*.

These two texts, then, represent the same sort of “positive models of boundary-confusion and hierarchies that turn out to be profitably tangled” today (Raber 21). While seemingly oxymoronic on the surface, humanism, specifically “[e]nlightenment humanism, has always carried within itself the seeds of posthumanism. Simply by putting “‘man’ at the centre of the inquiry, philosophy ensured that ‘man’ would be the focus of intense and eventually destabilizing scrutiny” (Raber 10-11). One other way to express this connection can even be made, *contra* our expectations, that more conservative readings of Shakespeare, such as Bloom’s *Shakespeare and the Invention of the Human* (1999), may announce a similar trajectory, since he emphasized the noun, “Human,” in his title.

A split or “Constitution” developed in the seventeenth century, according to Latour in his book, *We Have Never Been Modern*. This distinction, he argues, began at a time when “the natural philosopher Robert Boyle and the political philosopher Thomas Hobbes were arguing over the distribution of scientific and political power” (15). Yet this alleged “turn” or “swerve” in Stephen Geenblatt’s term, is more complicated than we supposed, because the humanism of Marlowe and Shakespeare’s age was not the humanism of the Enlightenment, as Raber notes, so it is certainly possible that “post-Cartesian or Enlightenment ‘humanism’” may not be “unproblematically continuous with Renaissance humanism” (4-5).

As a substitute for seeking answers in logic, mathematics, or rhetoric—some of the same fields which failed to satisfy Doctor Faustus—Boyle relied on “credible, trustworthy, well-to-do witnesses gathered” to observe an experiment, who could then “attest to the existence of a fact,” even if they did not “know its true nature,” and so in essence, Boyle “invented the empirical style that we still use today” (Latour, *Modern*, 18). Hobbes, on the other hand, “arriv[ed] at all his scientific results not by opinion, observation or revelation but by mathematical *demonstration*, the only method of argument capable of compelling everyone’s assent” (Italics mine, 19). Lest we forget, Dr. Faustus is also performing experiments, and, as he points out to his colleagues Cornelius and Valdes, he hopes to produce for them “demonstrations” of his power learned from his conjuring book (A-text, 1:1:142).

The Tempest and Doctor Faustus

Both Shakespeare and Marlowe clearly created at least one respective central character who would fit the genre of the “mad scientist,” a type often found in classic science fiction and a figure featured in some posthumanist critiques of literature.² In Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*, the protagonist Prospero is exiled to an island with his daughter, where he continues his “secret studies” which began even before his forced exile from Milan; Marlowe’s *Doctor Faustus* focuses on a Wittenberg graduate who has tired of all the traditional training he learned in multiple disciplines, including rhetoric, jurisprudence, and even the field of medicine, which allowed him to save whole cities from dangerous outbreaks of disease. But these accomplishments are not enough to satisfy him, so like Prospero, he begins to study “magic,” which he claims has ravished him; however, unlike Prospero, Faustus engages in more dangerous pursuits, such as his deal with the Satan, and in exchange for this god-like power, he offers his soul to him. By employing an important element of posthumanism, that of “actants,” those human and non-human objects mentioned earlier, I hope to show how an examination of characters in each author’s play—Mephistopheles in *Doctor Faustus* and Caliban and Ariel in *The Tempest*—may help us discern the two dramatists’ engagement with the newly emergent scientific knowledge.

In Act 1, Scene 3 of Christopher Marlowe’s *Doctor Faustus*, the protagonist rehearses his conjuring mantra by speaking aloud the following words: “Lines, circles, signs, letters, and characters / Ay, these are those that Faustus most desires” (A-text, 53-54). Recent literary critics such as David Bevington and Eric Rasmussen suggest that *letters* allude to those in Jehovah’s name, which will be written “*Forward and backward*” and “the *characters* seem to be cabbalistic signs or emblems such as astrological symbols for the planets” (n. 53. 114). While they agree with most interpretations that the *lines* in Faustus’s speech are probably the ones Faustus traces around his body, they further remind us that lines were “also used in geomancy,” which is “the art of divination through signs derived from the earth”; according to this interpretation, the standard “method was to jot down lines and dots at random and then interpret them” (114).

Although we might scoff at such power in dots and lines to form mystic signs, we should recall that early computer displays also employed “lines” and “dots,” especially when using a dot matrix printer to display a computer’s data

² See for example, John Cohen, *Human Robots in Myth and Science*. (New York: A.S. Barnes, 1967); Jessica Riskin, ed. *Genesis Redux: Essays in the History and Philosophy of Artificial Life*. (U. of Chicago P, 2007); and Jonathan Sawday, *Engines of the Imagination: Renaissance Culture and the Rise of the Machine*. (London: Routledge 2007).

collection. By employing closely-spaced dots, this computer printing also miraculously freed the machine from being limited to a single set of letters and numbers, such as on a typewriter. Often paired with a daisy wheel in the shape of a circle, these printers could not only print line by line, but also left to right and then right to left—“forward and backward”—in other words, just like the order and reverse order of Faustus’s speech. By accelerating the transfer of informational signs, usually using input from a technical expert, these printers occasioned a hybrid meeting of man and machine which produced on the printed page what N. Katherine Hayles refers to as a “material-semiotic object” (*Writing Machines*, 2002: 15).

This type of “material,” meaning objects and “semiotic” meaning concepts, also allows for connections between literary and scientific investigations urging us to read anew relations between objects, animals, and humans by granting all three some agency. For digital scholars today, “lines” have morphed into strings of XML code, “circles” are produced by Computer Aided Design (CAD) programs, “signs” have become Unicode symbols, and “characters” seem omnipresent in digitized texts. Even though we designate such esoteric “objects” as having no connection between Faustus’s recitation and today’s algorithmic processes, the correlation between them is quite close. While neither Faustus, nor Marlowe or Shakespeare for that matter, would have used a computer of any kind, in both moments of conception, a “command” is made—by a pen in Marlowe’s or Shakespeare’s hand, by a voice in Faustus’s and Prospero’s case, or by a keyboard or a touch screen today—to initiate the process. Moreover, posthumanism, as we will see, suggests that the humans in this network of “characters,” “signs,” “circles,” and “letters” may possess only as much agency as the objects, or “actants,” they are allegedly commanding.³

The literary and semi-scientific seem oddly to coexist in Faustus’s chant and Prospero’s spells, bringing together a “precisely written code” with “the richness of natural language” (Hayles, 16). Moving from the complicated conjuring quote in Faustus’s magical book, to the “creatures” in both plays,⁴ my essay focuses instead on these “actant” spirits that populate the dramas, primarily Mephistopheles in Marlowe’s work and Ariel and Caliban in

³ The term “actant” also, as Latour adds, allows literary critics to look more seriously at the “agency of a magic wand, a dwarf [or] the thoughts of a fairy’s mind,” or in Shakespeare’s play, Prospero’s magic staff and in Marlowe’s the agency of demons and semi-human characters. As Latour concludes, “novels, plays, and films from classical tragedy to comics produce a vast playground to rehearse accounts of what makes us act” (2005: 54-55).

⁴ As Julia Reinhard Lupton has shown, the word “creature” is related to the Latin verb “creare,” meaning “to create,” and those termed “creatures,” such as Caliban, are always a thing “with the sense of continued or potential process, action, or emergence” (Lupton, 2).

Shakespeare's play, not only to highlight the animal/human/monster amalgamations in both works, two primary aspects of posthumanism in general, but also in order to better understand the dispersal of agency in the plays themselves.

Networked Systems in *Doctor Faustus*

Faustus seems to believe he is in total control of the "spirits" he has commanded, particularly Mephistopheles, because the Doctor believes there is some grand division between the human subject and the object "actants" in the play; however, posthumanist theory suggests that humans have never been entirely autonomous beings, and, just like actants, they are always partly controlled by their own environment and the networks they co-inhabit. Countering this simplistic division, I follow Latour and propose to "redistribute the cards between humans and nonhumans, and to disengage this pair from the perpetual battle carried on noisily by objects and subjects, the former seeking to come together under the banner of nature and the latter wanting to regroup in society" (*Politics*, 76). While it is fair to say that Faustus initiates the process with the actants, his own "selfhood" becomes entangled with the "spirits" so much so that agency becomes distributed throughout the network of beings in the play. Just as in Mary Shelley's novel, *Frankenstein*, in Marlowe's play, creator and created become united, part human, part beast, part autonomous being.⁵ For Faustus, just as for Doctor Frankenstein, the two actants/agents break free of their so-called "masters" in the literary works and begin to reverse the flow of the agency so that Faustus is always implicated in, and interwoven throughout, the networked systems of the drama; in Marlowe's play, in other words, the controlling "system" becomes the true agent which creates the action.

Although this "assemblage" exists without any specific action in the play, Marlowe dramatizes this rearrangement by signing a "contract" with Lucifer via Mephistopheles. Once this pact is signed, in other words, a metaphorical switch is pulled activating a "vibrant materiality," which bestows agency on both "non-human" and "not-quite human things," in Jane Bennett's terms (vi), and one that includes animate and inanimate objects, some of which spin out of Faustus's control.

While interactions with such human/monster creatures seem like the stuff of science fiction, posthumanist theory offers many examples of how this works in our lives today. Bennett's term "assemblage" seems particularly apt

⁵ Regarding the connection between Shakespeare's Caliban and Mary Shelley's Frankenstein creature, see my article "Mary Shelley and Shakespeare: Monstrous Creations." *South Atlantic Review* 72.2 (Spring 2007): 6-22.

here, most clearly articulated when she uses an electrical power station as one example (23). Such “ad hoc groupings of diverse elements, of vibrant materials of all sorts,” Bennett argues, contain “living, throbbing confederations that are able to function despite the persistent presence of energies that confound them from within” (23-24). While such a constellation of agents represents an assemblage, the effects generated are more akin to vital forces causing an electrical blackout, which “is distinct from the sum of the vital force of each materiality considered alone” (24). And precisely because each member-actant maintains an energetic pulse slightly “‘off’ from that of the assemblage, an assemblage is never a stolid block but an open-ended collective, a ‘non-totalizable sum,’” capable of moving forward and backward (24). In other words, it does not offer a limb-by-limb anatomy we can study, nor does such a vibrant mass allow us to parcel out agency or assign blame.⁶

Keven LaGrandeur makes a compelling connection regarding the type of “actants” to which I have been alluding by using Mephistopheles as an example in Marlowe’s play. Even if we grant that Mephistopheles is “a highly intelligent entity,” who functions as an “intermediary between Faustus and the system of demons he tries to harness,” we should also see him as “a being who is reflexively entangled in a system of beings and environmental components” in the exact same way as Faustus (24). By immediately changing into a Franciscan Friar per Faustus’s “command,” the spirit quickly assumes a recognizable, nearly stereotypical character of Protestant scorn, but one that conceals “a dauntingly complex system” (24). Returning to the computer analogy with which I began, the “experience” we encounter when composing is supposed to replicate that of the more familiar typewriter, hiding the complex system through which the computer actually functions. Most significantly—for both the modification of Mephistopheles’ appearance and the disguised machinations and codes of the computational device we are using—the aim is to make us “forget the intimidatingly complicated actions going on just below the surface appearance,” by “lull[ing] the user” into absolute complicity, often followed by eager action on our part (25). Due to his advanced skills in education, law, debate and even medicine, it makes perfect sense that Faustus believes he possesses enough agency to conjure demonic entities and to perform magnificent deeds; yet he is actually ensnared in a network of his own making, and he is no more autonomous than the actant Mephistopheles, who even admits in the play, that he is always in hell no matter where he travels (2:1:124-126).

⁶ A recent example of an “assemblage,” would be a large power grid failing, such as the so-called “Northeast Blackout” in 2003, which affected both the Midwest and Northeast United States as well as the Canadian province of Ontario for over forty-eight hours.

But what does this whole scenario reveal to us when filtered through a posthumanist lens? In short, it undermines the characters' own sense of agency and stable identity. As Raber explains, early modern characters "discover that they are enmeshed in an environmental web within which identity," not unlike Doctor Faustus in this tale, "is constantly dissolved and dispersed" (125-126). Although Faustus represents one of many "fictional characters who can easily be labeled mad but whose madness . . . lends the stories their perverse psychological textures" (Chow, 6-7), the numerous variants of the tale create "loops" of meaning. As contemporary critics have noted about the posthumanist condition and the reproduction of virtual texts, and the subsequent numerous overlapping recurrences, these networks "suggest a topological looping together that is at the same time an enmeshment of topics," a type of "entanglement" of "things held together or laid over one another in nearness and likeness," not so different, perhaps, than the composition of plays by early modern collaborators (Chow, 1). Moreover, the dispersal of "agency" we witnessed in *Doctor Faustus*, certainly "is compounded, in the age of digitization, by the rapid disappearance of time-honored intervals, be those intervals temporal, geographical or personal," and so the "transmediality of the web or net," the latter names for the internet ("web" and "net") being perfect word-images for "capturing" copies from the past in the present, such as texts of early modern plays re-presented on computer platforms and through digital programs (10).

Animal/Human Hybrids in *The Tempest*

While Marlowe's play suggests a number of posthumanist characteristics, Shakespeare's *The Tempest* multiplies these connections in repetitive ways by not only providing a posthuman "networked system," but also emphasizing the man/machine, master/slave and animal/human hybrids so important to posthumanist theory. Hayles's insight into human co-evolution suggests that this new regime continues to involve a mutual and serial metamorphosis, with technology possibly shaping humanity and vice versa in a perpetual process: "As inhabitants of globally interconnected networks, we are joined in a dynamic co-evolutionary spiral with intelligent machines as well as the other biological species with whom we share the planet" (*Unfinished Work*, 164). This particular posthumanist theme of man and machine or master-slave may be most pronounced in Shakespeare's play *The Tempest*.⁷

⁷ Of course, the numerous postcolonial readings of the play, some of which focus on critical race theory, highlight and challenge the simple master-slave binary. See, for example, Paul Brown's, "'This Thing of Darkness I Acknowledge Mine': *The Tempest* and the Discourse of Colonialism." In *Political Shakespeare: New Essays in Cultural*

Humans “have never really been autonomous entities,” Kevin LaGrandeur posits, “but rather they have always been intimately interdependent upon their environment and tools” (16). Tracing this notion back to Aristotle’s *Politics* (about 350 BCE), LaGrandeur suggests that Aristotle’s “best solution for the thorny problems of owning slaves” might be by “inventing machines that were smart enough to do the work themselves” (17). In other words, Aristotle envisioned that “the shuttle would weave and the plectrums touch the lyre” so that eventually “chief workmen would not want servants, nor masters slaves” (Aristotle, 2: 229-230). Such a tension between who is the master and who the slave is certainly one of the prominent issues on the island where Prospero now reigns over not only Caliban, who was once his “own king” of the land (*The Tempest*, 1:2:343), but he exerts control over Ariel as well.⁸

For Aristotle, such mechanical inventions would then take over the slave’s primary function which was to “allow the master to overcome natural human limits” (LaGrandeur, 17). In other words, machinery/slaves provided “additive capacities of various sorts to the master’s bodily and mental abilities,” adds LaGrandeur, and “so they become tools to assist the master and so increase his or her natural strength,” such as the way Prospero uses Caliban to expand his own numerous physical feats. But Aristotle also suggests that the “additive capacity” is not limited to physical deeds,” claiming that “the slave that teaches the master’s children . . . adds mental capacity to the master’s cognitive repertoire that he would not otherwise have” (qtd. in LaGrandeur, 17). Since it seems both Miranda and Prospero helped to educate Caliban, we are once again confronted with the distinction and connection between master/slave and human/creature.

One last point Aristotle makes is that a humanoid system need not bear a physical similarity to humans, such as androids do, but they must be able to replicate human capabilities. On the island where Prospero now rules, we find an intelligent network consisting of organic and inorganic material, and this system is facilitated by Caliban who keeps Prospero and his daughter alive by “show[ing] him all the best qualities o’ th’ Isle” (1:2:338), including the “fresh springs” and “fertile” areas. He even picks berries, searches for fishes, and procures “wood enough” for Prospero’s and his daughter’s survival (2:2:157-158) until his grand project comes to fruition—one might say “experiment”—of

Materialism. Ed. Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield. (Manchester University Press, Manchester, U.K. 1985) 48-71. For a more recent essay on a similar topic, see John Kunat’s, “Play me False”: Rape, Race and Conquest in *The Tempest*.” *Shakespeare Quarterly*, Vol. 65.3: (2014): 307-327.

⁸ All citations to the *The Tempest* are to the Arden Shakespeare edition, edited by Virginia Mason Vaughan and Alden T. Vaughan. Full publication information can be found in the Works Cited.

marrying off Miranda, his daughter, to Ferdinand, in order to unite Naples with Milan.

The most important part of his survival depends on these spirits he assumes he commands, who, like Ariel, extend Prospero's own powers. Indeed, it is clear that Ariel is an extension of Prospero's power who not only helps to create the tempest that begins the play, but also entices Ferdinand towards Prospero and Miranda's dwelling, as well as directs the masque in Act 4. Prospero makes this perfectly clear when he admits at the conclusion of the wedding masque that Ceres, Juno, and Isis are "spirits," which he has "called to enact" his "present fancies" (4:1:120-122).

As Jan Kott has shown, this spirit of the air, is rooted in Shakespeare's backward look at the *Aeneid*.⁹ Two very specific examples should suffice to show how this actant is borrowed and appropriated from Virgil. When Ariel is transformed into a Harpy in 3:3:52 to menace Alonso, Sebastian and Antonio, the stage directions are quite explicit: *Thunder and lighting. Enter ARIEL like a harpy*, who then smothers the entire feast with his huge Harpy's wings, and so "the banquet vanishes" (3:3:52). Yet when the soldiers "draw their swords," they are suddenly stilled, as if by magic, just as in Virgil's version; when the Harpies snatch away the food, and Aeneas and his companions reach for their swords and raise them to strike at the birds, their swords freeze in their hands (Kott, "The *Aeneid*," 436). While not calling Ariel an actant, Kott's description of this scene demonstrates just how much agency Ariel has in the overall plot of the play.

Another transformation of Ariel occurs, as I noted above, in the wedding masque. Not only does Ariel prepare the masque "on Prospero's command," but he also took part in it by playing the role of Iris,¹⁰ who then introduces the goddesses and presents Ceres (4:1:59). But in Shakespeare's hands, this ceremony was no obligatory or traditional marriage feast which always ended "with the presentation of gifts to the young couple" (438). As Kott explains, however, this "dramatic rupture of Prospero's revels" is more akin to the scene in the *Aeneid*—the disruption of the hunt preparing us for the wedding pageantry of Dido and Aeneas" when Juno intervenes with a storm of "burning flame" and "lightning" skies. Everyone is scattered in confusion, and even "the Nymphs yelled from the mountains top" (Surrey, *Aeneid* IV, 216). As Kott notes, "in his disruption of the betrothal masque Shakespeare retained Virgil's dramatic

⁹ My extensive use of Kott in this section is in part due to the theme of this Special Issue, but also to show how he was thinking in posthumanist terms before most Shakespearean critics in the Anglo-American world turned their attention to this theoretical critique.

¹⁰ Isis and Ariel's "airy qualities" would associate the two for the audience (Vaughan and Vaughan, 71).

tension and the shock of interruption” and, as in the attack by the Harpies, “the narrative has been transformed into spectacle” (“The *Aeneid*,” 439). While such spectacles in *The Tempest* were first performed during Shakespeare’s time in London during new scientific discoveries and evolving stage practices, I would agree with Kott that Shakespeare is also looking forward: “Shakespeare, the producer and man of the theatre, probably . . . designed his last play for the possibility of a new stage where marvels could suddenly change” (“The *Aeneid*,” 442).¹¹

Yet lest we forget, Ariel is also enslaved by Prospero, and in his initial speech, he reminds Prospero that he has served willingly: “To swim, to dive into the fire,” or to “ride on the curled clouds” (1:2:190-191) to ensure his release. However, as the play progresses this promise of freedom has yet to be granted: “Since thou dost give me pains, / Let me remember thee what thou has promised / Which is not yet performed me” (1:2:242-244); in short, he seeks his own “liberty” (245). Again, the master/slave dichotomy is complicated, as is the “agency” on the island.

Caliban represents, of course, a much more belligerent actant/slave in the system, and his embodiment, as Aristotle noted earlier, does not need to necessarily replicate only human features. Indeed for Aristotle such “instruments are of various sorts” and perhaps even lifeless, like the rudders or sails of the ships in Alonso’s convoy. But Caliban is certainly not just an innate object as the ship parts. In fact, his embodiment, which is his form or bodily shape, remains “woefully imprecise” (Vaughan and Vaughan 13), surely to highlight him as a significant animal-human hybrid. For example, to Prospero, he is a “misshapen knave” (5:1:268) and to Trinculo, “half a fish and half a monster,” a sort of creature from the black lagoon, even as Antonio refers to him as a “plain fish” (5:1:266).

Other adjectives used to describe him run the gamut of animal-human hybridity: “shallow,” “weak,” “scurvy,” “puppy-headed” and “abominable.” However, and this is key, Prospero notes Caliban is human in some form as early as Act 1, when he states that “*except for Caliban, the Island was not honored with a human shape*”(Vaughan and Vaughan, 33; italics in the original). Even Miranda, who has perhaps the most reason to think of Caliban as beast like, must be referring back to him as a “man” when she describes Ferdinand as “the third man that e’er I saw” (1:2:446). As the Introduction to the Arden edition states, “despite his possibly demonic parentage and unspecified deformity,” Caliban is “essentially human,” (Vaughan and Vaughan, 34), and the word demonic here, as we will see in the conclusion, also adds to my posthumanist argument.

¹¹ For an excellent discussion of this movement, see Henry S. Turner’s *The English Renaissance Stage: Geometry, Poetics, and the Practical Spatial Arts 1580-1630*. Oxford UP, 2006.

These human-animal hybrids hover throughout the play “between ‘creatures’ and ‘mankind,’ between animate beings in general and their realization in the form of humanity” (Lupton, 2). Is Caliban, Lupton wonders (as do Stephano and Trinculo), “a man or fish? creature or person?” (2). He was once his “own king” (1:2:342), as we noted before. Since, however, Prospero’s colonization of the island, he is “[n]ow enslaved to a Master-Maker, [and] he finds himself locked within the swarming ranks of scamels, filberts, and the nimble marmoset” (Lupton, 2). Moreover, while he is seemingly learned language, usually an entrance point for civilization, it is all for naught, and so after his alleged rape of Miranda, he remains “pure vitality” (Lupton, 3). He loudly protests that he has learned to speak only in order to curse his tormentors, who call him a “villain,” a “poisonous slave,” and a “Hag-Seed,” referring to his mother, the witch, Sycorax (1:2:345; 1:2:367). By the end of the play, he is reduced to a “thing,” when Prospero alludes to him as a “thing of darkness” and Alonso calls him a “strange thing (1:3:313, 322, 368, 370; 5:1:278), an active if rebellious actant, yet one composed of Bennett-like “vital materiality.”

The posthuman “loops” or repetitions that Chow explained earlier continue throughout the time on the Island. Certain words, situations, and even theatrical moments recur on this isle “full of noises”; and many, as Kott has demonstrated, seem to echo events from the *Aeneid*. From the storm at the opening of the drama, all the way to the chess match between Ferdinand and Miranda (where the object, of course is to be “mated”), Shakespeare borrows from Virgil and he may have even seen a 10th-century manuscript which depicts Aeneas and Dido “as a medieval couple playing chess” (Kott, “The Aeneid” 429).

In one final connection between computers and the actant spirits in both plays is the term demon or daemon, one of the words used to describe Caliban in *The Tempest* and applied to many of the spirits in *Doctor Faustus*. According to the *OED*, a demon/daemon is “a supernatural being of nature intermediate between that of gods and men.” For example, as Wendy Hui Kyong Chun explains, “UNIX—that operating system seemingly behind our [computers]—runs daemons,” which include our e-mail and our web servers, and these “invisible processes” make our computer “executables magic” (318). While the most famous daemon is perhaps Socrates’ *daimonion*, a kind of mystical inner voice, not unlike a conscience, that assisted him “in time of crisis by forbidding him from doing something rash,” the more ubiquitous use of the word is the one created by James Clark Maxwell, a physicist in the late 19th century. His term referred to “an imaginary agent which helped sort molecules and worked tirelessly in the background” (“The Origin of the word Daemon,” online) most of the time, and like the slaves in both plays, “Maxwell’s Deemons also define and challenge the position of the master” (Chun, 320), not unlike Ariel’s complaints noted above.

Conclusion: “Forward and Backward”

As I hope I have shown, what we are experiencing in this posthumanist era is not entirely new. Connecting the past, and the development of the printing press, to 21st -century information gathering machines, Campana and Maisano also look forward and backward when they demonstrate that “Renaissance humanists demonstrated how close reading and careful restoration of *ancient* texts could be an effective means of situating, if not solving or answering, the pressing philosophical problems” of their own age (2).

While many important critics see *The Tempest* as a “childish” fantasy tale (Kott, *Our Contemporary*, 297), played out on an island which is a sort of utopia or a fairy isle located in a never-never land, Jan Kott anticipates the posthumanist reading I have developed. Claiming that *The Tempest* was “a drama of the men of the Renaissance, and of the last generation of humanists” (298), he believes it to be a tale of “man’s efforts to conquer the physical world; with dangers threatening the moral order; with nature, which is and is not the measure of man” (299). He also suggests that the play reflects “an era which saw a revolution in astronomy, in the melting of metals, and in anatomy; an era of science, which for the first time became universal” (299). Kott goes one step further, and with more specificity, by comparing Prospero to Leonardo DaVinci, not a medieval magus, but instead a “master of mechanics and hydraulics”; DaVinci could also, according to Kott, “already perceive the emergence of a world in which man would wrench from nature her secrets and overcome her by his art and science” (321).¹² More recently, Gabriel Egan also dismisses Prospero as a magician, arguing that his “apparent magic represents human ingenuity at its peak, not supernatural at all,” a point Kott and I would both support (164).

But more importantly for my argument is Kott’s assertion that in *The Tempest*, one of the most important symbols of time in the play is the hourglass, mentioned three times in the drama; I would add that the grains within it also move forward and backward. As Kott more specifically puts it, the “hour-glass is an image of time repeating itself and retuning” (“*The Tempest*, or Repetition,” 25). Once the sand runs out of the top, it is turned over and “the same sand runs its course again,” backward and forward; equally significant, Kott provocatively adds; “[e]ach hour measured by the sand is a different and the same hour” (25).

For the most part, Ariel serves as “type of proxy for Prospero,” a “digital daemon,” not unlike a contemporary “type of software that operates in the background, and also provides an interface between the networks user and the operating system”(LaGrandeur, 20). In other words, as Chun notes, these

¹² In 2007, for example, Jonathan Sawday, called the play more Baconian than Shakespearean, more concerned with science than with magic (305).

“daemons run in the background without intervention by the user”; so “technically UNIX daemons are parentless—that is orphaned—processes that run in the root directory” (319). Just as Caliban, Ariel, and even Mephistopheles are without family, they, too, continue to operate almost without intervention, at least before Caliban’s alleged attempt to rape Miranda or Faustus’s attempt to renege on his contract.

But one last element of posthumanism remains to be considered and that is the elemental and environmental forces which shape the narrative of the two plays and our understanding of the texts. Even though Faustus promises to “burn his books,” as he is being dragged to the underworld in the A-Text of the play, and Prospero intends to “drown” his magical books and staff at the close of *The Tempest*, these objects were never completely consumed nor destroyed, thanks in part to the newly invented printing press. So that today, in our own “brave new world” of digitized texts we can still access them. While the human bodies of Marlowe and Shakespeare may have “crashed” over 400 years ago, their body of work has continued to flicker across computer screens around the globe, their powerful poetry overcoming any surge protector. Today we encounter Shakespearean and Marlovian output in innovative actants such as e-books that read us—our favorite fonts, our usual formatting options, even our preferred color of print—so that we, too, are entangled in a scene that also looks forward and backward, even as we are scanning their plays on multiple screens, so much so, that agency is distributed in our encounters with the text, just as it was in Doctor Faustus’s study and on Prospero’s island.

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“No beast so fierce but knows some touch of pity”: Compassion and the Nonhuman in *Richard III*

Abstract: When Lady Anne accuses Richard of cruelty in the wooing scene of act one in *Richard III*, she claims that even the fiercest beast will demonstrate some degree of pity. Her attempt to categorize Richard as somehow both less than human and less than a beast, however, leaves her vulnerable to Richard’s pity retort that he knows no pity “and therefore [is] no beast” (1:2:71-2). The dialogue swiftly moves on, but the relation between the emotional phenomenon known as pity or compassion and the nonhuman, briefly raised in these two lines, remains unresolved. Recent scholarship at the intersection of early modern studies, historical animal studies and posthumanism has demonstrated ways in which the human-animal binary is often less than clearly articulated in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Building on such work, and adding perspectives from the history of the emotions, I look closely at the exchange between Anne and Richard as characteristic of pre-Cartesian confusion about the emotional disposition—in particular compassion—of animals. I argue that such confusion can in fact be traced throughout *Richard III* and elsewhere in the Shakespeare canon and that paying attention to it unsettles the more familiar notion of compassion as a human species distinction and offers a new way to read the early modern nonhuman.

Keywords: *Richard III*, compassion, emotion, posthumanism, human-animal binary.

In act one, scene two of *Richard III* something strange happens. Richard’s plan, revealed to the audience in the previous scene, of wooing Lady Anne despite having “killed her husband and her father” (1:1:154) is just beginning to gain speed, as is the snappy stichomythic dialogue between the two characters, when Anne accuses Richard of cruelty with what turns out to be a blunt comparison: “No beast so fierce but knows some touch of pity” (1:2:71). Her purpose, it seems, is to place Richard as far down a moral hierarchy of beings as possible: entirely devoid of pity, he is *not even* a beast. In the same breath, however, she

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unwittingly confirms his human status because, as Richard then implies in his quick syllogistic retort, if the beast is capable of pity it must belong to a different species from him: “But I know none, and therefore am no beast” (1:2:72). Lady Anne’s inability to be specific about Richard’s ‘humanness’, or ‘non-humanness’, means that she loses that verbal contest, even if she pushes Richard to admit the truth.

The dialogue moves on and the moment passes so rapidly that it hardly seems worth dwelling on, yet there is something about this exchange that invites pause, both in the reading and in the acting of the play. For Jan Kott, who makes a re-appearance in this special issue, it must have stood out too, because he cites Lady Anne’s line early on in his treatment of the scene in *Shakespeare Our Contemporary* (36), although he does not linger over the moment for long either. Perhaps the exchange simply has an arresting quality because the audience is treated to the full extent of Richard’s rhetorical dexterity and begins, like Lady Anne, to be won over by his quick-wittedness. However, the impulse to pause over these two lines might also be indicative of the ambiguity of what is being said—the strangeness of it. The notion of pity as a parameter for human(e) behaviour (with cruelty as its *inhuman* opposite) may not sound very strange, of course. It is after all common enough in contemporary discourse and, as we shall see, in early modern discourse too. But this simple parameter does not quite cover what takes place between Lady Anne and Richard. Even as the scene and the plot of the play move on, the species confusion briefly raised in these two lines remains unresolved.

In this article, I examine early modern relations between the nonhuman and the emotional phenomenon known as pity or compassion to suggest that there is indeed something ‘strange’ and confusing at work in this brief moment of dialogue. On what grounds does Lady Anne believe that beasts, even fierce ones, will behave compassionately? A text such as Edward Topsell’s oft-cited bestiary *The Historie of Foure-footed Beastes* (1607) might offer some clues by having—as we shall see—plenty of compassionate animals on show. But at the same time other sources, including *Richard III*, clearly promote compassion as a human distinction. So what seems to emerge is a picture of two different cultural narratives that both overlap and contradict each other. One potential danger in examining emotions, usually articulated as human attributes, in animals is, inevitably, anthropomorphism. Some of the animals mentioned in this article are not ‘real’ animals; rather, they represent a projection of human behaviour of both positive and negative kind. But having to negotiate that tricky fault-line does not mean that these animals should be left out of the equation. In fact, one of the things I hope to demonstrate is that the early modern period offers the possibility of looking at animals in the spacious ground between anthropomorphism and Cartesian automata, and that the question of animal compassion is one of the available road maps in this endeavour. Therefore, while Lady Anne’s

compassionate beast clearly functions on a rhetorical and symbolic level, I will argue that it also bears relation to an indecisiveness or confusion about the emotional disposition—in particular compassion—of ‘real’ animals in the period. And, in turn, that this confusion can seriously unsettle the human-animal binary implicit in compassion discourses that seek to privilege the human.

Pursuing such questions and contradictions means that I use a critical posthumanist lens in tandem with the methodology known as ‘the history of emotions’ so as to trace perceptions of nonhuman emotion in the period. The sceptical stance towards human exceptionalism which is central to posthumanist critical thinking is highly helpful when it comes to scrutinizing human-animal binaries.¹ This is not least the case when dealing with a period prior to Descartes’s notorious degradation of animals to the status of automata, as Erica Fudge, Karen Raber, Laurie Shannon and other critics working at the intersection of early modern studies, historical animal studies and posthumanism have already demonstrated substantively.²

However, I will suggest that posthumanist alternatives to anthropocentric attitudes also help to frame questions about emotional patterns that we might otherwise take for granted or lightly pass over as exclusively human in the period. Moreover, while my initial focus is on Shakespeare’s *Richard III*, I want at the same time to suggest ways in which early modern discourse might ‘speak back to’, or indeed anticipate, contemporary critical positions. Joseph Campana and Scott Maisano have argued that there are plenty of intellectual alliances to be looked for between Renaissance humanism and later posthumanist theory. That is, not only does the posthumanist critical lens prove productive to studies of Renaissance texts and culture, but the favour is easily returned when certain aspects of pre-Enlightenment thought turn out to be demonstrably already posthumanist. As Campana and Maisano posit, “Renaissance humanism was never a coherent or singular worldview, much less a rallying cry for ‘man as the measure’—or center—‘of all things’” (2).

Bridging the pre-modern and the posthuman can feel like venturing into slippery temporal territory, however. According to Campana and Maisano, there is no easy solution to negotiating the temporal paradox of that bridging: “much of the work on pre-Enlightenment posthumanisms seems to range somewhere between two poles of almost irresistible attraction: ‘we were always posthuman’ and ‘we were never human’” (7-8). In this respect, the pre-modern/posthumanist

¹ For a comprehensive outline of posthumanist thinking—and related terms—see Rosendahl Thomsen and Wamberg (2020). In their introduction, Rosendahl Thomsen and Wamberg explicitly select posthumanism as the governing term for a range of critical positions which in various ways question or displace human exceptionalism.

² See for example Fudge (2000, 2004, 2006 and 2018), Raber (2013 and 2018) and Raber and Duggan (2021) and Shannon (2013).

alliance may a little too easily become what Campana and Maisano call a temptation for scholars to point out “fuzzy contours of the so-called human in premodern eras and how the resulting uncertainty might impact contemporary thinking about contemporary things” (8). In many ways, this article follows this line of thought too, but, as Campana and Maisano also claim, this is “neither erroneous nor outmoded” but “might be just the beginning of a conversation that leads [...] to a larger conversation about what Renaissance humanism is, was, and could be in the future” (8). Karen Raber goes further and dispels Campana and Maisano’s misgivings about applied posthumanism in close readings of Renaissance texts when she advocates a “kind of slow posthumanism” and argues that testing the capacity of posthumanist theory by “fighting anthropocentrism one close reading at a time is not a bad place to start” (*Shakespeare and Posthumanist Theory* 159-60). Taking its cue from Raber, then, this article contributes to that growing catalogue of close readings.

Given that I am concerned with compassion—an emotional phenomenon that is easily simplified or left unquestioned—the particular pre-modern/post-humanist critical alliance I am suggesting is designed to uncover any potential mutual blind spots. Compassion always presents a complicated case-study, partly because it sits awkwardly within the taxonomy of emotions, such as anger, sadness or joy, by representing an emotional reaction to another’s emotional state or situation, rather than an emotion in and of itself.³ Moreover, although the capacity or will to act compassionately is usually understood to be good and desirable, it does not take much probing to complicate the picture. When it comes to early modern compassion discourse too, a historicized analysis soon shows that compassion cannot simply be taken for granted as a signifier of (human) virtue in the period.

As Katherine Ibbitt and Kristine Steenbergh have shown in a recent collection of essays on early modern compassionate practices, determining the nature and the value of these practices was subject to several contrasting views. The main rift was between the influences on the early modern mind-set of classical philosophy, particularly Stoicism, which advocated moderation, in some cases even elimination, of compassionate response to others, and Christian morals (further complicated by sectarian variants), which advocated the

³ I do not make a fine-grained etymological distinction between compassion and pity or other related terms here, as some scholars have previously done, since such a distinction is not necessary for the discussion of this article. What I do concede is a potential distinction between the kind of compassion that spares a potential victim (which is the kind Lady Anne refers to in *Richard III*) and the kind of compassion that signifies a co-suffering response in any given situation. However, I would argue that both these usually derive from a common emotional premise.

opposite.⁴ The full scope of contentious compassion(s) in early modern contexts extends beyond my discussion here; but it is important to point out that compassion discourse is already not straightforward in this period, before examining another complication, one that has received comparatively little attention from scholars working on early modern emotion: that is, compassion’s complicated relationship with human-animal binaries.⁵

Lady Anne’s invocation of the compassionate beast in *Richard III* is odd, because it seems to be contradicting the play’s more pervasive perception of beasts as uncompromisingly fierce and cruel. A glance at other beastly references in the play confirms this impression. When the imprisoned Clarence confronts his murderers and entreats their pity, he tells them that “[n]ot to relent is beastly, savage, devilish” (1:4:262), thus firmly defining a lack of compassion as belonging to the nonhuman category. In contrast to the murderers’ beastliness, Clarence demonstrates his own humanist education by understanding the nature of compassion and how to provoke it in others; as Richard is also well aware when he warns the murderers in the previous scene: “do not hear him plead, / For Clarence is well-spoken and perhaps / May move your hearts to pity, if you mark him” (1:33:46-48). Significantly, the discourse here centres on speech as a marker of compassionate behaviour and on the humanist rhetorician’s skill to move others to compassion, which, when recalling Descartes’ speechless animal automata, seems further to exclude the nonhuman. In other words, it looks as if the play’s human-centred compassion discourse here anticipates or represents an early version of the later Cartesian paradigm in which the question of speech contributes to establishing the dividing line in the human-animal binary.⁶

Animal imagery is used elsewhere in the play to signify cruelty, not least in relation to Richard himself. Moments before Lady Anne brings in the

⁴ For a detailed analysis, see for example Ibbitt and Steenbergh’s introduction in Ibbitt and Steenbergh (2021) or Bruce R. Smith’s chapter ‘The Ethics of Compassion in Early Modern England’ in the same collection.

⁵ Studies of early modern emotion so far have not been very concerned with animal emotions or emotional relations between humans and animals, although see Gail Kern Paster’s chapter on animal emotion in Shakespeare in Paster, Rowe and Floyd-Wilson (2004). In reverse, Lara Bovilsky’s essay in Campana and Maisano’s collection (2016) exemplifies an engagement with early modern emotion from a posthumanist perspective. Writing into a more contemporary context, Kristine Steenbergh also brings post-humanism into an interesting conversation about compassion in the Anthropocene in the concluding chapter to Ibbitt and Steenbergh (2021).

⁶ As Descartes sets out in *Discourse on the Method*: “For it is highly deserving to remark, that there are no men so dull and stupid, not even idiots, as to be incapable of joining together different words, and thereby constructing a declaration by which to make their thoughts understood; and that on the other hand, there is no other animal, however perfect or happily circumstanced, which can do the like” (45).

reference to the compassionate beast in her exchange with Richard, she has cursed him, wishing his fate to be worse than that of “wolves, [...] spiders, toads / Or any creeping venomed thing that lives” (1:2:19-20), and not long after, she refers to him derogatively as “a hedgehog” (1:2:104). All of which makes the appearance of the compassionate beast in the space between these instances of negative animal imagery seem even stranger; clearly animal-related narratives and counter-narratives can co-exist even within a single scene.

Throughout the play, Richard’s heraldic symbol of the boar is equated with his brutality in the mouths of his antagonists and, of course, the play also abounds with references to dogs—from the dogs in Richard’s opening soliloquy, who bark at him as he halts by them, to the frequent likening of Richard to a dog by his opponents. The Richard-as-dog trope is especially favoured by Margaret but also used by Richmond, whose final triumph over Richard assigns the former king to the animal kingdom only: “God and your arms be praised, victorious friends: / The day is ours; the bloody dog is dead” (5:5:1-2). Richmond’s lines imply that his new rule will be a human(e) one, setting rational kingship against animalistic tyranny, and the trope is arguably anticipated by Richard’s own willingness to exchange his kingdom for a horse in his final lines immediately before Richmond’s proclamation of victory. In this sense, Richard’s claim to human status is closely bound up with animal imagery that unsettles it and, while his animality is his cruelty (and vice versa), at the end of the play it has also become his abjection.

While these animal references are, as I say, tropes, I am not convinced that the animals in *Richard III* are there simply to serve symbolic purposes; or rather, I do not believe that the symbolism is simple. The early reference to barking dogs by Richard is particularly ambiguous in this respect. Why would the dogs bark at Richard as he halts by them? Because his misshapen form unsettles them? Because their barking confirms his exclusion by other humans? Or because, rather than seeing him as a stranger, they recognise a certain kinship, which he, by referring to them, recognises too? (And which is confirmed to the audience by the subsequent references to Richard as dog-like by the other characters?) Rather than representing the other side of the human-animal binary, the barking dogs in *Richard III* seem to suggest an interspecies relation that is unclear in its division.

Human-dog relations in Shakespeare have recently been analysed by Bryan Alkemeyer with reference to another early play in the Shakespeare canon, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*. According to Alkemeyer, the play’s depiction of the relationship between Crab the dog and Lance his master (con)fuses their species in ways that, I would argue, resemble some of the confusion I am tracing in *Richard III*. Alkemeyer cites, for instance, Lance’s re-enactment of his departure from his family in which he swaps selves with Crab several times: “I am the dog. No, the dog is himself, and I am the dog—Oh, the dog is me, and

I am myself” (2:3:21–22). Significant for my discussion too is Crab’s (in)famous lack of pity, which Alkemeyer reads by the letter, and which I want to return to further on. For now, I wish to underline Alkemeyer’s point that *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* (also) contains a species reversal by which, as he says, “Shakespeare dislodges conventional understandings of the human” (39).

Richard’s barking dogs do not belong to Lady Anne’s category of compassionate beasts: their behaviour, like Richard’s, is in line with the play’s representations of ferocity and cruelty. However, later in the play, two dog-like humans, or human-like dogs, perform a decided shift from cruelty to compassion. In James Tyrrell’s account of the princes’ murder in the tower, the two murderers, Dighton and Forrest, hired to complete the royal infanticide, are overcome with emotion even as they undertake the act: “Dighton and Forrest, who I did suborn / To do this piece of ruthless butchery, / Albeit they were fleshed villains, bloody dogs, / Melted with tenderness and mild compassion” (4:3:4-7). Is it a sign of their underlying humanity despite their dog-like nature that the murderers should be subject to “tenderness and mild compassion”? Or is it that, being bloody dogs (Tyrrell does not indicate that the dog reference is metaphorical), they are nonetheless capable of compassion, like Lady Anne’s fierce beast? As Laurie Shannon has pointed out, some early modern thinkers berated humans, rather than animals, for behaving cruelly, which would also complicate a straightforward reading of supposed animal-like cruelty in Tyrrell’s account. Referring to writings by, among others, Erasmus and Luther, Shannon notes that “[t]he persistent idea that a tyrant declines from a civil humanity into savage animality contradicts a rival observation about species and violence” (75). The point here is that to some early moderns, humans, despite their supposed rationality, could not be trusted to be kind, not even or especially not, to their own kind. Shannon cites, for example, Luther’s observation of animal compassion in contrast to a human lack of pity: “When a pig is slaughtered or captured and other pigs see this, we observe that the other pigs clamor and grunt as if in compassion [...]. Only man, who is after all rational, does not spring to the aid of his suffering neighbour in time of need and has not pity on him” (qtd. in Shannon 75-76).

Thus, while scholars working on early modern emotion have not paid a great deal of attention to animals, scholars such as Shannon and Fudge, working with the perspectives of historical animal studies and posthumanism, have addressed the complicated question of human-animal cruelty and, by extension, compassion within early modern discursive frameworks. Fudge observes a similar perception in the period to that noted by Shannon. Citing sixteenth- and seventeenth-century sources, she finds an early modern understanding of cruelty that is inescapably human:

By being cruel, humans destroy other humans, but more significantly in this discourse, they destroy their own humanity and descend to the status of the beast. Paradoxically, this descent is something only humans can achieve. Animals, it would seem, are wild but not cruel; or, if they are depicted as being cruel then that cruelty is in this logic an anthropomorphic, not (to use an anachronistic term) a zoological statement. (*Brutal Reasoning* 68-69)

Shannon and Fudge engage more with the question of cruelty than with that of compassion, but their observations are decidedly helpful in unsettling compassion-centred discourses that privilege the human and in uncovering some of the context for Lady Anne's compassionate beast. An early modern text regularly cited by early modern animal studies scholars—Edward Topsell's bestiary *The Historie of Foure-footed Beastes* (first published in 1607 and in an extended edition in 1658) offers several, sometimes contradictory, perceptions of animal emotion behaviour. To the many meticulous depictions of the physical characteristics of the animals listed in his bestiary, Topsell adds lengthy anecdotes and historical and literary references to describe the behaviours and dispositions, including emotional dispositions, of his subjects. He draws on humoral vocabulary—a key discourse very familiar indeed to scholars working on emotions in the early modern period—and finds that horses can be melancholy (as well as mad and frantic), elephants can be deeply sorrowful and love-sick—that is, love-sick for humans—while cows show a strong sense of emotional affinity with each other and “are said to loue their fellowes with whom they draw in yoake most tenderly, whom they seeke out with mourning if he be wanting” (80).

Although many of the non-domesticated animals in Topsell's bestiary are predictably fierce, he frequently supplies a counter-narrative. His lions, for example, are both cruel and bloodthirsty, but their cruelty is offset by stories about their high-mindedness and how they deal justly with both humans and animals, correctly measuring out their revenges and not killing unless necessary. They are also highly emotional, especially when mourning the death of their cubs, courageous, companionable (including to humans) and, not least, compassionate. In describing what he calls the admirable disposition of lions, Topsell commends them for their ability to love both animals and humans and, crucially, their honourable sparing of weaker creatures and a compassionate attitude towards human misery:

Their clemencie in that fierce and angry nature is also worthy commendation, and to be wondered at in such beastes, for if one prostrate himselfe vnto them as it were in petition for his life, they often spare except in extremitie of famine; and likewise they seldome destroy women or children [...] *Solinus* affirmeth that many Captiuies hauing bene set at liberty, haue met with Lyons as they

returned home, weake, ragged, sicke, and disarmed, safely without receiuing any harme or violence. (Rr6r)

According to another of Topsell’s anecdotes, lions will even understand human speech when they are entreated to show compassion. He relates the Libyan story of a fugitive woman who is set upon by a group of lions but escapes by using supplicant speech and gestures,

[f]alling down on her knees vnto them, beseeching them to spare her life, telling them that she was a stranger, a captiue, a wanderer, a weake, a leane and lost woman, and therefore not worthy to bee deuoured by such couragious and generous beastes as they: at which words they spared her, which thing she confessed after her safe returne. (Rr6v)

We might thus detect a through-line of shared cultural references between Lady Anne’s compassionate beast and Topsell’s merciful lions, whose nature seems to consist of equal parts fierceness and clemency.

Are Topsell’s animals anthropomorphic? Yes and no. Many of the qualities he attributes to the lion are predictable to a degree that suggests the interference of human imagination, and there is, of course, nothing remotely empirical about his gathering of evidence when it comes to animal emotion. Yet perhaps one of the most striking aspects about Topsell’s text—one that contradicts the impression that the emotional dispositions of his animals are thinly disguised human practices—is the suggestion in his dedication to the dean of Westminster, “the reverend and right worshipfvll Richard Neile”, that humans should look to animals to learn how to practice compassion:

Were not this a good perswasion against murder, to see all beastes so to maintaine their natures, that they kill not their owne kind. Who is so vnnaturall and vnthankfull to his parents, but by reading how the young *Storkes* and *Wood-peckers* do in their parents olde age feed and nourish them, will not repent, amend his folly, and bee more natural? What man is so void of compassion, that hearing the bounty of the *Bone-breaker Birde* to the young *Eagle*, will not become more liberall? (A5r)

Topsell does not supply any specificities regarding the behaviour of the “bone-breaker bird”, or vulture, to young eagles, so the reader must guess what he means, but what matters more is the implied image of that feared and unappreciated scavenger as a surprising embodiment of compassion. In the same vein, Topsell hopes to discourage human cruelty and tyranny with an example from the insect world: “And what King is not inuited to clemency, and dehorted from tyranny, seeing the king of Bees hath a sting, but neuer vseth the same?” (Ibid.).

While Topsell's animal lessons in compassion might serve as a cultural subtext for Lady Anne's compassionate beast, they are firmly contradicted by another Shakespearean animal, the aforementioned Crab in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*—at least according to his master Lance's often-cited description of the dog's pitiless demeanour:

I think Crab my dog be the sourest-natured dog that lives. My mother weeping, my father wailing, my sister crying, our maid howling, our cat wringing her hands, and all our house in a great perplexity, yet did not this cruel hearted cur shed one tear. He is a stone, a very pebble-stone, and has no more pity in him than a dog. (2:3:4-10)

Much of the joy (for the audience) of Lance's lament relies on it being an instance of what happens when 'real' and anthropomorphised dog(s) meet. Bearing in mind that Crab might have had a material existence on the early modern stage undoubtedly adds to the fun. But although Crab deservedly takes center-stage, figuratively, materially, and usually critically, we might also ask: what about the cat? Crab may be incapable of pity, but he is not the only animal mentioned in the account. The "hand-wringing" cat provides something of counter-narrative to Crab. The fact that Lance genders it (her) also confirms its compassionate disposition, given the early modern tendency to understand compassion as a predominantly female emotion in humoral terms.⁷ Lance's cat is of course thoroughly anthropomorphic, which perhaps counts for the fact that it is frequently overshadowed by Crab, but it arguably deserves to belong among the group of cats which has prompted more explicit investigations of the human-animal binary. This group includes Montaigne's cat who, in *An Apology for Raymond Sebond*, prompts the philosopher to ask the famous question: "when I play with my cat, how do I know that she is not passing time with me rather than I with her?" (505), but also the cat who appears at the centre of a contemporary critical conversation.

In *When Species Meet*, Donna Haraway responds to Derrida's often-cited reaction to being watched by a cat in his bathroom, which appears in the opening sequence of Derrida's 1997 lecture 'The Animal That Therefore I Am (More to Follow)'. According to Haraway, despite his lengthy attention to the cat, Derrida fails what she calls "a simple obligation of companion species; he did not become curious about what the cat might actually be doing, feeling, thinking, or perhaps making available to him in looking back at him that

⁷ Several early modern treatises on the passions take the view that women's humoral make-up, by being moister than that of men, made them more compassionate, including Thomas Wright: "Women, by nature, are enclined more to mercie and pitie than men, because the tendernesse of their complexion moveth them more to compassion". (40)

morning” (20). Instead, as she argues, Derrida turns his attention to the question of animal suffering, which he posits as the “*first and decisive* question” in the human-animal relation (396). The question of suffering also brings Derrida to the question of human compassion with animals, or rather to the certainty of compassion with animals (because there can be no doubt about their suffering):

[T]he response to the question ‘can they suffer?’ leaves no doubt. [...] No doubt either, then, for the possibility of our giving vent to a surge of compassion, even if it is then misunderstood, repressed, or denied, held in respect. Before the *undeniable* of this response (yes, they suffer, like us who suffer for them and with them), before this response that precedes all other questions, the problematic changes ground and base. (397)

To this Haraway concedes that she “would not for a minute deny the importance of the question of animals’ suffering and the criminal disregard of it throughout human orders,” but she still insists that Derrida has got the decisive question wrong:

The question of suffering led Derrida to the virtue of pity, and that is not a small thing. But how much more promise is in the questions, Can animals play? Or work? And even, can I learn to play with *this* cat? Can I, the philosopher, respond to an invitation or recognize one when it is offered? What if work and play, and not just pity, open up when the possibility of mutual response, without names, is taken seriously as an everyday practice available to philosophy and to science? (22-23)

Derrida’s lecture and Haraway’s response are of course wide-ranging and highly complex in their separate and conjoined ways; my reason for bringing them into the discussion of this article is ‘simply’ the centrality of compassion to the disagreement between them. It is curious that Haraway berates Derrida for *only* getting to the point of pity. My suggestion is that not pausing over the question of how actually to define pity is a missed opportunity for both philosophers. It is perhaps because Haraway leaves Derrida’s unilateral pity unquestioned—a pity that stems from a human response to the animal, but not the other way around—that she finds insufficient promise in his questions. She proposes an alternative set of questions—can animals play or work?—that she finds more promising for the possibility of “mutual response”. But this, I would argue, fails fully to recognize the potential mutuality of compassion. In other words, neither Derrida nor Haraway inverts the perspective to ask not if humans should pity animals but if animals can pity humans.

As I have tried to demonstrate, thinking about animals as compassionate can be a productive route to unsettling ingrained patterns of thought about humans and animals, and the early modern period offers a rich ground for

pursuing this course. I would argue that the early modern texts I have looked at in this article ask questions about compassion that are not part of Haraway's response to Derrida. That is, if animals can pity humans does that not cross a line where the animal's subjectivity potentially even overrides that of the human, so that, in fact, the human turns out to be the object? On a fundamental, even if farcical, level this question is implied by poor Lance in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* with respect to Crab's behaviour. Because if we read Crab's behaviour as characteristic, not of dogs or animals in general, but of his particular dog personality, which I would argue is what Lance is telling us, it is no longer the case that animals are incapable of pity, only that *this* animal, Crab, is pitiless. Which might explain why Lance laments his behaviour instead of taking it as a matter of course. Moreover, Lance clearly craves becoming the object of Crab's pity. Failing that, he takes on, as Brian Alkemeyer also notes, an abject position in relation to Crab, by taking the punishments for Crab's various 'crimes' upon himself.⁸ In other words, Lance suffers for Crab, but not in the sense implied by Derrida. Which is to say, paying close attention to pity—what it is and what it does—is an instance where early modern 'posthumanist' discourse might productively return the gaze on contemporary critical positions.

I have so far looked at two of Shakespeare's early plays, *Richard III* and *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, but the conjunction of humans, compassion and the nonhuman is a concern of Shakespeare's throughout his career. In fact, Shakespeare's most explicit example of nonhuman compassion engenders a turning point in the plot of *The Tempest*. Describing the afflictions of the shipwrecked party under Prospero's charm, Ariel dwells on old Gonzalo, whose "tears run down his beard like winter's drops / From eaves of reeds" (5:1:16-17), and suggests that if Prospero could see them, his "affections would become tender" (5:1:18-19), to which Prospero replies:

Dost thou think so, spirit?

ARIEL

Mine would, sir, were I human.

PROSPERO

And mine shall.

Hast thou, which art but air, a touch, a feeling

Of their afflictions, and shall not myself,

(One of their kind, that relish all as sharply,

Passion as they), be kindlier moved than thou art?

(5:1:16-23)

⁸ As Alkemeyer notes, "Lance regularly claims responsibility for Crab's misdeeds: 'I have sat / in the stocks for puddings he hath stolen, otherwise / he had been executed. I have stood on the pillory for / geese he hath killed, otherwise he had suffered for't (4:4:29-32)'" (39)

Prospero is reminded of his moral obligation towards his own species. The obligation comes, as his response to Ariel indicates, from a sense of kinship sealed by an emotional commonality—Prospero and his fellow humans feel emotion (or passion in early modern terms) in the same way—from which Ariel is apparently excluded. But it is still the nonhuman Ariel who, by deploying humanist rhetorical devices in the vivid depiction of old Gonzalo’s sorrow, re-educates Prospero, which, given classical rhetoric’s stipulation that a speaker must experience the emotion they seek to induce in their audience, begins to contradict that human monopoly. In this sense, the passage, like the exchange between Lady Anne and Richard in *Richard III*, is potentially stranger than it looks. The answer to the question of why Lady Anne would imagine a beast to be capable of compassion is not just that Richard is so exceptionally—or *inhumanly*—cruel that even a beast is more compassionate than he is. Nor is it that Richard’s cruelty makes him stoop to beastly levels. Instead, as we have seen, Lady Anne’s compassionate beast can be read along an early modern line of thought that allows both human and nonhumans to share in compassion as an emotional phenomenon. This also means that compassion discourses which rely on a distinct human-animal binary should be read with care.

Reading the nonhuman in early modern compassion discourse thus encompasses examples of humans learning their compassion lessons from animals to the invention of a nonhuman creature, who, if not directly capable of compassion, is decidedly capable of teaching it to humans. The human/nonhuman binary arguably separates Prospero and Ariel quite unequivocally. There is less species confusion or reversal at play here than in some of the other examples in this article. But while Prospero’s compassion *seems* to be what sets him apart as human, other compassionate discourses in the period do not privilege his species in this way, which makes it more complicated to accept compassion as the dividing factor between him and Ariel. By contrast, we might think about compassion discourse as a means to question and ultimately expand the notion of kinship in this passage. Including posthumanist approaches into historicized accounts of emotion, then, helps to detect alternative accounts to the ones we might take for granted and to accept nonhuman compassion as one of these accounts, strange though it may be.

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Darlena Ciraulo*

Superhero Shakespeare in Golden Age Comics

Abstract: Albert Lewis Kanter launched *Classic Comics* in 1941, a series of comic books that retold classic literature for a young audience. Five of Shakespeare's celebrated plays appear in the collection. The popularity of *Classics Illustrated* encouraged Seaboard Publishing to issue a competitive brand, *Stories by Famous Authors Illustrated* (1949-51), which retold three Shakespearean dramas. Although both these enterprises aimed to reinforce a humanist perspective of education based on Western literature, the classic comics belie a Posthuman aesthetic by presenting Shakespearean characters in scenes and postures that recall Golden Age superheroes. By examining the Shakespearean covers of *Classic Illustrated* and *Stories by Famous Authors*, this essay explores how Shakespearean characters are reimagined as Superhuman in strength and power.

Keywords: Shakespeare, Superhero, Superpowers, Posthuman, *Classics Illustrated*, *Stories by Famous Authors Illustrated*.

In 1941, Albert Lewis Kanter launched *Classic Comics*, a series of comic books that retold classic literature in comic panels for a juvenile audience. Encompassing over 160 volumes, the series would eventually morph into the famously titled *Classics Illustrated* in 1947 (Jones, 9-16).¹ Printing a wide range of engaging adaptations in easy-to-read language—from Homer's *Iliad* to Cervantes's *Don Quixote* to Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*—the series brought a sizeable sampling of timeless masterpieces into the hands of young adults. Its motto, "Featuring stories by the world's greatest authors" (#1, October 1941), reinforced Kanter's initiative to deliver in an enjoyable format the works of prominent writers (predominately from the Western canon) to its readership. Five of Shakespeare's celebrated plays appear in the total collection, and they

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¹ I'm indebted to *Classics Illustrated: A Cultural History* for editorial information regarding artists, dates, and adaptors of the retellings.

represent a substantial contribution from a single-appropriated author: *Julius Caesar* (#68, February 1950); *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (#87, September 1951); *Hamlet* (#99, September 1952); *Macbeth* (#128, September 1955); and *Romeo and Juliet* (#134, September 1956). Although ghostwritten, the adaptations of Shakespeare's plays incorporated much of the playwright's poetic language into the text. Even so, Kanter wanted his audience to read the actual works themselves, so he appended the following recommendation to each edition: "Don't miss the added enjoyment of reading the original." Shakespearean drama adhered to the underlying ideology of *Classics Illustrated*, one that embraced the humanistic dictum of *utile dulci*: fiction should delight and instruct (Horace, 479).

The popularity of *Classics Illustrated*, which ran from 1941-69, sparked Seaboard Publishing to issue a copycat brand competitively called *Stories by Famous Authors Illustrated* (1949-51), later shortened to *Famous Authors Illustrated*. Out of the thirteen titles that saw print from this series, three included Shakespeare: *Macbeth* (#6, August 1950); *Hamlet* (#8, October 1950); and *Romeo and Juliet* (#10, November 1950). These comics promised "A Treasury of Celebrated Literature" for "easy and enjoyable reading." The inside cover of the first edition, "The Scarlet Pimpernel" (#1, January 1950), melodramatically promises to give its audience "the imperishables," which have stood "the severest test of all—the test of time." The publisher of *Classics Illustrated*, Gilberton Company, eventually cornered the classic comics market for adolescents by acquiring this rival series (Jensen, 97).² Their underlying agenda abided by the belief that Great Books impart invaluable human experiences that better the ethical constitution of the readers and advance their education: "The Great Books Good For You" creed of pre and postwar America (Beam, 57-74). However, just as "imperishable" books conjure up the "imperishable" men and women of comic books, *Classic Illustrated* and *Stories by Famous Authors Illustrated* belie a Posthuman aesthetic. By creating Shakespearean characters who resemble Golden Age superheroes (1938-58), classic comics reshape Shakespeare's Marc Antony, Romeo, Hamlet, Macbeth, and even Oberon, into caped personas who exhibit augmented strength and power beyond the ordinary.

² Gilbert extended its market control to include *Classics Illustrated Junior* (1953-62), which repackaged seventy-seven fairy tales, myths, and legends to a preadolescent audience. The only other successful comic book series that occupied an educational place in the market in the period was Maxwell C. Gaines's *Pictures from the Bible* and *Picture Stories from American History* (Jean Paul Gabilliet, 28).

The Imperishables

One definition of “Posthuman” that is especially applicable to comic book superheroes centers on the idea of “augmentation.” According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the word “Posthuman” can signify “a hypothetical species that might evolve from human beings, as by means of genetic or bionic augmentation.” Although not necessarily enhanced by genes or bionics, comic superheroes nonetheless perform extraordinary feats based on an array of remarkable abilities that transform them into mega entities of speed, stamina, and courage. They are, in essence, augmented. When, for example, the boy Billy Batson says “Shazam,” he magically metamorphoses into Captain Marvel, an adult with an arsenal of super capabilities, including flight (Fawcett Comics, 1939-53). Wonder Woman not only exerts exceptional force and brawn, she also possesses advanced mental and psychic energy, in addition to using her trademark bullet-proof bracelets, a Lasso of Truth, and an invisible plane (DC Comics, 1941). Superman, the Man of Steel (DC Comics), has the dual advantage of both human and alien status. Born on the planet Krypton, his legendary talents, which include Leaping-Over-Tall-Buildings-In-A-Single-Bound, moving Faster-Than-A-Speeding-Bullet, plus X-ray vision, give this superhero a superior advantage over his enemies. As such, comic book superheroes often demonstrate super or augmented potency and agency, and this archetypal trait bestows on these characters unassailable toughness and mastery over their opponents.

Scott Jeffery identifies Posthuman bodies in comic books as “Superhuman.” This term points to the augmented form of the superhero whose physical and cerebral capabilities far exceed those found in ordinary humans. It also refers specifically to “an assemblage of socially coded affects” that shape the “Perfect Body” of the superhero in Golden era comics (Jeffery, 228). This Superhuman hero is constructed by a network of socio-historical discourses (evolutionary theory, eugenics, industrialization, technology, medicine, and urbanization, among others) that seek to idealize and aggrandize the human body beyond standard dimensions and aptitudes (Jeffery, 69-91). Moreover, because the “superhero’s *mission* is to fight evil and protect the innocent,” as Peter Coogan states, the Superhuman relies on special powers to triumph over an endless number of evildoers (4). The Superpowers that these heroes wield to defeat villains—powers that derive from advance science, highly-developed aptitudes, the supernatural, or mystical sources—“emphasize the exaggeration inherent in the superhero genre” (Coogan, 4). This exaggeration speaks to the superheroes’ enhanced qualities that enable them to literally and figuratively stand above and beyond the average person in their attempt to redress wrongs and fight for justice.

Classics Illustrated and *Stories by Famous Authors* utilized the popular appeal of the Superhuman aesthetic to promote their projects. Imperishable and

enduring, classic literature (of which Shakespeare's plays are often viewed as the pinnacle) arise as the superheroes of the book world. Not only does reading classic stories engage the audience in a war against cultural illiteracy, but it also brings youth closer to the "Superpowers" of great works themselves. In *Classics Illustrated*, a full page advertisement appears in the back of the adaptation of "A Midsummer Night's Dream." The ad describes "The World of Books" as a "Remarkable Creation of Man," one that outlives "Monuments," "Nations," and "Civilizations." When empires fall, Books,

Yet Live On
Still Young
Still As Fresh As the Day They Were Written
Still Telling Men's Hearts
Of the Hearts Of Men Centuries Dead.
("A Midsummer Night's Dream," 50)

This above statement is extracted from the booklet *The Story of the Yale Press* (1920), written by the celebrated cartoonist Clarence Day. The author praises the labor and foresight of publishers and printing houses for providing the World of Books a "harbor" for "rich bales of study" and "jeweled ideas" (7). This humanistic viewpoint reflects what Rosi Braidotti in *The Posthuman* sees as "Faith in the unique, self-regulating and intrinsically moral powers of human reason" (21). Reading the classics contributes to the betterment of the individual self by allowing one to enter into the mysterious and mystical realm of "the Hearts of Men Centuries Old." Although adhering to this doctrine, classic comics controvert their own educational values by conferring on Great Books the enhanced and Posthuman Superpower of eternity: volumes, such as *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, "Live On," overcoming time itself to impart invaluable lessons and insights to new generations of humans. The personification of great books as imperishable creations (children) of men and women bears witness not only to their human origin, but also to their Posthuman evolution and advancement.

Men of Steel

Superman's well-known nickname, Man of Steel, gives prominence to his immense toughness and durability. With his first appearance in Action Comics in 1938 (created by Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster), Clark Kent's Superpower of iron strength coincides with a body image that exudes muscle and might. Likewise, the Shakespearean male heroes who appear on the covers of classic comics show an augmented and enhanced physicality that conforms to the Superhuman corporeality of Golden Age heroes. The physiques of Marc Antony,

Romeo, Hamlet, Macbeth, and Oberon, are modeled on the perception of white male power and privilege of which Superman is the exemplar of the period. Although Superman is fashioned as an alien outsider, and although he was created by Jewish-American immigrants, “whiteness,” as Aldo J. Regalado reminds us in *Bending Steel*, “remained operative in superhero fiction”(9). Thus, the early genre of classics comics avoids adaptations of *Othello*, for instance, in which the main character is a black warrior, as well as the General of the Venetian army. Moreover, it is the able and active Shakespearean characters who become larger-than-life figures: the “superability of empowered heroes” (Foss, 7). The ageing and decrepit King Lear does not make the cut, nor do the likes of the stout and ale-chugging Falstaff. In keeping with what Scott Jeffrey terms the “Perfect Body” of the Superhuman, Shakespearean male characters smack of Men of Steel, fighters who wage battles to right wrongs—whether justified or not in the plays.³

The first Shakespearean retelling issued by *Classics Illustrated*, “Julius Caesar” (1950), features Marc Antony eulogizing the assassinated Caesar at the forum. Illustrated by H. C. Keifer, who helped define the in-house style of the series, Marc Antony is pictured on the cover in the throes of his iconic funeral oration. Smoke from an incense resin pours across the page. He holds Caesar’s purple *pallium*, a large square mantle (Croom, n.p.) in his hands to indicate the “three and thirty” (5:1:54) stab wounds that the conspirators inflicted on Caesar’s torso. This piece of clothing looms gigantic in the drawing. We can imagine that the Roman General, Antony, addresses the crowd of plebeians with “Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears” (3:2:75), or other prominent Shakespearean lines from the scene that describe Caesar’s blood-stained and torn covering. In the illustration, Marc Antony towers over Caesar’s pyre, hands outstretched, in a red tunic with a green mantle, or cloak, across his shoulder. While the illustration portrays a critical and highly dramatic moment in the storyline, it also shows Marc Antony costumed in a manner that evokes the caped costume of the superhero, especially since in modern usage “mantle” and “cloak” both can connote a sleeveless cape. Not only does Antony wear a type of cape, as well as cuffs, but Caesar’s *pallium* takes center stage in the picture. In the iconography of comics, “The cape alone,” writes Peter Coogan, “stands for the idea of the superhero”(7).⁴ Both Marc Antony and Caesar—the man in Shakespeare’s words who bestrode “the narrow world / Like a Colossus” (1:2:135-36)—project a larger-than-life image.

³ For discussions of the non-Perfect body, or disabled body, in comics, see Scott Thomas Smith and José Alaniz, 69-91.

⁴ Although depicted with a mantle on the cover, the inside picture of Marc Antony shows him dressed in Lupercal attire to suggest his role as the New Dionysus.

The *Classics Illustrated* cover of “Julius Caesar” undergoes a change in the revised edition to enlarge on Marc Antony’s position as a “cape,” a proverbial Man of Steel (artists George Evans with Reed Crandall, adaptation Alfred Sundal, revised 1962). According to Mike Benton, “after 1951 new covers were done in a painted style in contrast to the cartoon-line drawing covers of the 1940s” (124), though the interiors basically remained the same. This updated and upscale cover depicts two centurion Roman soldiers battling hand-to-hand. Each wears the standard Roman military gear: cuirass, or breastplate, red-plumed helmet, wrist guards, a shield, and the all-important cape, or *sagum* (D’Amato and Sumner, 54). Their flowing red capes, rippling muscles, and explosive fighting all dominate this action frame, making it reminiscent of the dynamic energy and sensationalism of superhero comics. The two soldiers on the cover of “Julius Caesar” represent the two opposing armies at the Battle of Philippi in which Marc Antony and Octavius Caesar gain victory over Brutus and Cassius. The soldier on the cover who faces the reader, I would suggest, symbolically embodies the potent vigor of Antony, whose super charisma not only overshadows the rhetoric of others in the play, but whose desire to retaliate for the murder of Caesar catapults him into the superhero arena, a righter of wrongs, standing, in the words of Shakespeare, like a “triple pillar of the world” (*Ant*, 1:1:12), eyes glowing “like plated Mars,” the Roman god of war (*Ant*, 11:1:4).



Fig. 1. “Julius Caesar.” *Classics Illustrated*, 1962

Marc Antony's Superhuman characterization in Shakespeare carries over into the comic book realm. As stated in *Superhero Bodies*, "The superhuman body is a site of possibility; its mutability through costume, pose, or literal, physical transformation is key to its enactment of fear and desire (3). The tension between fear and desire, between invincibility and powerlessness, undergirds the superhero's materiality, though hope and indestructability win out in the early comics. The fact that the historical Antony does not survive—eventually suffering suicide as related in Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*—remains outside of the imaginative purview of "Julius Caesar." However, the cover of "Romeo and Juliet" recast the tragedy of star-crossed love into a Superhuman battle that pits unshakable passion against the villains who want to crush and destroy it (artists George Evans with Reed Crandall). Romeo is portrayed on this *Classics Illustrated* cover with Man-of-Steel confidence and grit, clashing swords in the hot streets of Verona with his nemesis, Tybalt. This realistic interpretation boasted "handsomely drawn Italian Renaissance costumes and architecture, [with] carefully observed principal characters" (Jones, 186). In a deadly skirmish that sets right against wrong, love against hate, Montagues against Capulets, Romeo fights not only to avenge the death of Mercutio, but to assert the invincibility of his undying devotion for Juliet.



Fig. 2. "Romeo and Juliet." *Famous Authors Illustrated*, 1950. "Romeo and Juliet." *Classics Illustrated*, 1956

The cover of "Romeo and Juliet" from *Famous Authors Illustrated* (illustrated by H.C. Kiefer, adapted by D.E. Dutch) once again pictures the infamous duel between Romeo and Tybalt. It also suggests Romeo's obsessive dedication to Juliet. In fact, this cover may have influenced George Evan's

artistic rendering above of the tragedy for *Classics Illustrated* issued six years later. The Superhuman passion that fuels Romeo in this version is enhanced by his appearance as a “caped” revenger. Costumed in purple doublet and hose, plus a red Cavalier Shoulder Cape with yellow accoutrements, Romeo has just thrust his flashing rapier into the trunk of his enemy, Tybalt. Benvolio also appears on the cover in the position of a side-kick. He is pictured with his arm on Romeo in a futile attempt to stop the violent feud and protect his friend from the wrath of the Prince. As a side-kick, Benvolio is paired with Tybalt, the “hot tempered nephew of Lady Capulet,” as his foe (“Romeo and Juliet,” 2). In the comic panels of the story, the rich color scheme of Romeo’s clothing (his purple outfit and magnificent red cape) mirrors the royal habiliments of his kin, Prince Escalus, to imply prestige and powerfulness. As Elizabeth Currie writes, clothing in the Renaissance “could bind individuals into a carefully structured hierarchy” (7). Yet Romeo moves beyond the socio-political system of Verona to transform into a Superpower emblem of timeless love. The apocalyptic description of Romeo and Juliet’s forever-enduring commitment to each other points to its indestructibility beyond cosmic life: “a love that out-shines the sun—until life’s candles are snuffed out” (“Romeo and Juliet,” 2). This language of adoration raises Romeo’s zeal (as well as Juliet’s) to a Superpower intensity and height.⁵

The covers of *Stories by Famous Authors Illustrated* depict the actual book covers of each literary piece, so that the classic comic book draws attention to itself as a literary artifact. This metafiction—reading about reading a great book—becomes accentuated in “Hamlet” where the work itself is marketed as a Superpower book (illustrated by Henry Kiefer, adapted by Dana E. Dutch). The back matter of the volume reads: “Enjoy the thrills and excitement which have made HAMLET the outstanding story of all times, the world’s most popular play” (“Hamlet,” back cover). Shakespeare’s Danish tragedy excels all other literature due to its universal appeal and global reach, being “the most magnificent and powerful of Shakespeare’s plays” (“Hamlet,” back cover). The greatest of the great, the literary masterpiece of *Hamlet*, as well as the immortal character, possesses a shield of invincibility that corresponds to the Man-of-Steel ethic of durability and endurance. Concomitantly, the image on the comic book cover utilizes what Terrence R. Wandtke calls the standard “iconographic style” of superhero comics: “caricature, exaggeration for impact, motion-related transitional effects, the regular use of visual clichés, and the absence of background material” (92). Hamlet is thus fashioned as a muscular man of action, rather than the legendary thinker who compulsively ruminates on death.

⁵ Although female characters from Shakespeare’s plays are usually not put on the cover of the comic books, later *Classic Illustrated* editions feature Juliet and Ophelia, alongside their male counterparts (“Romeo and Juliet,” 1969; “Hamlet,” 1969). This alteration reflects the growing female readership in the Silver Age of comics.



Fig. 3. “Hamlet.” *Stories by Famous Authors Illustrated*, 1950. “Hamlet.” *Classics Illustrated*, 1952

The cover of “Hamlet” (adapted by Samuel Willinsky) reimagines the grave scene of Act Five as a slug fest between Laertes and Hamlet. The illustrator, Henry Kiefer, was a “sometime Shakespearean actor” who “sport[ed] a cape and declaimed rather than spok[e]” (Jones, 64). Kiefer’s theatrical experience and bearing, along with his eccentric cape (not unlike a superhero’s) brings a dramatic energy to the artwork that deepens the intensity of Hamlet’s portrayal. As the Prince of Denmark duk[es] it out in a hand-to-hand dogfight with his adversary, Laertes, both men are illustrated wearing long capes: Hamlet in black, Laertes in red. The different shades of the costumes underscore the antagonism between the two fighters, while the “striking, idiosyncratic” capes constitute a chief part of the superhero’s “signature outfit,” as Glen Weldon notes (13). Moreover, this action-filled illustration conforms to the iconographic style of superhero comics. The two brawlers have jumped into Ophelia’s grave in a titanic contest of wills, their blows stunning the distant, small-figured onlookers in the picture’s backdrop (Claudius, Gertrude, and so on). Ophelia’s corpse is the site of male aggression and frenzy where each character believes himself to be the champion of right, an avenger of a perceived injustice against a sister, ex-lover, or even a father. In the cover picture, Hamlet gains the victory by overwhelming his opponent in a stranglehold. In Shakespeare’s story, however, it is Laertes who has the upper hand in the rumble, as evidenced in Hamlet’s plea, “Prithee take thy fingers from my throat” (5:1:246). This modification by the illustrator enhances Hamlet’s strength. Although this comic book “Hamlet” attempts to stay true to the origin text, the cover subtly alters the storyline to augment Hamlet’s supercharged grief and feelings of reprisal.

Kryptonite

Based in myth and religion, the Superpowers of comic book characters exhibit the “strength and extraordinary abilities” found in mythological heroes and religious persons (Arnaudo, 130 and Fingerroth, 31-45). For instance, Superman’s enormous vigor and toughness are rooted in the fortitude and sway of the biblical Samson, or Wonder Woman’s roots can be located in Greco-Roman Amazonian mythos (Cocca, 25-55, Lepore, 190-91). Equally, the Man of Steel’s vulnerability to Kryptonite, his heel-of-Achilles, resembles Samson’s analogous hair weakness, and Wonder Woman’s strength evaporates in the Golden Age when her Bracelets of Submission are chained together by men. In constructing Shakespearean characters as Superheroes, classic comics also imbued their illustrations with touches of their vulnerabilities, or what might be called their tragic flaws. For example, A. C. Bradley in his famous study of Shakespearean tragedy defines the hero as an augmented being:

His nature is also exceptional, and generally raises him in some respect much above the average level of humanity [. . .] desire, passion or will attains in [tragic heroes] a terrible force. (19-20)

This “terrible force” ignites the action of the drama, propelling heroes to their catastrophic, ground-shattering downfalls. Perhaps due to their “Super” attributes, Shakespearean tragedies were generally adapted by *Classic Illustrated* and *Stories by Famous Authors Illustrated*, rather than the comedies or histories. They may have even aided in shaping the Superhero genre itself.⁶ Not dissimilar to Kryptonite, the terrible force that impairs and ultimately destroys Shakespearean tragic heroes is suggested on the very covers of some of the comic books. It is no wonder that “Kryptonite” in modern slang denotes a person’s weakness, or “particular threat to one who is otherwise powerful,” over and beyond Superman’s powerlessness to it (the free dictionary, n.p.).

The cover of *Classics Illustrated* “Hamlet” (illustrated by Alex A. Blum) depicts Hamlet’s troubled encounter with the Ghost, the spirit of Old Hamlet, in Act 1, scenes 4-5. Blum’s artistic flair favored clean and sculptured line work that, in its simplicity, imparted “compositional balance” and “pictorial clarity” (Jones, 77). The strikingly sharp-hewn scene of the cover captures the “terrible force,” in Bradley’s words, that will shortly erupt in Hamlet’s bosom to ignite the plays’ spiraling cascade of mayhem and disaster. He has been running frantically up the castle’s stone bulwarks to catch up with a golden specter, the

⁶ For the ways in which classic literature shapes and is shaped by comics, see George Kovacs and C. W. Marshall.

Ghost. Prince Hamlet wears a regal purple cape over his blue doublet and hose, and he also sports weaponry, a dagger and rapier: the embodiment of Superhero perfection. Yet his disturbed countenance, drawn in profile, suggests a dark stirring of anger and revenge, the Kryptonite unleashed. Upon hearing in amazement the gory details of his father's killing,

Sleeping, by a brother's hand
Of life, of crown, of queen at once dispatched,
.....
Oh, horrible! Oh, horrible, most horrible! (*Ham.*, 1:5:76-81)

Hamlet's impassioned longing for vengeance begins in earnest. The duality of the sky on the comic book cover foreshadows Hamlet's anguish and future perplexities. Half of the firmament is colored in black to visualize nighttime, the other a pinkish yellow of daylight. The hours in which the Ghost visits Elsinore and departs in Shakespeare's play run the gamut from midnight to dawn. Blum's vision of the ghostly encounter between the armed phantom and son uses a mix of pigments to specify this compressed timeframe; however, the dichotomy of the heavens also suggests Hamlet's split persona: his new masked identity as a madman with an "antic disposition" (*Ham.*, 1:5:181). Embedded within the cover of "Hamlet" lies the Kryptonite of this profoundly distraught and unstable character, caught in an excessively tormented battle between performing deeds of valor and living in crippling doubt.

The cover of "Macbeth" in the *Classics Illustrated* series (illustrated by Alex Blum, adapted by Lorenz Graham) reveals "the terrible force" brooding in the thoughts of the Scottish thane. It depicts Macbeth's soliloquy, "a dagger before the mind" speech, right before the murder of King Duncan (2:1:34-65). Dressed in a blue medieval tunic with a red cape, Macbeth wears a horned helmet to emphasize his role as a warrior. In Shakespeare's play, Macbeth's (and Banquo's) superiority on the battlefield is compared to "cannons overcharged with double cracks." Both men "double redoubled strokes upon the foe" (1:2:37-8). Their martial prowess and agility exceed human capability and are thus described in non-human terminology. But it is Macbeth who is invested with other-worldly Superpowers, as Ross likens him to "Bellona's bridegroom" (1:2:56), or husband to the Roman goddess of war. In some accounts, she is married to the god of war himself, Mars. Macbeth's expression on the cover of *Classics Illustrated*, however, shows the extent to which his legendary ambition, his Kryptonite, has propelled him down a path of destruction. Once untouchable, Macbeth's dread and apprehension now dominate the page, as he contemplates the dagger before his eyes, or the "false creation / Proceeding from the heat-oppressed brain" (2:1:39-40). A glowing red and gold light illuminate the dagger, and the ghastly image presages Duncan's "silver skin laced with his golden blood" (2:3:114). This vision in the play prompts Macbeth to question

not only his sanity but the “bloody business” of the regicide (2:1:49). The stark picture of a weakened Macbeth on the cover of the same issue diminishes the notion of his Superhuman might, but it nonetheless aggrandizes Macbeth’s “vaulting ambition, which o’erleaps itself” (1:7:27): his Kryptonite.



Fig. 4. “Macbeth.” *Classic Illustrated*, 1950. “Macbeth,” *Stories by Famous Authors Illustrated*, 1950

The cover of “Macbeth” in *Stories by Famous Authors Illustrated* (illustrated by H. C. Kiefer, adapted by Dana E. Dutch), presents a strikingly similar rendering of the Scottish thane. He dons a blue tunic, red cape, and horned helmet. He wears golden cuffs and displays daggers on his double-wrapped belt. The cover focuses on Macbeth receiving the prophecies of the witches in Act 4, scene 1 of the play, and it foregrounds the Weird sisters’ bubbling cauldron replete with Paddock and Grimalkin, toad and cat, not to mention other reptilian familiars. The face of Macbeth is contorted into a horrified demonstration of shock and terror, as an armed head emerges from the witches’ concoction. In the play, this apparition is accompanied by “Macbeth! Macbeth! Macbeth! Beware Macduff, / Beware the Thane of Fife” (4:1:71-2). Although this cover depicts a different dramatic scene than that of *Classics Illustrated*, both illustrations show a vulnerable, debilitated and enfeebled Macbeth. In fact, the deterioration of Macbeth’s mind and body is reinforced in the full-page panel that introduces the Scottish play. The Shakespearean lines printed in the opening of the comic book, “Sleep no More! Macbeth does murder sleep” (“Macbeth,” 1), exemplify Macbeth’s fallen state. Even so, the narrator attempts to make Macbeth into a Superhero, one who has not succumbed completely to the Kryptonite of vaulting ambition:

He might have escaped the consequences of his brutal crimes if he had chosen to flee. Instead, he charged madly onto the field of battle to meet an enemy whose sword was keen for vengeance! (“Macbeth,” 1)

This interpretation supports Macbeth as a courageous and dauntless thane who faces the onslaught of Macduff’s army in retaliation for the assassination of Duncan. His over-the-top mettle and daring recalls Macbeth’s Superhuman role as the husband to Bellona, the goddess of war.

Conclusion

The aim of *Classics Illustrated* and *Stories by Famous Authors Illustrated* was to introduce youth to great books, the Superpowers of the literary world. On the one hand, classic comics followed a humanist trajectory that saw excellent fiction, the books that stood the test of time, as a way to encourage children and young adults to read more, as well as to make delving into books more enjoyable. The adaptations would often contain biographies of the author or other curious or historical information. Although critics such as Frederic Wertham believed that Shakespeare in comic book form was harmful—“Shakespeare and the child are corrupted at the same time” (143)—publishers like Albert Kanter viewed the comic book structure as a redeeming medium for engaging youth with the figurative “invincibles,” or literary masterpieces. Yet portrayals of Shakespeare’s tragic heroes, especially the images that appear on the covers, invoke the augmented and enhanced bodies of Superheroes in Golden Age comics and, at times, their Kryptonite vulnerabilities. The cover of *Classic Illustrated’s* retelling of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (illustrated by Alex A. Blum, adapted by Samuel Willinksy) illustrates Titania fawning over Bottom with her attendant fairies. While the focus is on the lavish, beautiful figure of the fairy queen, it is the caped Oberon who most resembles a superhero, bronzed with a rippling physicality that represents the mastery and sovereignty over all who inhabit the Athenian forest, including mortals. And although in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* Duke Theseus ultimately marries Hippolyta, an Amazonian warrior, in the inside comic panels that retell Shakespeare’s play the character does not resemble her Superhero counterpart, Wonder Woman, whose mother was the Amazonian Queen Hippolyta. Rather, it is the augmented Oberon who is portrayed as both human and not human, fairy and man, existing in an imaginative, Posthuman realm, which, according to the doubter Theseus, is “more strange than true” (5:1:2).

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Robert Darcy*

Facial Recognition and Posthuman Technologies in Shakespeare's Sonnets

Abstract: The human face, real and imagined, has long figured into various forms of cultural and personal recognition—to include citizenship, in both the modern and the ancient world. But beyond affiliations related to borders and government, the human face has also figured prominently into biometrics that feed posthuman questions and anxieties. For while one requirement of biometrics is concerned with “unicity,” or that which identifies an individual as unique, another requirement is that it identify “universality,” confirming an individual’s membership in the species. Shakespeare’s sonnets grapple with the crisis of encountering a universal beauty in a unique specimen to which Time and Nature nonetheless afford no special privilege. Between fair and dark lies a posthuman lament over the injustice of natural law and the social valorizations arbitrarily marshaled to defend it.

Keywords: Shakespeare’s sonnets, facial recognition, Dark Lady, fair youth, Nature, Time, posthumanism, biometrics, face, Woody Bledsoe.

The event precipitating this inquiry into Shakespeare and posthuman experience is fictional. It is what happens in Shakespeare’s sonnet 126—something unforgivable: and it happens to the speaker as witness to the terrible negotiation between Nature and Time resulting in the death of the fair youth. The death does not itself occur in sonnet 126, but its projection is guaranteed there by nonhuman agents working against human beings. After sonnet 126, the speaker takes a dramatic turn away from certain aspects of life to which he had earlier paid fealty, namely: a commitment to biological reproduction, a celebration of idealized forms, and a preoccupation with aging and death. In light of the fair youth’s final consignment to death, a certain recognition comes over the speaker of the sonnets, and it has to do with his sudden insight into something Giorgio

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Agamben and others call a “state of exception.”¹ But while this term has been used to describe the casting of human life into a limbo between *bios* and *zoe*, human life and bare life, accomplishing its temporary dehumanization and opening the possibility for genocide,² for Shakespeare’s speaker the realization is that Nature and Time have always already conspired to dehumanize what human beings take for granted about their humanity. Definitions of dignity, justice, empathy, and the exceptionalism of the human soul have never been integrated into any credible perspective of Nature or Time who, in an admittedly difficult imaginary for them, are nonetheless agents equally associated with indignity, injustice, cruelty, and soullessness. Despite their personification (and Nature’s “doting” attitude toward the youth in Sonnet 20, for example), Nature and Time clearly remain indifferent to the way human beings perceive themselves as special, a stance critically scrutinized in posthumanist theory.

The quasi-deified status of Nature and Time in the sonnets is particularly felt given the total absence in the sonnets of any reference to theological paradigms about the God of monotheism or of Christianity.³ God apparently does not enter the speaker’s mind as he wrestles with the sonnets and their expression. His consciousness is not centered around religious convictions in the least. And yet, he struggles with Nature and Time in a familiar kind of theological agony. The procreation sonnets, with their obsessive obedience to Nature’s perceived dictum to propagate, ultimately struggle free from Nature’s imperative through a championing of the capacity of writing to produce equally good if not better terms of reproduction for the youth. This struggle progresses quite clearly in sonnets 15, 16, 17, and 18, where the gardener’s imperfect “graft” yields to a “pupil pen,” then seeks only corroboration in the companion child, and finally triumphs (somewhat inexplicably) with a sudden confidence that “this gives life to thee,” where “this” is the poem itself.⁴

But “this” declared triumph for writing as an act of reproduction is a challenge for readers, particularly as they expect that a reproduction of the

¹ See Mordini and Massari 494; Agamben sources this term to Carl Schmitt’s 1922 work *Political Theology*, where a definition of the sovereign is “he who decides on the state of exception” (Agamben, *State of Exception* 1). See also Agamben’s account of the debate over the term between Schmitt and Walter Benjamin (*State of Exception*, “Gigantomachy Concerning a Void,” 52-64).

² Agamben draws on Foucault’s formulation that the sovereignty of government makes possible the ability of the social sciences “both to protect life and to authorize a holocaust” (Foucault, *Dits et écrits*, 3:719; quoted in Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 3).

³ Not all would agree that the sonnets are secular and theologically empty: see McCoy on religious sacrifice and Hokama on prayer in the sonnets.

⁴ This progression has been generally observed; see especially, however, Nardizzi’s excellent discussion of the gardening metaphor of grafting as it relates to writing, “Shakespeare’s Penknife.”

youth will include a depiction of his face. Like all literature, Shakespeare's sonnets struggle with the face. Because language is not pictorial but verbal, the effort to produce credible imagery in language is tenuous at best. Here is why one is usually disappointed by books turned into film: the literalization of story into picture rarely matches the private imagination of the reader. And it is fair to say that each reader's private imagination cannot match that of the original author, who was the first to envision the words' original imagery. Shakespeare's sonnets pose a similar problem: no one can say with finality what the fair youth and the dark lady look like. We know one of these is a universal beauty, and the other is definitionally not. The two beloveds in the sequence—the fair youth and the dark lady—represent distinct facial brands. The youth has a face that makes him adored by everyone, and the lady has a face adored only by the speaker.

What makes the sonnets posthuman in their gesture, however, is their purported effort to capture and record human faces without actually doing so. Their celebration of the face of the beloved is an early modern version of a “deep fake,” in that they purposely falsify what are really only impressions of facial recognition. The sonnets are in fact a story of facial misrecognition, then, or of reference without referents. The human is everywhere referred to by the sonnets but nowhere captured in them. To understand facial misrecognition in the early modern period, one needs to remember that when Shakespeare was writing, painting or drawing was nearly the only way to present a person's face in their absence.⁵ And the sonnets acknowledge this by referring back to Nature's ability to paint: the youth's face is “with nature's own hand painted” (Sonnet 20). The invention of photography, of course, changed the stakes entirely for reproducing faces. In almost an opposite way to writing, modern cameras incessantly now capture the faces of human beings with what appears to be reliable precision. Human beings have probably always been obsessed with recognizing one another: One's eyes naturally dart to the eyes of another whenever another human being is in one's field of vision. And so a desire for the eventual technology of photography is not a surprising historical development.

But why should Shakespeare's sonnets remain engaging? If their effort of reproduction has been outpaced by technology, why do we continue to read about two faces that remain elusive and remote because of the inadequacy of

⁵ In recent decades, art historians have reevaluated Renaissance portraiture as more than the “mere copying of mundane appearances” and more profoundly a record of ideas “on the identity and the importance of the individual . . . , on memory and mortality, on the religious or social advancement of personages, or on the metaphysical justification of the self” (Rogers 375); for an excellent discussion of identity in Renaissance portraiture, in which empirical likeness was of only secondary importance, see Loh, “Renaissance Faciality.”

language? Would two photographs have served well enough as a replacement for these poems (see Figures 1 and 2)? I think the obvious answer is that there is something that remains nonetheless compelling precisely about failing to capture the face. And in terms of new technologies related to image duplication, there is also something concomitantly eerie about capturing a face too well. Modern technologies of facial recognition are as alienating, perhaps, as they are reassuring, and it may be because the technology does not advance a constituent set of ethics or ethical encounter. In fact, with the removal of the photographer, who at least has the capacity to bring ethical editing into the frame of the image, photographs taken with nonhuman surveillance technology and then analyzed by artificial intelligence for biometric markers of identification, for example, are strictly speaking unfettered by human ethics.



Fig. 1. Fair Youth:

<https://thispersondoesnotexist.com/>



Fig. 2. Dark Lady:

<https://generated.photos/faces>

Figures 1 and 2 are unique faces but not of real people. They are both deep fakes generated by artificial intelligence and facial learning software

In the language of one researcher into facial recognition experimentation, who is observing without any special view to the ethics of the science, the face is “our most varied attribute. Fourteen bones provide the underlying structure for the face, and these bones differ in size and shape from one person to another. A layer of fatty tissue that varies in thickness and smoothness across individuals also contributes to individual differences. This tissue separates the skin from the interconnected and criss-crossing pattern of more than 100 muscles, which permit variation in facial expression” (Liggett, cited in Seamon 363). The abstraction of the face to its component parts and features—ironically not unlike the Renaissance literary blazon (see Figures 3 and 4)—has clear dehumanizing effects as the face becomes an organ as

impersonal and interchangeable as a lung or liver.⁶ It is not surprising that one of the earliest efforts of facial recognition A.I. involved algorithms for racializing the face alongside such identifications as gender and age.⁷



Fig. 3. Woodcut printed in 1654 parodying the literary blazon of the face through a literalization of Petrarchan metaphors. (Sorel 24)

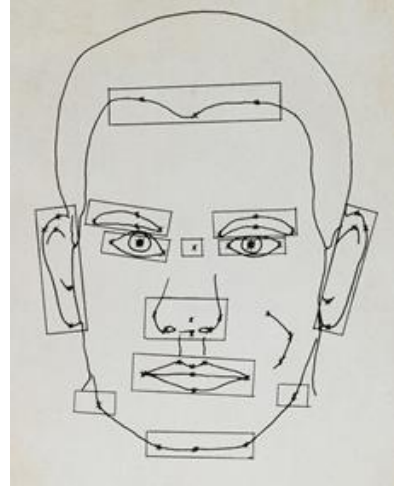


Fig. 4. Drawing from facial recognition pioneer Woody Bledsoe's papers, captioned "Points on the Face Divided into Natural Subsets for Use in the GROUPS Program." (Detail of a photo by Dan Winters; see Raviv)

⁶ In fact, the face became an "organ" in American medical nomenclature on July 3, 2014, with the advancement of techniques for its transplantation from one body to another; see Taylor-Alexander, "How the Face Became an Organ."

⁷ Raviv reports that "In March 1965—some 50 years before China would begin using facial pattern-matching to identify ethnic Uighurs in Xinjiang Province—Woody [Bledsoe, an early pioneer of facial recognition] had proposed to the Defense Department Advanced Research Projects Agency, then known as Arpa, that it should support Panoramic [Bledsoe's company] to study the feasibility of using facial characteristics to determine a person's racial background. 'There exists a very large number of anthropological measurements which have been made on people throughout the world from a variety of racial and environmental backgrounds,' he wrote. 'This extensive and valuable store of data, collected over the years at considerable expense and effort, has not been properly exploited'" ("Secret History of Facial Recognition"); see Perkowitz, "Bias in the Machine," and Williams, "Fitting the Description," on racial disparities and injustices in facial recognition; see also Tsui for ethical calls within facial recognition research related to gender and gender-neutrality.

In their superb 2008 article on biometrics for the journal *Bioethics*, Emilio Mordini and Sonia Massari recall that in ancient Greece, the word for slave was *aprosopon*, literally “faceless one,” and that the Greek word for face, *prosopon*, would become the root of the Latin word for “person” (497). Their investigation into biometrics includes a contemplation of generalized citizenship as inflected by history and the advent of the distribution of unique identity credentials, such as the passport: “This new citizen is an unmarked individual who is uniquely and reliably distinguishable as an inhabitant of a nation-state, and not as a member of a guild, village, manor or parish” (496). Biometrics such as fingerprinting and facial recognition analysis (of which the photo ID is perhaps the most widely used) would develop as key guarantors of state assignments of identity.

The human face, real and imagined, has therefore long figured into various forms of cultural and personal recognition—to include citizenship, in both the modern and the ancient world. But beyond affiliations related to borders and government, the human face has also figured prominently into biometrics that feed posthuman questions and anxieties. For while one requirement of biometrics is concerned with “unicity,” or that which identifies an individual as unique, another requirement is that it identify “universality,” confirming an individual’s membership in the species.⁸ Individuals have unique faces, in other words, but the fact that they have a face at all is a pre-condition of the most basic recognition of human, social, and political identity.

When computers begin to collect biometric markers, which they do faster and more reliably than human beings can, the posthuman nature of that work grows even more obvious. What makes biometrics of concern to posthuman theory is that faces are common across an array of animal species, too. And the automation of facial recognition must contend with this fact through well-articulated algorithms that draw distinctions between the human and the nonhuman animal. When a computer surveillance system searches for a human face, it must distinguish between what is human and what is not, but this means ultimately that it must acknowledge the animal face in order to disqualify it from (or otherwise include it in) consideration. The extension of human traits to nonhuman species excites one branch of posthuman investigation that is eager to deconstruct human exceptionalism in view of a world ecology that strains under that self-centered paradigm.⁹

⁸ The other two basic requirements for biometric identifiers along with “unicity” and “universality” are “collectability” and “permanence” (Mordini and Massari 489).

⁹ The field of animal studies in Renaissance literature is burgeoning, as is the study of non-animal ecologies similarly affected by human exceptionalism. See as a representative example Laurie Shannon, “Poor, Bare, Forked”; see also Campana and Maisano’s edited collection *Renaissance Posthumanism*.

But the technology of biometrics also informs posthuman theory precisely because it relies on computers and artificial intelligence, which prove superior in their capacity to perform originally human tasks. In consideration of what may prove insurmountable limitations on human understanding—i.e., the capacity, speed, and even cognitive reach of the human brain, constrained by the biology of evolution—the branch of posthuman life represented by A.I. poses a plausible potential for computing to develop superiority not only in speed and capacity but even in the area of cognition.¹⁰ While the ethics of A.I. remain a human problem, the A.I. of the future, after algorithmic controls are necessarily relaxed in favor of deep learning strategies, may well look more like the neutral surveillance that already exists, which gathers data without a clear ethical paradigm in place for its collection.

“Function creep” is the industry term for technologies that begin to develop in ways that they were not originally intended to fulfill. Here is where the real problem of ethics can be most acutely felt because technologies that are purposeful usually will attempt to grapple with the ethics of their use. But when a technology becomes useful in some borrowed capacity, the use often migrates ahead of the ethicists because of its sheer utility. The convenience, for example, of being able to convert a surveillance image into personal information about identity runs ahead of the researchers who are merely measuring the bones of a face to see if the computer can match separate images taken at different angles. As Mordini and Massari explain, “function creep” usually involves a “policy vacuum,” where no guidebook has been written to govern or steer a technology’s application (490).

In part, this clarifies Giorgio Agamben’s public objection to boarding a plane for the United States because of the requirement that he be photographed and fingerprinted on arrival, a government policy he compared to the tattooing of Holocaust prisoners (Agamben, “No to Bio-Political Tattooing”; Mordini and Massari 494). Without special algorithms invented and encoded by human beings, a database of biometric data functions very much like Nature and Time in the sonnets, who document human life, take note of its rise and decline, record

¹⁰ There is a suspicion among those at the vanguard of scientific knowledge that human learning may not be capable of grasping certain truths about the universe, based on structural deficiencies in the human mind as a residual limitation of biological evolution. In a 2017 broadcast event from the 92nd Street Y in New York, the American physicist Neil deGrasse Tyson commented on this suspicion: “I wonder if in fact the human intellect is sufficient to actually decode the full operations of this universe in which we live” (1:15:26-40), adding, “but that doesn’t mean I shouldn’t dream of that frontier” (1:20:45-53). He concludes the talk even more soberly with: “The larger grows the area of knowledge . . . so too grows our perimeter of ignorance. It may be that as much as we think we know . . . for all we know, we could be steeped in the center of infinite ignorance” (1:21:37-22:19).

markers of gender, race, and age, and steer its generational movement, all with a keenly felt indifference.

But facial recognition—not the misrecognition that seems to mark the sonnets—has proven problematic even in the sphere of the ethical encounter. In their introduction to a special issue of *Criticism* devoted to posthumanist literary study, Steven Swarbrick and Karen Raber (citing Claire Colebrook) analyze the human face so critical to the ethical encounter that Emmanuel Levinas proposed and that Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari shortly after criticized as “always Western, European, white, and male” (Swarbrick and Raber 319) and not even, in fact, a face at all but a trope for “the inhuman in human beings.”¹¹ Purporting to identify the special in-group status of all human beings and what they share at a minimum in order to relate ethically to one another, the Levinasian face, in the estimation of its critics, collapses humanity into a flat universality that both denies variety and aberrancy within human encounter and somehow also promotes human exceptionalism over and against the rest of the animal and natural world. In concert with these critics and with Bruno Latour, who rejects modernity as having never actually happened and looks to the sixteenth century as the “nonmodern” present’s closest mirror and intellectual ally,¹² Swarbrick and Raber suggest that the ubiquitous motif of the face in Renaissance literature—not only of the human figure in all manner of human form, but of objects, too, such as that of clocks and of the sun—make the Shakespearean text ripe for posthumanist recastings and new critiques of Levinasian faciality. And I think this is particularly true for the sonnets, where faciality proves a consistent concern: “Look in thy glass, and tell the face thou viewest, / Now is the time that face should form another” (Sonnet 3); “A woman’s face with Nature’s own hand painted / Hast thou, the master-mistress of my passion” (Sonnet 20); “Methinks no face so gracious is as mine” (Sonnet 62); “Look in your glass, and there

¹¹ Deleuze and Guattari 176, quoted in Swarbrick and Raber 319. With their typical flamboyance, Deleuze and Guattari write: “The face is not a universal. It is not even that of the white man; it is White Man himself, with his broad white cheeks and the black hole of his eyes. The face is Christ. The face is the typical European, what Ezra Pound called the average sensual man, in short, the ordinary everyday Erotomaniac” (176). See also Raber’s earlier work on Shakespearean faces in the context of posthumanism, *Shakespeare and Posthumanist Theory*, 74-88; see also Knapp’s excellent edited collection of chapters about the face in Shakespeare.

¹² Latour, “Attempt,” 480; cited in Swarbrick and Raber, 315. In *We Have Never Been Modern*, Latour clarifies his position: “So is modernity an illusion? No, it is much more than an illusion and much less than an essence. It is a force added to others that for a long time it had the power to represent, to accelerate, or to summarize—a power that it no longer holds” (40); he adds: “Would I then be, literally, postmodern? Postmodernism is a symptom, not a fresh solution. It lives under the modern Constitution, but it no longer believes in the guarantees the Constitution offers” (46).

appears a face / That overgoes my blunt invention quite" (Sonnet 103). Mirrors and faces obsess and haunt Shakespeare's speaker, making image recognition and misrecognition a central concern of the sequence in anticipation of post-human considerations about values found there.

Misrecognitions of Facial Beauty in the Sonnets

In his earliest facial reference, Shakespeare's speaker urges the young man to "Look in thy glass, and tell the face thou viewest / Now is the time that face should form another" (Sonnet 3). The direction to "form another" face is at its simplest an attempt to move the youth to recognize that his current enjoyable place in the world's youngest generation is on track to expire: the relevance of his beauty is fleeting, and its persistence will depend entirely on its fresh reproduction in the face of a child. But the direction also overdetermines the face as a site of value for the youth: his beauty resides entirely there, as the sequence repeatedly confirms.

It may be tempting to interpret the sonnets' attention to the youth's face as merely figurative of the more holistic beauty presumed to be associated with human beings in their full emotional and cognitive expression. But when the sequence asserts a different type of beauty in the dark lady sonnets to come, it nonetheless remains defensive about what superficially disqualifies that beauty through failures specific to the face: "My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun" (Sonnet 130) but rather, because dark, "they mourners seem" (Sonnet 127) in the context of a face-oriented culture. The fair youth's beauty, then, in light of the defensiveness of the dark lady's lack of beauty, is reconfirmed as part of the physicality of the face. Though he does not perform one, it is as though the speaker has earlier participated in a blazon of the youth's face in just the way he parodies such a blazon in Sonnet 130. But the distinction is not simply one of beauty because a different love detached from physical beauty is newly found in the sequence:

In faith, I do not love thee with mine eyes,
For they in thee a thousand errors note,
But 'tis my heart that loves what they despise,
Who in despite of view is pleased to dote. (Sonnet 141)

The abrupt turn in the sequence, however, from the fair youth with his universal beauty to the dark lady with an appeal that is strictly unique to the speaker, is not predicated on unfair distinctions to be drawn between standards of beauty, superficial or not, racial or otherwise oriented. The crisis of Sonnet 126 has more to do with what happens to the fair youth, who has been extolled as the epitome

of human beauty and therefore a sort of destination or apex of biological achievement—something eerily akin to later claims to an idealized Aryan biology. In Sonnet 126, the speaker suddenly realizes again what he already knew from the start, that the youth will be subject to decay and death just like everyone else in possession of a face. His face does not provide any special advantage to him in the end, despite an apparently intense interest in him paid by Nature. If ever Nature could find occasion to make an exception to the fate that all human beings share, this was the specimen to inspire that. And yet, Sonnet 126 sees her conceding to Time and paying the debt of the fair youth's longer-than-usual beauty by "render[ing]" him up in the end.

The crisis of the sequence, then, is not over designations of beauty but in the speaker's ultimate recognition that beauty is merely an exploitable tool of Nature that renders no special benefit beyond generational reproduction. The fair youth might just as well be ugly as beautiful when passing from the hands of Nature to Time, for Nature and Time are both indifferent to his special preservation or survival. It becomes particularly clear that Nature, who has some capacity to assign life expectancy to her creations, and does so differently across species, is not oriented toward individuals but rather toward species and their more general survival through generations.

Not even the quiet revolution against Time and Nature that the speaker mounts at the conclusion of the procreation sonnets—when he declares that his poetry can immortalize the youth—changes biological facts about any actual person's life. In its immediate articulation, after all, the speaker still depends on human agents and their eyes reading the paper on which the poetry is written. His imagination, in other words, has not branched into the posthuman potential of a nonhuman reader of text to receive and interpret his poetry. But the declaration does gesture to a posthuman condition, at least for the youth. If words on a page endure longer than human lives and are more easily and reliably duplicated there, then the youth is in some lesser degree of danger of disappearing from the earth despite Nature and Time continuing in their usual way.

But this does not seem to be a satisfactory achievement for the speaker, who does not recall the youth (arguably) after he disappears from the sequence.¹³ The speaker abandons the youth in fact. Everyone knows that the youth has not died yet—it will take half a lifetime still for that to happen. So why is the youth so summarily abandoned, if not in protest to the terrible realization about Nature and Time?

¹³ Sonnet 144 does refer to "a man right fair," but that brief reference is ambiguous in its attachment to the youth from before. Regardless of the ambiguity, the speaker quite noticeably removes the youth from view in the sequence with the formal farewell of Sonnet 126.

The individual biometric markers of the youth's face—those elements that make it beautiful—are no more significant, in other words, than the distinct but analogous markers available to view in the face of the dark lady. Despite distinctions of valorization made by the immediate human culture observing them, the preference imagined to be expressed for one over another by Nature proves insubstantial and purely capricious. It does not yield a meaningful benefit from a posthuman point of view. The face merely has a series of metrics that make it both universal and unique. In similar manner to Nature and Time, any A.I. can track those features of a given face without any special reference to its particular beauty.

What is recognized, therefore, in the human face besides its certain articulation of the common human fate of aging and death? The dark lady sonnets may try to focus a new effort against Nature's goals, imagining as the speaker does for himself a new originality in his activity of looking and evaluating that sets him apart from universal standards. But indifferent Nature, who neither appears nor gets mentioned again in the sequence following the first of the dark lady sonnets, remains a spectral presence as her posthuman status looms over the sonnets' project. For Nature is posthuman in every sense of the word: despite her literary personification, she is both nonhuman and superhuman in her reach and effect. And despite her expression of dotting preference, her resting state is proven to be one of indifference toward that small portion of global life that is occupied by human beings.

Both Nature and Time contribute in profound ways to the biometric markers that make a face a face, and a body a body. Nature's "prick[ing] out" of the youth in Sonnet 20 "for women's pleasure" is an attribution to her of the ability to assign arbitrarily the sex of a human child at birth. And Time steps in with his penciled lines at the eager onset of senescence, which happens much earlier than might be imagined, as the sequence makes clear: "every thing that grows / Holds in perfection but a little moment" (Sonnet 15). Both gender and age are organizing principles around which facial recognition is oriented. And these early modern preoccupations would prove to have staying power as they also guided the earliest explorations of facial recognition through artificial intelligence in the middle of the twentieth century.¹⁴

Shakespeare's sonnets resonate with modernity because of the way they seem to invent subjectivity and inwardness. But they resonate with posthuman theory for different reasons: they invalidate human observations and ascriptions of beauty—racial and otherwise—for being slow and encumbered by valorizations that don't matter to Nature and that will not matter to truly posthuman considerations, such as those of an A.I. released from algorithmic responses.

¹⁴ See both Raviv and "A Brief History."

Justice and the Racialization of the Face

“Every fair from fair sometime declines” (Sonnet 18): So perishes beauty. But so might the speaker’s sense of law and equity, justice, and fair obedience to the law be in similar jeopardy. “Fairness” in decline reflexes back on the law and its promises of equity and freedom from bias. “Dark” on the other hand, can refer to a clandestine law-breaking, or the secret spaces of conspirators who lie and cheat, who “in our faults by lies we flattered be” (Sonnet 138). The “Dark Web” is where laws are broken, for example: an ether-sphere of dark matter affords a space for lawlessness, but also a suspicion of the so-called “fair” laws of the sovereign state that serve some more justly than others. The disappearance of Nature in the dark lady sonnets—her suppression by the speaker—is readable as a denouncement of laws that decline toward something unfair. And yet the speaker must quickly understand his own participation in a human version of that indifferent justice. The face of the fair youth, extolled for its superlative beauty, is not in the end owed special advantage by any true measure of justice. And the speaker engages in a compensatory swerve away from his sycophantic fawning on Nature and Time, who spur in him a frantic effort to marshal attention around the one good specimen on which to focus all of humanity’s hopes, dreams, and eyes. In turning away from Nature and Time, but Nature in particular,¹⁵ Shakespeare’s speaker seeks refuge in a renegade space that is in defiance of conventional jurisdiction, with a lady who is dark, childless, and “rare” (Sonnet 130).

Although it is unfair to bring them into too close a constellation, Shakespeare’s speaker shares something of this swerve with the 1960s pioneer in facial recognition technology, Woody Bledsoe. Bledsoe, who early stressed the capacity of his technology to identify race (as related in note 7) made a further indirect allusion to race in a much later address to the American Association for Artificial Intelligence, which he delivered as its president. That address, made in 1985 by a man who had already devoted two decades of his professional life to facial recognition development, was titled, “I Had a Dream,” and it began:

Twenty-five years ago I had a dream, a *daydream*, if you will. A dream shared with many of you. I dreamed of a special kind of computer, which had eyes and ears and arms and legs, in addition to its “brain.”

¹⁵ In fact, of the two, only Nature is referenced one more time after the farewell to the fair youth, at sonnet 127, the introductory sonnet to the dark lady section. Generally, Nature and Time can be said to reside squarely in the fair youth sonnets. The sonnets in which Nature appears as a proper noun are 4, 11, 20, 67, 68, 84, 126, and 127. Time, as a personified entity, is harder to distinguish from the general noun, but a conservative list would include 5, 12, 15, 16, 19, 22, 44, 55, 60, 63, 64, 65, 77, 100, 115, 116, 123, 124, and 126. Not even the general term “time,” in any case, appears after sonnet 126.

I did not dream that this new computer friend would be a means of making money for me or my employer or a help for my country—though I loved my country then and still do, and I have no objection to making money. I did not even dream of such a worthy cause as helping the poor and handicapped of the world using this marvelous new machine.

No, my dream was filled with the wild excitement of seeing a machine act like a human being. . . .

My dream computer person liked to walk and play Ping-Pong, especially with me. And I liked to teach it things—because it could learn dexterity skills as well as mental concepts. And much more.


Bledsoe's speech cannot help but reference, in a somewhat provocative parallel, Martin Luther King Jr.'s famous speech that also dreamed of a future Utopia, there entirely racial in nature. For Bledsoe, the dream extends into the posthuman realm through his allusion to the intelligible intra-human problem of race. The common gesture in both Shakespeare and the mind of a pioneer into posthuman futures, both engaging as they do a racial suggestion, racial inflection, and eventual racial communion, would seem to be in part a reaction to a deep disappointment in the current state of the human. It would seem to stem from a recognition that human law—both natural and juridical—are unfriendly to the individual organism and to whole swaths of populations even, as they focus on paradigms of Nature and Time that inspire a frantic desperation for getting the work of life done correctly and quickly. Bledsoe seems to imagine an ethical creation in his computer friend, one capable of growth and learning without accompanying decay. As a witting pioneer, Bledsoe steps into the role of Nature in the same workshop featured in Sonnet 20 as he assembles his creation for now artificial life. Shakespeare's dark lady sonnets turn similarly to an underprivileged creature of Nature, deprived of the beauty that would make her universally beloved. And the dark lady is spared by the speaker what the fair youth was not: the constant relation of her life to parenting, aging, and decay—all those things that relate her so unfairly to Nature. Both Bledsoe and Shakespeare's speaker seem to find harbor in a dream of a fairer posthumanity than currently in supply, with Nature and Time's dark indifference finally overcome in both.

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Jan Kott is Dead, Long Live to the <“Hybrid”> Critic

Abstract: This article is a little tribute that a drama teacher, an editor and translator and a lecturer in English Literature would like to contribute to this *Special Issue* in Honour of Professor Dr Jan Kott, the most influential non-English speaking Shakespearean Critic in the second half of the 20th Century and early 21st Century. In the initial part of the essay we will overview Kott’s influence in the development of current Shakespearean tradition(s) in Spain from the early 1970s to the present day. In fact, his writings and critical views on William Shakespeare’s *Works* have been a decisive point in the development of new approaches to this playwright in some University Departments and Drama Schools in this country. The whole discussion will take the notion of *hybrid* and *hybridization* as the point of departure and we will draw some conclusions for discussing new critical thinking in Art (Science,) and Humanities.

Keywords: Jan Kott, William Shakespeare, translation, globalization, Shakespearean criticism, dramaturgy, hybrid teaching.

“Truly thrilling” was accessing to a unique source of information when the aim consists of analysing oral history and traditions and much more exciting when you can share it with all *netizens* and other people in such a simple way.¹ We, like many others all over the world, had been studying his essays, reading his

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¹ We invite the reader to access to the following online resource: Text und Bühne. (1990) *Jan Kott. Is still Shakespeare our Contemporary?* Youtube. 9 July 2013. Web. Accessed 15 June 2021.

memoirs or we even were fortunate enough to hear about him for other personal experiences but, till that very moment, we had not yet had an opportunity to hear one of his most outstanding features: his foreign accent when talking in English. The relevance emerged so clearly that we felt it would be a wonderful idea to use this as an extra resource to supplement this very same text because he would be entertaining while popularising his global audience(s). The title of the channel, *Text und Bühne*, gave us some clues in advance about this sight and when we played that recording, it was enchanting listening directly to Professor Dr Jan Kott lecturing on Shakespeare's *Contemporaneity*... again.

At first, we ignore the fact that we all heard him in this constrained lockdown because it was perfect for the resumption of our critical talks but during this virtual and asynchronous meeting with one of the most prolific and iconoclastic Shakespearean critics of the past century, a particular passage captured our attention. In particular, that one when he talks about his colleague "T. J. B. Spencer" and the "three bodies of Shakespeare" basically for two reasons: on the one hand, we were provided with some *watchwords* to orchestrate this challenge; on the other, because Jan Kott and T. J. B. Spencer played an important part in consolidating the first Spanish Shakespearean Institution on the international scene. A concrete scenario, which is still part of our daily life and that we will try to unveil in the course of these shared reflections.

As with both leading scholars, obviously, we also share the essence of those "Shakespearean bodies" in his triadic relation between individual ("to be read" or textual), society ("to be told" or academic) and species ("to be performed" or theatrical) but, from our critical point of view, we believe it is appropriate to identify another condition between individuals and society in order to best fit the previously described model by Spencer. In fact Kott began his lecture by referring to this *dual* state when describing a father and his son in a desert island during a time of exile.² This kind of Socratic method he mentioned to describe the scene, this mutual respect between individuals based on asking and answering questions to stimulate critical thinking (commonly known as peer-to-peer education in current curricular reforms) proved to be a key element in the comprehensive approach to William Shakespeare's *Works* by our Spanish school since its creation in the 1970s and, logically, one of the objectives in this essay will consist of trying to expand this triadic approach into a *tetradic* one because from our temporal perspective (individual, *dual*, social and historical) some ideas of both schools of thoughts could be clarified.

² At the beginning of his lecture, Kott describes the scene included in the first chapter of a biography of Shakespeare by Victor Hugo and he read the dialogue between this author and his son. Moreover, the scene has clear references in appearance and meaning to *The Tempest* by Shakespeare.

Another topic that Kott mentioned in this recording, before analysing and criticising some Shakespearean plays and concepts in detail, deals with the utopic purpose of any (literary) translation but, instead of using a temporal concept, he employs a spatial one, magnifying the hugeness of this humble aim that Victor Hugo ingeniously compared with the enormity of an ocean.³ But it is after these time-space concepts when he includes some basic opposition between sources and influences, between some old traditions and new iconoclastic proposals, between friendliness and textual dismemberment. Some conceptual parameters where, as Kott remarked, only audiences have the key to establish more or less contact with real poetry, with new experiences, with real problems of life, with the real drama of time and above all, with the illusion that Shakespeare, is unchangeable. And this *dual* perspective, this *two-faced* approach to mythologies and realisms presided over the beginning and endings of conflicts by a dramatic Polish Janus, began for most of us with “a careful reading of the list of” essays contained in a book once called *Szkice o Szekspirze*.

A Title for a Book, a Book for a Title

In 2014, during the proofreading phase of our last academic translation of William Shakespeare for the publishing house Cátedra, the editor in chief was asking us about the title for the play we were proposing because, after consultation with some reviewers, we were being altering the editorial tradition and some doubts were raised. After some talks with her, she finally agreed not to change our *Medyda, por Medida* for matching the original “*Measvre, for Measure*” and our 2015 edition consolidated some regular updates within the editorial policies of our Institution because we had from the beginning of this specific project a twofold objective in mind: to open Shakespeare to the public in an orthodox way and to attract both traditional and new audiences by catching their attention. Obviously, we were aware that this change would be drawing further criticism but it was worth the effort to highlight both a significant change in our editorial policies for translating the texts contained in the *First Folio* of 1623 into Spanish from new theatrical-dramaturgical point of views and the beginning of a new trend for editing similar dramatic texts thanks to emergent technologies (e. g. TEI P5 and XML Standards). In this case, obviously, time will tell and history will judge.

³ In the Spanish context, one of the authors that has most influenced in this field has been José Ortega y Gasset. His famous essay entitled *Miseria y Esplendor de la Traducción = Elend und Glanz der Übersetzung* extends this idea developed by Hugo and supported by Kott.

We introduce this anecdote in this section because electing the right title, the right cover or even the right foreword for a book is something essential to the phenomenon we all call “best-seller book”. In the case of “literary criticism”, as noted by Joseph Campana, maintaining the highest degree of “cultural visibility” when writing nonfiction has only been achieved by a few, but it is remarkable that in his selection of four well-known authors, two of them are Shakespearean experts. It is likewise highly illustrative that, in the case of Marjorie Garber, he describes her essayistic writing (her scholarship) as very familiar for the public because her approach to Shakespeare’s *Works* is “eclectic, encyclopaedic, historical and anecdotal”, remarking that some of her academic books (specially *Shakespeare and Modern Culture*) are continuing “the story scholars have been telling since Jan Kott’s *Shakespeare Our Contemporary* about the ways in which Shakespeare’s works live on, transform, and tangled themselves up in contexts far distant from the Renaissance stage.” (*Criticism of Criticism*)

In this respect, Pérez Gállego (Pérez *El País*, 1987), Emeritus Professor of English and North American Literature at the Complutense University of Madrid and the best Shakespearean scholar in Spain until his death in 2013, talked about the influence of the Polish critic in his country in a very short article entitled *Un Amigo de Hamlet (An old friend of Hamlet)* at the end of 1980s. His analysis becomes overwhelmed, at least, from a technical and editorial point of view. He describes Kott’s book as a prophetic example, as a classic text for classic texts, for renewing the exercise of theatrical and dramatic criticism in Spain and he remarks how important this text was (and still is) for the members of the Spanish *Shakespeare Institute* but, besides that, he deeply deplores that the first translation of “*Szkice o Szekspirze*” by Jadwiga Maurizio—translator of Stanisław Lem into Spanish too (Lluch, 15-17)—was so literal that, from his point of view, it considerably reduced the initial scope of Kott’s ideas in the Spanish-speaking world. In fact, Pérez Gállego puts the accent on the “*absurdity*” of her proposal (*Apuntes sobre Shakespeare*) because “*Apuntes*” in Spanish (*notes* in English) denature the content of this influential book substantially and does not capture any reader’s attention. Such is the degree of isolation and the small success of Maurizio’s translation that Joan Guasp,⁴ a famous playwright in Spain, declared in 2007—after the publication of *Shakespeare, nuestro contemporáneo* by Trigán and Olszewska—that it was a shame that “this book” by Jan Kott would have never been translated into Spanish.⁵ A statement that, besides not being correct, we think is worthwhile to develop.

⁴ Joan Guasp *English*, <https://www.escriptors.cat/autors/guaspj/joan-guasp-english>. Accessed 15 June 2021.

⁵ Guasp, Joan. *El Ciervo*, vol. 56, no. 678/679, 2007, p. 43. *JSTOR*, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40833961>. Accessed 15 June 2021.

In his memories, (Kott *Still*, 41-43) the Polish critic tells us about his personal relationship with Adam Bromberg, highlighting how important this editor was for his international projection. In this sense, Kott said:

I am indebted to Bromberg for my own initial entry into the world. While still the director of the PWN he suggested that I publish my *Shakespeare, Our Contemporary* in English. This was a year after the Polish edition came out. His idea seemed to me even more foolish than unexpected, but Bromberg commissioned the English translation to Bolesław Taborski and paid for it in hard currency. He had not only the imagination of a great editor but also the business sense. The English edition of my *Shakespeare*, published by Methuen, was printed in Poland. And paid for in hard currency.

Kuharski (Kuharski *Essay*, 53), in his short biography on Kott states, in this regard, that *Szkice o Szekspirze* was published in Polish in 1961, translated into English by Taborski in 1964 and revised and enlarged as *Szekspir Współczesny* in 1965. “Selected Works” which point out the presence of two documentary sources for this famous book from 1960 to 1970. But a quick overview of these same records using new bibliographical tools like *WorldCat*⁶ suggests an interesting challenge. Among others editions and translations of this title we can find: in 1961, a German translation by Peter Lagman entitled *Shakespeare heute*; in 1962, a French one entitled *Shakespeare notre contemporain* by Anna Posner and the Portuguese *Shakespeare nosso contemporaneo* by Norberto Ávila; in 1964, the aforementioned translation into English *Shakespeare Our Contemporary* by Taborski, the Italian *Shakespeare nostro contemporaneo* by Vera Petrelli, *Eseji o Shakespeareu* in Slovenian by Uroš Kraigher and Radojka Vrančič and *Shakespeareovské črty* in Czech by Ludmila Furgyíková; in 1968, a Spanish translation entitled *Shakespeare, nuestro contemporáneo* by Jaime Sarusky in La Habana, Cuba; and, finally, in 1969, *Shakespeare, contemporanul nostru* by Anca Livescu and Teofil Roll in Rumanian and *Apuntes sobre Shakespeare* in Spanish by Jadwiga Maurizio.

Regarding the original title in Polish for these translations we find: *Szkice o Szekspirze* for the Portuguese, Italian, Czech, Rumanian and Spaniards translations; *Szekspir Współczesny* for the German; and in the case of French and Slovenian translations, we find both *Szkice o Szekspirze* and *Szekspir Współczesny* in their records. Apart from these raw data, if we compare physically the Spanish edition by Maurizio based on the 1961 text and the English one by Taborski based on the 1964-65 revision, we find that in the former there is neither “Preface” by Peter Brook nor the “*Shakespeareian Notebook*” Appendix. A special paratext, in the case of Brook’s words, that in

⁶ *WorldCat: The World’s Largest Library Catalog*. <https://www.worldcat.org>. Accessed 15 June 2021.

tandem with that controversial title contributed to the popularization of the book. In this regard, Garber (Garber *Shakespeare*, 288) shares with us the following reflection:

At the same time, there appeared for the first time in English translation another, equally influential book that also put *King Lear* at this center, the Polish writer Jan Kott's *Shakespeare Our Contemporary*. Kott's interpretation became vastly important for the itinerary of *King Lear* in the theater and on film from the sixties on. In both of these books—books which could not, in other ways, be more different—the word “our,” a classical shifter (*whose* time? *whose* contemporary?) signals both a problem and a marker for modernity.

Noteworthy is the fact that dates and data are not aligned according to Kott's written testimonial but as he himself recognised (Kott *Still*, ix) he wrote his “*biographical sketches*” at the dictation of his memory and in some cases there are “alterations and lapses” because “memory always has only one tense: the present.” As we can see, some editions did translate *verbatim* the initial title of the essays. Others use the most popular title but these were published before the revision of the Polish title and text within 1961 and 1965. But, in the case of the Spanish translation by Jadwiga Maurizio, it calls our attention that the English translation by Taborski was already released and, as Lluch (15) remarks, during that time Maurizio was reading and studying French in-depth, paying special attention to theatre and drama. Does this mean that she had a chance to use Poster's translations but she did not? Perhaps, considering that Maurizio was a good “*literary translator*”, Kott's essays were very “technical” for her. Or maybe, being the first time she was translating in a professional way, this text needed an extra skill for getting a greater recognition among other experts in Spain. Or maybe the audience was much more interested in *watching* Shakespeare⁷ than in reading it. All we can say, agreeing with Pérez Gállego, is that Kott's influence by means of his nonfictional book was rather limited, at least at the beginning of the 1970s, in this country.

On the other hand, and prior to a brief analysis on Kott's influence in Spain, what it is worth mentioning here is the relationship that maybe Bromberg and Kott achieved with some of these translators due to the intellectual revolution that was taking place between Politics and Literature in a Post-War Era. A chapter that according to recent studies (Popa, 2019) concern with the

⁷ During the 1960s and 1970s some Shakespearean productions were broadcast in a famous program entitled *Teatro de Siempre* (Traditional Theatre) and *Estudio 1* (Studio 1). For further information, review: Shakespeare. *Archivo RTVE* <https://www.rtve.es/rtve/20150709/william-shakespeare-archivo-rtve/1174722.shtml> Web. 15 June 2021.

“Political commitment and the International Construction of symbolic recognition during the Cold War” after the signing of *The Letter of 34*⁸ by Jan Kott, other artists and thought leaders. Ioana Popa (3-14) who analyses the transferring between East and West Literary products in French, talks about the translation channels that were created after the de-Stalinization within the Eastern Bloc and about the *cultural hybridity* that translators got when transferring Polish authors into French. Among chief mediators, Popa highlights the figure of Anna Posner and her capacity to foster competition between publishers for specific works and authors experiencing censorship or being marginalized. A phenomenon that provided some authors both a national identity in the exile and international fame, relocating them in new canonical forms. This would explain too why Kott effectively and generously exhibits the name of his translators in his own texts, giving visibility to this *hybrid mediator*—with which we are convinced he identifies himself—and why Stříbrný (101) locates Posner before Taborski in the historical path.

Spain in Kott, Kott in Spain

In his memoirs (*Kott Still*, 20-27) the Polish author mentioned his stay in a monastery located in the Massif Central of France to test his faith because he considered himself a nonbeliever. It seems that his experience as a seminarian was far more fruitful than his stay in Paris because in that place of worship, reflection and dialogue he made friends from different continents and his reading and essayistic skills were increased significantly. We can see a good sample of the academic freedom he experienced in that place just by paying attention to some authors (Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, Cornelius Jansen, Bataille, Sade) or topics (philosophy, theology, languages, pornography) but Kott remarks that his favourite seminar was an optional one dealing with history of art and history of painting. In this seminar, lectured by a Spanish Dominican, is where he experienced his initial contacts with the *grotesque*, with cruelty and bestiality in art and life, with the sophisticated satire, with Goya’s pictures and Artaud’s proposals and with “a mass and office of the dead for the Basques”. Tortures and madness, death and destruction, exile and passivity, Fascism and totalitarian regimes were concepts to think in depth but, as he remembers in “the early spring of 1939”, they also were the prelude of the approaching War and of the highest forms of absurdity that he would experience in person. In this context, it is difficult to determine how significant was the Spaniard in Kott from this learning experience but, apparently, it sounds a little distant or asymmetric. But

⁸ Polish History Museum, Warsaw <https://polishhistory.pl/the-letter-of-34/> Web. Accessed 15 June 2021.

let's try to sketch a historical approximation of the influence that the figure of the Polish critic has exerted on our form(s) of understanding Theatre.

In the 1940-1960 period, we can find two monographic studies (Ballester, 1945; De Madariaga *Hamlet* 1945) on Shakespeare's *Works* from a *Historical* point of view *per se*.⁹ In the first case, we find the book entitled *El Historiador William Shakespeare (William Shakespeare, the Historian)* by Rafael Ballester Escalas (1916-1993) that according to Monterrey (91) would serve him to write his doctoral dissertation entitled "*Concepto y estructura de la historia en la obra de Shakespeare*" (1950). This Ancient History lecturer and translator reviewed from a very personal approach both the figure of Shakespeare as a "Historian" and his *Histories* in depth, saying that some conceptual changes are necessary to renovate our points of view, provided that we are not losing its meaning as an organic whole. For him, Shakespeare the *Historian* is not a professional *chronicler* because he included some anachronisms, additions and inaccuracies in his texts but that is only a small detail because this playwright used an integrative writing to depict the whole humanity. Ballester, in fact, affirms that analysing History consists of analysing contradictions, but if we only focus our attention on "*mechanical proofs*" we are losing a huge range of theatrical possibilities, of theatrical experiences. A reflection we think Jan Kott would agree with strongly. Ballester also stressed that Shakespeare in general did not investigate *History*, he just set it down with a view to imagine these characters as never before existed, just pure fantasy, so that he had courage to give extra *courage* to them. The only feature that secular historians did not credit to some royal figures (e. g. Richard III) in their official Chronicles. A fact, that makes a distinction between having courage of *writing* History rather than of *being* History.

In the second case we find an in-depth study entitled *On Hamlet* (derived from his bilingual edition (English-Spanish) with an introductory essay and notes) by the prolific diplomat and writer Salvador de Madariaga y Rojo (1886-1978). A melancholic and thought-provoking study for interpreting this play—very similar to Hugo or Kott's literary experiences—that it was also written from exile in an island. A critic that, despite lecturing in Oxford (UK), did not have the same influence than Kott on the Shakespearean scene, but who foresaw that political construction of these new identities from a unique European perspective. On this particular issue, he said (De Madariaga *On Hamlet*, vii-viii):

⁹ For an approach to those Shakespearean Studies in Spain prior to 1940, specially Alfons Par, Astrana Marin, Juliá Martínez and others, you can check: Monterrey, Tomás. "Los Estudios Ingleses en España (1900-1950): "Contexto ideológico-cultural, autores y obras". *Atlantis*, 25.2 (December 2003): 71-96. https://www.atlantisjournal.org/old/Papers/25_2/071-096%20Monterrey.pdf. Accessed 15 June 2021.

It is not in vain that Shakespeare shone in the European firmament when the sun never set on the Spanish domains. The era of Shakespeare is the era of Spain. Now nations reach the apex of their power when the genius of the time is in harmony with their own genius; when in other words the age acts as a sounding board for their own peculiar note. The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were the Spanish era because then the subject of the world’s debate was man on a background of absolute values—God, evil, death, love, free arbiter and predestination; all pre-eminently Spanish themes. The eighteenth century was French because by then the world’s debate had shifted from the spirit of the mind, from inspiration and revelation to enquiry, from synthesis to analysis, and from religion to politics. The nineteenth century was English because by then politics had grown so thing that one could see the economic bones through the ideological skins, and the once religious and theological ethics had become secularised into social morality. And we are now entering a new era in which social mechanics or behaviourism threatens to oust social morality, an era therefore which will be the century of the U. S. and the U.R.S.S. as the case may be.

As we can see Salvador de Madariaga, after analysing several national characters in Europe is not far off from the new reality we inhabit, although it gives us the impression that when he thought about these changes, he had in mind literary *authors* rather than literary *critics* (we think of Harold Bloom in the same way than Jan Kott) as national geniuses. A subtle line which marks the artistic quality from new types of brutalism and minimalism. But this Spanish author (De Madariaga *Portrait*, 151-153) gave us a pleasant surprise when he also outlined, in a very intuitive way and in anticipation of Kott’s main thesis on *King Lear*, some connections between Ireland, Poland, Spain and the “familiarity with the *absurd*”. On this specific subject, he adds that:

this familiarity with the absurd is a somewhat rare quality in Europe, perhaps only known to the Irish, the Spaniards and the Poles. Nor are their “*absurds*” of the same quality or flavour, even though they spring from the same root. The root is, of course, a superabundance of the individual, as against the social, pole of the being [...] The determination to suffer no law, no pressure from the world outside one’s skin, is common to the Irish, the Spaniards and the Poles [...] Only the Spaniards, the Irish and the Poles fight on when they know it is to no purpose. It is the absurd in them that results in a kind of glory over death.

A year earlier this author (De Madariaga *Essays*, 33-42) tried to give an answer to this political question—the complex relation between the individual and the community—in an essay entitled “*The Artist as Citizen*” where he analysed three creative prototypes: scientists, artists and *saints*. From a creative point of view, his answer was that the best choice is both “Neither” and “Both” because the creative evolution of any community is fastened to the [creative] life of the individual without crossing the line towards any “literary anarchy” because “art

for art's sake cannot mean that. Just as science for sake of science cannot mean that we condone the experiments made on prisoners in Buchenwald". In his concluding remarks and recommendations, he points out that all artists should "watch over the freedom of the art", all citizens should "watch over the liberty" of their fellow citizens and all men should "watch over liberty" because the *aesthetic thinking* is the greatest exponent for freedom. In the same line of aesthetic thinking from exile but most recent, Arthur Koestler (1905-1983) the Hungarian writer captured by the Fascists and condemned to death during the Spanish Civil War, developed his own theory on this socio-political issue (Koestler *Art*, 1969; *Janus*, 1978). In his case, the creative prototypes reviewed are sages, artists and *jesters* and among his theoretical achievements we find the fruitful notions of "*bisociative thinking*" and "*holons*". But, in contrast to Kott or De Madariaga, the fact of not being a lecturer may have placed him in an intellectual outskirts and his main line of thought must be recovered from fictional literature by reading *Darkness at Noon*.

Without doubt, these comparative lessons from solitary confinements and exiles,¹⁰ where creative thinking, languages and politics rule the core of the literary phenomenon are according to Pérez Gállego (González, 39-62), the true birth of the "Shakespearean Criticism" in Spain. Comparative lessons that, in conjunction with new dramatic and theatrical influences (we think of *Waiting for Godot* by Samuel Beckett) triggered an intellectual response to our human suffering, to our human condition. Once at this point is where the Spanish and the Polish critical schools met and we began to notice the direct influence of Kott (and Brook) in our new approaches to William Shakespeare's *Works*.

It is not surprising that Pérez Gállego mapped a new critical framework out around Jan Kott because at the end of the 1960s he was investigated both English traditional and contemporary drama.¹¹ Apart from sharing critical readings from famous Shakespearean critics (Tillyard, Wilson Knight, Boas, Levin, Bradbrook, etc.), an initial study on "downturn" in Shakespeare's Roman Plays, a sociological study on Elizabethan Drama dealing with Shakespeare, Heywood, Tourneur, Webster, Middleton and Rowley (1967), a doctoral dissertation where he examines some sociological relations between *Literature and Rebellion* in England from the perspective of the *Angry Young Men* (1968) and an in-depth study of dramatic levels in Christopher Marlowe (1969) are part of his cover letter before finding in Kott's "Grand Mechanism" a keyword for analysing the relationship between power and politics in Shakespeare's *Comedies*. In fact, his *Shakespeare y la Política (Shakespeare and Politics)* became a significant milestone not yet surpassed in the Spanish university studies.

¹⁰ Regarding Jan Kott's exile, cf. Kuharski, 2003, 235-257.

¹¹ In our edition of *Measure, for Measure* (2015, 93-99) the reader can find a first attempt we began to compile the textual production of this critic.

Since the publication of this book—that according to Pérez Gállego himself emulates Kott’s proposal (González, 40)—a new phase for the Shakespearean studies began in Spain by a close cooperation between the English Department at his alma mater, University of Zaragoza, and the English Department at the University of Valencia, with the outstanding presence of the stage actor, playwright and scholar Manuel Ángel Conejero. One year after, in 1972, the Spanish section of *The World Centre for Shakespeare Studies* was founded and this specialized centre for Theatrical Studies under the direction of Pérez Gállego already enjoys the support of Jan Kott and Kenneth Müir, among others specialists involved with this International Institution founded in London two years before (*Las Provincias*, 19 Jan. 1974, n.p.). Since that time, the Spanish section will promote different academic meetings, conferences, seminars and cultural events around Shakespeare and Drama at national and international levels being one of the biggest events the 7th *World Shakespeare Congress* (1997-2001) in Valencia and Madrid.

It must be stressed that, apart from exploring similar theatrical resources and writing in a similar way, Jan Kott and Pérez Gállego shared intellectual interests and employed similar critical theories to approach the literary phenomena. Apart from History of art, History of painting and Ancient Greco-Roman texts and authors, they both had a direct influence from painters from Zaragoza. The aforementioned Francisco de Goya in the case of Kott and Julián Gállego



Fig. 1. Spanish Section of the World Centre for Shakespeare Studies.
Personal file Vicente Forés López

Serrano, his uncle, artist and art historian, in the case of Pérez Gállego. Regarding their *hybrid* critical thinking (Kott, *Still*, 47-93; Kuharski, *Arden*, 235-257; Cid, 216; Díez 391-418, 493-522; Domínguez Lasierra, personal communication, 24 July 2018) they both studied scientific disciplines (e.g. mathematics, logics, computational notation) but soon after they change them for literary and cultural studies, being classical mythology, sociology of literature, symbolism, rhetoric, linguistics and anthropology some related fields they both include in their texts and/or teaching. And, obviously, they seek new *languages, expressiveness and imageries*, from *realism* and *symbolism* within Shakespeare's *Plays*.

Regarding differences between both critics, to point at least one, we must know that Jan Kott follows the theoretical approaches by Mikhail Bakhtin to the *Semiosphere* (Kuharski *Arden*, 240) and Pérez Gállego, due to a close link with Harvard University, is inclined to follow the context-oriented approach to Shakespeare known as *New Historicism* developed by Stephen Greenblatt.¹²

With reference to Manuel Ángel Conejero, we can say that, in 1974, he combines his teaching at the University of Valencia with other cultural and artistic activities at the Theatre group while completing his doctoral dissertation on the expression of loving used by Shakespeare. Shortly after, he lays the foundation for the first academic group specialised in Renaissance Drama with the publication of *Shakespeare: Orden y Caos (Shakespeare: Order and Chaos)* in 1975, a work in progress till the arrival of his *Eros adolescente: La Construcción Estética en Shakespeare (Adolescent Eros: The Aesthetic Construction in Shakespeare)* in 1980. Monographic studies (Conejero, *Orden*, 26; *Rhetoric*, 37) that they mix both a linguistic and visual thought—following primarily the theoretical claims by Rudolf Arnheim in his *Entropy and Art*—in order to make a leap from “la historia de otra historia” (the history of another history (*retelling*)) towards “translating a translation” via traditional Rhetoric as a vertebral axis. That is to say, we pass from a single *musical score* based on rhythm and poetic patterns (literal translation or *poetic phrase*) to an *audio-visual score* based on poetic patterns, stage movements, rhetorical figures and oratory (dramatic translation or *theatrical phrase*) to get an effective communication between the source and the target system because, as Pérez Gállego claimed (González, 47), it is required the direct projection of the play into a data visual set. Something that, for example, we miss in *Hamlet* by De Madariaga (1949) but that, in contrast, Wyspiański (86-89)—an information source for Kott (Kuharski *Arden*, 241)—explores when describing the *stage space* and its multiple *dimensions*.

¹² An updated description of current Literary Theories can be found in Berensmeyer, I. *Literary Theory: An Introduction to Approaches, Methods and Terms*. Stuttgart: Klett Lerntraining, 2014.

One of the main weaknesses that this scholar found in his research (Conejero *Rhetoric*, 13-36) was the inadequacy for a great majority of Castilian and Spanish translations. Some use French texts as source documents. Some others were mutilated texts. Some others were simple adaptations that had nothing to do with the original. Canonical translations (Astrana Marín and Valverde) did translate the entire dramatic corpus into Castilian but plays were only in prose, no verse. And some others—to a lesser extent—used original sources (e. g. McPherson) but the poetic pattern was so rigid and forced (mainly hendecasyllabic verses) that actors would not be capable of telling their lines in a right way on stage. Bearing in mind all this, in 1978 he decided to create the first and only Spanish *Shakespeare Institute* together with Jenaro Talens, Juan Vicente Martínez Luciano y Vicente Forés López. A team of *academic artists* (questioning *oxymoron*) decided to shake *dramaturgy studies* up for Spanish-speaking audiences thanks to their *multidimensional* translations and the active collaboration of experts such as T. J. B. Spencer, Roger Pringle, Jan Kott, Peter Brook and Giorgio Melchiori, to name a few.



Fig. 2. Kott attending an International Meeting in Valencia (11 Feb. 1979).
Personal file Vicente Forés López

Their model compared to other design approaches (e. g. philological, literal in prose, poetic or scientific/academic), as argued by Conejero (Conejero *Rhetoric*, 15) will follow the guidelines outlined by the Italian scholar with a small but significant change: the Socratic method or peer group discussion; Their goal: the best setting for that multidimensional stage space that Shakespeare's *Plays* need for getting a uniformity of style now and then.

Kott's methodology (Kott *Head*, 93) does not differ much from this *dual* approach to Shakespeare's texts and traditions we assert, as we can see in an article he wrote in a collective volume to honour the British scholar T. J. B. Spencer. Let's just see how he plays this out when he wrote *Head for Maidenhead*, *Maidenhead for Head*:

George Whetsone's play, *The Historie of Promos and Cassandra*, published in 1578 and long forgotten, is acknowledged as the main dramatic source of Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure*, I wish to present the interrelation between the two plays not from the perspective of philological influences but as a transformation of one and the same structural model. To uncover such a transformation is at the same time to make literary and, more importantly, theatrical interpretation.

To “uncover” transformations to “make literary” and “theatrical interpretation”, that is the key his approach proposes. To use a method of interpreting something—in his case he uses Levi’s Strauss’ method of interpreting the Oedipus’ myth—for improving a “graphic model” to work with.¹³ Pérez Gállego (González, 45) saw this and it was expanded in his *Dramática de Shakespeare* (*Shakespeare’s Dramaturgy*), a text that implies the active participation of the reader as a supporting actor being *present|absent* at the same time. Marjorie Garber (*Coming*, 1997) saw this too and she explains us how powerful and wonderful was the *Coming of Age in Shakespeare*. Kott (Kott *Still*, 88), with the subtle irony of a polymath *look back in joy* and says:

The Circle of Polonists was my university. In the most literal sense. Its members began to conduct their own courses twice a week, in the afternoon and evening. The initiative came from Franciszek Siedlecki; he was the oldest of all of us and also the most mature [...] Siedlecki taught Polish versification, and it was from him that I heard for the first time about Saussure’s linguistics and the phoneme. Siedlecki said that Einstein had split the atom the Prague Circle had split the word. Einstein did not split the atom. Siedlecki was more of an expert in phonetics than in physics. But words suddenly acquired a certain transparency. They no longer consisted of letters, prefixes, suffixes and roots; phonemes existed because of mutual oppositions and formed morphemes that differentiated meanings.

But all this *full potential*, all this *wisdom*, without the pertinent *know-how* will be little point in creating any interaction. And that is what we mirrored from Jan Kott’s lessons: bridge the gap between theoretical and practical knowledge. On this respect, let’s see what Kuharski (Kuharski *Arden*, 245) tells us about the role of drama schools:

Theatre artists, much like the members of a diasporic group, also inhabit an archipelago of cultural centers and peripheries. They lead dual lives, at once sharing in the life of the larger communities they inhabit and participating in a subculture with an intense and insular collective life of its own, deeply marked by an arcane and complex common history and sharing shibbolethic rituals and codes of behaviour.

Obviously, the key question is: where do we learn those shared shibbolethic rituals and codes of behaviour? In 1979, Rague-Arias (21, 1) portrayed the issues surrounding this problem in Spain and, following the example of some

¹³ These methods that can be specified as proto-computational, are the basis for current trends in Digital Humanities and Literary Criticism. As an example: Moretti, Franco. *Distant Reading*. London and New York: Verso, 2013.

European cases (e. g. Kott, Brook and Olivier) some solutions were proposed. Theatrical projects were subsidised thanks to local and central governments and our group of *academic artists* had a close collaboration with the Theatre company “*Teatro del Arte*”¹⁴ under the direction of Miguel Narros (1928-2013). The choice had all elements to achieve the objective to offer an “*authentic*” Shakespearean production for a contemporary audience from a contemporary point of view because Narros (Castro, 2021) was a stated supporter of the *Stanislavski method*, worked in tandem with William Layton and Andrea D’Odorico and he had led some Shakespearean plays in the past. Furthermore, as Narros himself declared after reading Kott’s book (González, 425) the issue of humankind in Shakespeare is the issue of the contemporary man and most social concerns and personal attitudes can be found in his plays.

The chosen play for restarting Shakespeare was *Macbeth* and the *Teatro Español* hosted the premiere of this play on 29 November 1980. Next day, the theatre critic Eduardo Haro Tecglen (1980, n. p.) set a harsh criticism down¹⁵ via *El País* and the first thing that draws our attention are: the title “*Un product híbrido*” (A hybrid product) and the watchword “*hibridación*” (hybridization). To get this term, this theatre critic compared this staging with the Romantic proposal by Victor Hugo to his own contemporaries, remarking that the *musical* and the *audio-visual* scores were out of sync and this could be due to both a *naturalistic* approach by the director and a lack of reconciliation between the *schools* involved because words, voices, silences and shouts were too cold for such a bloody sequence of events. He also suggests that Shakespeare rewrote an old Tale for a Romantic audience in a Renaissance time (cf. Janus) but if the proposal is not suitable, it is much better to make use of false patterns (in the Spanish case, hendecasyllabic and overacting). We want to believe that for avoiding this de-synchronization problem, our *hybrid* agents reflected on Haro’s

¹⁴ Although most of them depend on Universities, it is important to notice that before 1979 (García, 55) we had University Theatre Groups and Independent Theatre groups, being the latter the main generator of Professional Theatre groups in Spain. For further information on these Independent groups, the reader can visit the project which is lead by *Museo Nacional Reina Sofia* entitled *Spain’s “Independent Theatre”, 1962-1980*. <http://cdaem.mcu.es/teatro-independiente/grupos/?idioma=en>. Accessed 15 June 2021.

¹⁵ This *harsh criticism* could be due to the fact that *Tabano*, an Independent Theatre group, released another production of *Macbeth* earlier that year. This Shakespearean adaptation, entitled *Un tal Macbeth*, tried to merge the original text with the world of criminal gangs but, as Haro remarked, the setting layout did not match and most proposed thesis on the script could not be found on-stage. A format defect shared among peer theatre groups that focused their attention on body expression and stage movements rather than in words and speeches. Haro Tecglen, Eduardo. “Un empeño imposible” *El País*, 5 Mar. 1980, https://elpais.com/diario/1980/03/06/cultura/321145215_850215.html. Accessed 15 June 2021.

note and they asked Kott how to solve it. For him the *watchword* would be *editing* (Kott *Our*, 282-283) because the “living Shakespeare of our time has been presented, first and foremost, in film.”¹⁶ Film has discovered the Renaissance Shakespeare” and they finally found the *pretext* to praise his *Plays*.



Fig. 3. Rehearsing *King Lear* at the University of Valencia, Spain.
Empar Ferrer (*Fool*) – Fermí Reixach (*King Lear*); Personal file Vicente Forés

¹⁶ Two in-depth studies on Shakespeare and Film for Spanish audiences can be found in: Pérez, Xavier. and Balló, Jordi. *El mundo, un escenario. Shakespeare, el guionista invisible*. Kindle ed. Anagrama, 2015 and Gil-Delgado, Fernando. *Introducción a Shakespeare a través del cine*. Madrid: Ediciones Internacionales Universitarias, 2001.

For this purpose, they invoke the “Great Mechanism¹⁷” and as Macbeth was dead, they proclaimed a *Long live to King Lear!* And indeed, that was that happened. An *absurd staging*, which was four hours of length in an empty space (1983 and 1997) that, as in the case of Jan Kott, marks a before and an after to understand “Shakespearean bodies”. Those bodies Kott cited in such a passionate way that, here and now, must be expanded with a fourth one: to be *edited*. Wyspiański, Brook and Olivier just indicated the creative path but Kott walked it along to find common solutions to these challenges. Nobody can measure if he was right or wrong, but one thing is for sure: he used a spread spectrum for a *Glocal Shakespeare*, all over the world, for *dramaturges*, directors, players and *multi-cultural* audiences.

A Quote for a King, A King for a Quote

Mixed feelings sometimes arise after reading or listening Jan Kott’s ideas on Shakespeare. Art or Science, two *schools* both alike in dignity. Stříbrný (101) said that Kott was unique but “not precise or scholar in any sense of the word” and his essays were “marked by a number of elementary mistakes and misreading” provoking even a winter of discontent in traditional criticism. Kujawińska Courtney, (*Shakespeare in Poland*), with a divided heart among tradition and (post-)modernity and the weight of evidences and history in mind maintains that any critic “cannot be a respected Shakespearean scholar without knowing his book”. Kuharski (451-453) insinuates devotedly that we should use *hybrid* parameters to rank him in a *Glocal World* and the Spaniard Pérez Gállego (Gonzalez, 43) still complains that nobody within our Institution wanted to embark on such an open and polemic *existential criticism*. Now is the time his friend Brook would say he is a Renaissance *polymath*. And we, following another polymath, we just think he is a Pole Janus, a *holon* (Koestler *Janus*, 60).

With Kott we learnt that, sometimes, the unconventional results an effective acting. That drama and theatre as *living entities* have individual, *dual*, social and historical items because our temporal thinking is often vague and

¹⁷ Jon Viar, a former student of the *Shakespeare Foundation of Spain*, uses Jan Kott’s “Gran Mechanism” to return to the controversial issue of Shakespeare’s authoring, ascribing the words and *Plays* of the Bard of Avon to Christopher Marlowe. His work, openly declared Marlovian, is a product of an original research both as an actor and as a scholar, because it emanates from a lengthy reflection about the evolution of modern and post-modern drama and, in this context, it has to be noted that it gives continuity to some ideas of the Polish critic: differences between Classical Drama and Renaissance Drama, Gods vs. Humans, External vs. Inner Mechanisms, Comparing texts and proposals. As we may disagree with his thesis and conclusions, we should also mention his research.

ambiguous and past, present, future and *eternal* are axis of symmetry. So that, *Contemporary* is not a stage in world history, the outbreak of which is conditioned by its “iron laws”. It is a great period that occurred, and is occurring, as a result of the confluence of certain circumstances initially in a certain place and at a certain time, but later absorbed practically all of humanity. *Contemporary* encloses individual circumstances, decisions, struggles, criticism, rebellion and rupture with *traditions*. In this sense *contemporary* can be easily affiliated to *democracy*. If this term assumes thirst and ability for self-reflection and self-criticism, Can an individual be “*contemporary*” out of time?

With Kott we discovered that majesty and buffoonery are interchangeable (Woszczerowicz and *Stańczyk*) that things are not always what they seem and *absurd* is not as bad as is repeatedly portrayed. That the History of Western and Eastern Theatre collected, step by step, that displacement from Myths and Religion (*gods/saints*) towards Tragicomedy and Grotesqueness (*jesters*). That recreating *Classics* is a *spatial* (e. g. *Ran (Lear)* Kurosawa) and not a *temporal* question.

With Kott, besides, we also discovered that sages, scientists and artists should have hybrid discussions instead of circular conversations to avoid both individualism and provincialism. Translation would be the *watchword*; the vital element to response any critical question although this discipline is not considered—as our colleague Vicente Forés constantly reminded us—an academic discipline *yet*. Even if we run the risk of becoming *Bernardo* for answering our own questions, as Muriel Bradbrook (112) highlighted when she gave us an existential interpretation of *Hamlet*. New teaching and learning is going to be different and the Lifelong Learning approach, where mixing informal, formal, technical and artistic skill will be a thrilling challenge.

To be precise or not to be precise, that is the question.

With Kott we understood that *theatre*, as an area of human activity, is like a *kingdom* and, it is clear that this *expert* ruled as a king for a time. But, as he himself remarked (Kott *Still*, 279) “one thing is clear both anatomy and metaphysics: death comes when the heart stops beating” and iambic pentameter is the heart of this Shakespearean art. We do not have a better way to conclude this distant tribute, some words of *wisdom* from his *colleague* Peter Brook (110): “*Shakespeare. Quality. Form. This is where our work begins. It can never end.*” Jan Kott was dead, that is *scientific evidence*, but thousand of great admirers worldwide meet him *every time*...

Who's there, now?

Nobody. Unfold yourself.

Long Live to the <“*hybrid*”> critic!

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Joseph Campana*

Afterword: Posthumanism—Past, Present and Future

Of words and terms, I often think, *they are what they do*—or what can be done with them. I want to ask, in this brief afterword, not what posthumanism is but *what it does*, which is also a way of asking, *what it does now* and *what might it do* for those who still invoke it. So the point becomes to say, with Robert Sawyer, Monika Sosnowska, and the contributors “we have always been posthuman,” but also then to ask “what can and should we do with that *now*?”

Although most references to origins are dubious (and the unsavory powers associated with them), I start with two early invocations of both postmodernism and the posthuman, fully aware, in the context of this special issue, that it would be no surprise to succumb to the temptation to add “early” before any use of the term modern, modernism, or modernity, or to substitute “early modern” for any of the references to either modernism or postmodernism. This was of course very much on my mind in the years of collaboration with Scott Maisano on the volume *Renaissance Posthumanism*, which we thought of not as a variety of posthumanism but as an attempt to understand how the stage for later (including recent) disenchantment with and the de-centering of the human was more than capaciously set by the thinkers and the writers at heart of anything one might call Renaissance humanism.¹

In the heady days of 1976, as postmodernism was taking root both as a way of describing the world and as a staple of academic discourse, Ihab Hassan seems to have coined the term “posthumanist” in “Prometheus as Performer: Toward a Posthumanist Culture,” which was first the keynote address at the International Symposium on Postmodern Performance and then later a published text appearing in the *Georgia Review*.² “Prometheus as Performer”

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¹ *Renaissance Posthumanism*. Eds. Joseph Campana and Scott Maisano. New York: Fordham University Press, 2012.

² Ihab Hassan. “Prometheus as Performer: Toward a Posthumanist Culture?” *The Georgia Review* 31.4 (1977): 830-850.

was, notably subtitled “A University Masque in Five Scenes.” I cannot speak to the conditions of the original “performance,” but the text indicates a series of speakers—Pretext, Mythotext, Text, Heterotext, Context, Metatext, Posttext, and Paratext. Much more might be said of this work, which was conceived in the context of performance and with reference to a court theatrical form, the masque, critical to the late medieval and early Tudor cultures that shaped William Shakespeare.

If the overall goal of the masque is to “place the subject of postmodern performance in a wide and speculative context” that wide context gets no less wide and no more specific when it comes to whatever “posthumanist” culture might be or mean. Early on Pretext calls it an “emergent culture” and “the matrix of contemporary performance,” while later Metatext will indicate that “posthumanist culture is a performance in progress” (Hassan 831). In between, Text refers to “the process leading us to a posthumanist culture” which “depends mainly on the growing intrusion of the human mind into nature and history, on the dematerialization of life and the conceptualization of existence” (835). Alongside the ambiguities of posthumanism would be the ambiguities of Prometheus, who Text admits to Mythotext “may be a vague metaphor of a mind struggling with the One and the Many.” But he also indicates that “His mind is where Imagination and Science, Myth and Technology, Language and Number sometimes meet. Or put it both prophetically and archetypically: Prometheus pre-sages the marriage of Earth and Sky. Only then, perhaps, will posthumanism see the dubious light of a new day” (835). Whatever is at issue in posthumanism, I would stress, one might draw from Hassan that it is an *ambiguous performance codified by a deeply but fascinatingly outmoded form*, one might say an *anachronistic and allegorical*, form.

In the perhaps less-heady days of 1992, Donna Haraway published “Ecce Homo, Ain’t (Ar’n’t) I a Woman, and Inappropriate/d Others: The Human in a Post-Humanist Landscape.”³ Haraway, perhaps more so than any other of the early proponents of terms like posthuman and posthumanism, focused not only on the ethics of technological impacts on and extensions of the human body but also the question of how varieties of gendered identity might *not* be effaced in invocations of universality. “Humanity,” Haraway suggests, “is a modernist figure”:

and this humanity has a generic face, a universal shape. Humanity’s face has been the face of man. Feminist humanity must have another shape, other gestures; but, I believe, we must have feminist figures of humanity. They cannot be man or woman; they cannot be the human as historical narrative

³ Donna Haraway. *Ecce Homo, Ain’t (Ar’n’t) I a Woman, and Inappropriate/d Others: The Human in a Post-Humanist Landscape*. *Feminists Theorize the Political*. Eds. Judith Butler and Joan Wallach Scott. London: Routledge, 1992. 86-100.

has staged that generic universal [sic]. Feminist figures cannot, finally, have a same; they cannot be native. Feminist humanity must, somehow, both resist representation, resist literal figuration, and still erupt in powerful new tropes, new figures of speech, new turns of historical possibility. (Haraway, 86)

Notably, Haraway would later turn away from posthumanist as a term, preferring “companion species” and a series of other terms largely because posthumanism, she suggests, too easily leads to forms of “transhumanism” or fantasies of exceeding through technology the limits of human corporeality.⁴ For the moment, what I find most provocative here is that Haraway does not abandon the human. Rather, her goal is quite specific, which is to strip away the “generic face” and “universal shape” of the human or of humanity. From my point of view, far more effective than invocations of the decentering of the human would be a de-generalizing or better yet *a specification of the human*. Human and associated terms (like humanity and humanism) might be useful and even necessary even amidst the multi-species assemblages of a blighted planetary moment I might call the Anthropocene except it would provoke conversation about the utility of that over-invoked term.

I also want to appreciate that Haraway’s subject is, in fact, the figure of the suffering body crystallized by the figure of *Ecce Homo*, “a rich, dangerous, old, and constantly renewed tradition of Judeo-Christian humanism” with readings of Jesus and Sojourner Truth to ask “how recent intercultural and multicultural feminist theory constructs possible postcolonial, nongeneric, and irredeemably specific figures of critical subjectivity, consciousness, and humanity—not in the sacred image of the same, but in the self-critical practice of ‘difference,’ of the I and we that is/are never identical to itself, and so has hope of connection to others” (Haraway, 87). Much suffering results from the dominance of a certain version of the human to which a term like posthumanist responds. How interesting that for Haraway, appropriate attention to *figurations of the suffering human* might offer a way to undo the damages of anthropocentrism.

It is hard not to be stirred by Haraway’s powerful call for “new tropes, new figures of speech, new turns of historical possibility” (87). Indeed, I have turned in these brief engagements to two of the earliest to think with terms like “posthuman” or “posthumanism” to try to tap back into the frenetic early energies of those terms. One might say there is an historical reason for doing so. To date from Hassan, is to conceive of nearly 50 years of something called posthumanism, posthumanist, or the posthuman. To date from Haraway is to consider 30 years. Critical terms don’t merely have a shelf life; they have life

⁴ See, for example, Donna Haraway. “When We Have Never Been Human, What Is to Be Done?” interview by Nicholas Gane. *Theory, Culture & Society* 23.7–8 (2006): 135-158.

cycles. If at first a coinage or a new use of a term is attended upon by mystery (or a masque even!), then an often-frenzied phase of definition and codification ensues, which often leads directly to the equally frenzied overuse. At such a point, terms either seem to fall out of use or to become so vague and generic, they merely signpost once-impactful histories and intensities: sometimes usefully, sometimes not. One might quip, “Once there’s a _____ *Reader* published, it’s really over.”⁵ One might say this even admiringly, because such readers often seem retrospective codifications (at times elegiac in tone) rather than prospective or anticipatory. But the most interesting thing that can happen, it seems to me, is that a term continues *to work*, which is to say that it functions, enhancing critical conversation by *doing* or *performing* to provoke, clarify, and incite. The essays here suggest that there is much still to do and perform and that the literature and culture of early modern Europe amply, if unexpectedly, fulfils Haraway’s call for “new turns of historical possibility” (Haraway, 86). What follows, then, are provocations, sentiments that crystallized during and after Renaissance Posthumanism and that have a new lucidity, lit as they are by the inquires in this special issue.

Like postmodernism, no version of posthumanism (in no matter what era it is practiced) can afford to take religion for granted. This is not to re-enchant the world, per se, but if the patterns of thought in question are those that locate the human relative to other creatures and things, early modernity offers proof positive that this cannot be understood out of the context of world views anchored not only in ancient cosmology but in a series of active theological and institutional conflicts. Indeed, it might be more interesting and useful to think of a *Reformation Posthumanism* than a *Renaissance Posthumanism* at this point in critical history.

The work of the human requires less decentering or displacing than specifying, connecting and scaling. This is also a way of saying that the world may not get better through patient readings that call out the various anthropocentrism afflicting the planet, no matter how destructive they are. From one point of view, this is because “the human” is persistent, retrenched, and always most present when most appearing to be absent (or when having been banished). More useful would be to pluralize and specify the human, to refuse generality of invocation, to locate connection and disconnection between humans and the planetary systems of which they are part, and to think of the human not as a measure of all things but, rather, as the inverse: *an entity defined*

⁵ See, for example, the most recent forays: *Posthumanism in Art and Science: A Reader*. Eds. Giovanni Alois and Susan McHugh. New York: Columbia University Press, 2021 or *Posthuman Studies Reader: Core Readings on Transhumanism, Posthumanism and Metahumanism*. Eds. Evi D. Sampanikou and Jan Stasienko. Basel: Schwabe Verlagsguppe, 2021.

by the negotiation of a range of scalar paradoxes. Such paradoxes range from what early moderns might have thought of as the microcosmic to the macrocosmic and what now might be described from quarks to cosmoses.

It seems to me that one tendency worth reflecting on is a strategic self-abnegation of the human. I, too, am often struck by the desire to get “the human” out of the way. But that is because I can only understand the enmeshed, open-weave creatures called humans in the multi-species ecologies in which they live by not setting humans aside out of the understandable desire to not limit other entities to human definition and to recognize the extent to which other entities already participate in some qualities historically cherished as human. Even so, one wonders if reassigning human concepts or capacities (agency or personhood or governance) to other entities changes these capacities. The oddities of early modern natural history offer ample opportunities for this task, and more writing, research, and editing of these works makes available a laboratory for exploring articulated systems of creaturely connectivity across centuries, geographies, and media. How Pliny is translated and circulated, or Conrad Gessner, matters. The extraordinary archive of works on furry, four-footed creatures as well as trees and bees and even “humans” has witnessed somewhat of its own renaissance in recent years, but that work has only just begun.

“Shakespeare” may be even more retrenched than “the human.” Of centering Shakespeare, I too am guilty—often happily so. The danger is not that one is doomed to become a Harold Bloom by writing about Shakespeare. And, in fact, “Shakespeare” is always a strange assemblage of various hands and voices and media that give us these texts in their moments and in long, strange subsequent histories. Such magnificent work—particularly with respect to the concerns of this issue—have arisen from engagement with Shakespeare. So, I am ambivalent about this formulation, but I do wonder what texts, what authors, what genres, what anonymous phenomena offer as-yet-unheralded perspectives on Renaissance (post)humanist dilemmas.

One benefit of studies anchored in Shakespeare, especially in a journal like this one, is that *adaptation, translation, and remediation rise to the fore in (post)humanist approaches*. Whether one thinks of the vibrant translations of early modernity or the global dissemination of early modern works (primarily if not exclusively Shakespeare), the many languages and cultures that touch these works offer opportunities for critical insight. Similarly, the adaptation and remediation of early modern works (within early modernity or our own era) also highlights how bodies, environments, technologies, and a range of other factors fundamentally condition what we construe to be or not to be human. In an increasingly virtual moment, as tech billionaires fuel trillionaire corporations funding flights of fancy to outer space to bring disaster capitalism and extractive practices to the stars, clearly the impact of *technological sea changes on our ideas of the human* will only increase. More attention to the histories of science

and technology from early modernity to the present will be required to counter transhumanist fantasies, to counter extractivism in its new guises, and to offer perspective on transformations too rapid and intense to understand with any long-term point of view inside one's own historical moment.

It may be an all-too recursive strategy to suggest that the future is the past. And yet so many of the pillars of recent posthumanisms have deep roots in the early modern past—and some might argue even earlier. I have no interest in wars of periodization (“no, our period invented that!”). But to honor Haraway's still-resonant call for “new tropes, new figures of speech, new turns of historical possibility” (86) is to keep as wide an archive as possible of the moments, languages, and cultures, that help us understand the complex situation not of The Human but of specified and scalable humans who are complexly connected to and disconnected from the living and unliving systems of the planet. These humans may not be as singular as once was hoped for the Human. But whether sited in early or late modernity, these humans are in fact a whole lot more familiar.

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Book Reviews

Latest Western Shakespeare Criticisms Introduced and Studied in China. A review of 许勤超, 《文本政治学: 文化唯物主义莎评研究》 [Xu, Qinchao. *The Politics of Text: A Study of Cultural Materialist Shakespeare Criticism*. Beijing: China Social Sciences Press, 2014. Pp. 199] and 杨林贵、乔雪瑛, 《世界莎士比亚研究选编》 [Yang, Lingui and Qiao Xueying, eds. *Selected Papers of World Shakespeare Studies*. Beijing: Commercial Press, 2020. Pp. 407].

Reviewed by *Zeyuan Hu**

One thousand readers make one thousand Hamlets. Shakespeare has been read and interpreted through different schools of criticism and theories since his own time. There had been Neo-Classicism, Romanticism, and Victorian criticism of Shakespeare before the 20th century. Prior to the 1970s, the intrinsic criticisms of literature had been dominating the western literary criticism. Russian Formalism, New Criticism, Structuralism, etc., emphasized the autonomy of literary texts and viewed the texts as the focus of their literary analysis. In the 1980s, some critics began to realize the defects of intrinsic criticisms. A literary work is deeply rooted in its political, social and cultural contexts. The so-called “self-sufficient literary work” doesn’t exist at all. Since 1979, the intrinsic rhetorical studies of literature have been replaced by the extrinsic studies of literature. Around the 1980s, Western Marxism, Feminism and New Historicism became the most influential theories in literary criticisms. As one of the most influential schools of literary criticisms, Cultural Materialism emerged in England in close association with Marxism and New Historicism. Cultural Materialist Shakespeare criticism, Marxist Shakespeare criticism and New-Historical Shakespeare criticism are classified as Materialist Shakespeare criticisms as a whole.

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In China, the first exclusive study of western Cultural Materialist criticism of Shakespeare in the west was made by Xu Qinchao in his monograph *Politics of Text: A Study of Cultural Materialist Shakespeare Criticism* published in 2014. It makes a close reading of the writings of leading cultural materialists, such as Jonathan Dollimore, Alan Sinfield, and John Drakakis, on William Shakespeare, with an interaction with other critical theories. What's worth mentioning is that the author combines theoretical discussions with the play texts of Shakespeare from historical, political, social, feministic, cultural and educational perspectives. Theoretical analysis is convincingly interwoven with textual reading and textual reading often illuminates theoretical reasoning.

Chapter 1 introduces the political turn in Shakespeare criticism in the academia of the English-speaking world. The emergence of Cultural Materialist Shakespeare Criticism is accounted for in political, social and literary contexts. The representatives of this school, like Dollimore, Sinfield, Drakakis, etc., are adequately introduced. What is especially worth noticing for western scholars is the Cultural Materialist Criticism of Shakespeare in China. Yang Zhengrun, the author's supervisor for his Ph.D. dissertation and a noted Shakespeare scholar, is the first scholar who studied Shakespeare from the perspective of Cultural Materialism. He published an essay titled "The Politicization of Literary and Shakespeare Studies: A Survey of Cultural Materialism" in the magazine *Literature and Arts* (wen yi bao) on December 22, 1990. According to Yang, the rise of Cultural Materialism was due to the ideological change since the conservative government of Madame Thatcher took power in England in the 1970s. In Shakespeare criticism, there appeared a political tendency. Cultural Materialism integrated the political context with intrinsic formalist studies of literature. He categorized politics into four fields: race, class, gender, and sex. According to Yang, politics is mainly about power. These fields are battlefields of power. Critics should analyze the political intention, political content and political function of the literary works from the relations among the four fields. Yang thinks that each of Shakespeare's plays is a social critique from morality rather than from politics. Shakespeare hoped to reform rather than subvert the political power structure of his time. The author makes a survey of foreign and domestic studies of cultural materialist Shakespeare studies and finds that most of the studies were merely introductory without profound interpretations of Shakespeare's works. Cultural Materialism was regarded as a school of New Historicism and discussed with its theoretical framework, cultural background and other critical theories. There were few exclusive studies of this school combined with a profound textual reading at home or abroad. The book makes a close reading of Cultural Materialist criticism of Shakespeare interacting with critical theories, Shakespeare's works, historical and political backgrounds, as well as an analysis on race, class, gender and sex.

Chapter 2 discusses the history, ideology and subjectivity of the interpretation of Shakespeare. History, subjectivity, anti-essentialist humanistic criticism and historical ideological criticism are discussed in three sections separately. The author highlights the critical strategy in cultural materialism: Dollimore revealed the historical and social truth of decentralized subjects in Shakespearean plays, committed to subvert the various ideologies which limited the freedom of subjects, and resumed the identities of those suppressed subjects. The author points out that it was from the perspective of anti-essentialism that Dollimore analyzes *King Lear*, *Coriolanus*, *Antony and Cleopatra* and reveals the pivotal function of wealth, politics and power in the construction of human nature. Through Xu's Dollimore analysis, we know that human nature becomes more sophisticated with social interventions.

Chapter 3 is about the identity politics in Shakespearean plays. Race, class, gender and sex politics in Shakespeare plays are discussed in comparison with post-colonialism, Marxism, and feminism. The author acknowledges the significance of Cultural Materialists' discussion of race problems in Shakespeare criticisms. The conflicts of classes are not only determined by economic factors, but also by various other factors, like race and gender. Cultural Materialist Shakespeare criticism emphasizes the impact of history and culture and avoids unary determinism. The author concludes that with the development of cultural studies, Cultural Materialist Shakespeare criticism tends to be more closely integrated with feminist Shakespeare criticism. In later Cultural Materialist Shakespeare criticism, gender and sex studies became the major objects of the political interpretation of Shakespearean plays. However, the strategies in deconstructing male chauvinism were mainly on the levels of language and culture, which was far from reality and failed to be conducive to the liberation of women in reality.

Chapter 4 is an ideological investigation of the Shakespeare industry. It discusses the teaching, performance, and film and TV productions of Shakespearean plays from the perspective of ideology. With a close reading of Alan Sinfield's "Give an Account of Shakespeare and Education, Showing Why You Think They are Effective and What You have Appreciated about Them. Support Your Comments with Precise References," this chapter discovers that Shakespeare was applied in the education of British citizens as a tool to spread conservative political ideology while its humanism was neglected. With an analysis of Alan Sinfield's "Royal Shakespeare: Theatre and the Making of Ideology," the chapter holds that the Royal Shakespeare Company's performance of Shakespearean plays consolidated the ruling ideology in England. With reference to Graham Holderness's "Radical Potentiality and Institutional Closure: Shakespeare in Film and Television," the author points out that the adapted films and TV series of Shakespearean plays were simply a means for various groups and parties to win the cultural leadership or obtain their economic profits.

Chapter 5 is a conclusion summarizing the achievements and limitations of Cultural Materialist Shakespeare criticisms in the west. First it acknowledges the inheritance of tradition in Cultural Marxist Shakespearean Studies. Then it holds that the most striking and outstanding contribution of Cultural Materialist Shakespearean Studies was its political criticism and ethical pursuit. Shakespeare criticisms are going out of the ivory tower and directly intervene in the reality. Shakespeare embodies the qualities of a Marxist and writes as a Marxist here. In reading Shakespeare, with the illumination of cultural materialist critics, we discover the political, historical, racial, class, gender and sexual struggles in and between the lines. At last the author criticizes Cultural Materialist Shakespeare criticism in China is far from enough despite the dominant Marxist ideology in China. There is still much room for Chinese scholars to do Cultural Materialist studies of Shakespeare.

In comparison with other critical theories, like New Historicism, Feminism, Post-colonialism, and Marxism, the book clarifies the characteristics of Cultural Materialist Shakespeare criticisms. What's illuminating is that the author wisely combines ancient Chinese stories in analyzing Western Shakespeare criticisms, such as comparing the tragic love story of Xiang Yu, King Ba in the late Qin Dynasty, and his beloved concubine Yu Ji with that of Antony and Cleopatra. The book also makes some objective comments on the achievements and limitations of Cultural Materialist studies of Shakespeare.

Xu's book makes a profound analysis of Cultural Materialist Criticism of Shakespeare in England. It helps Chinese scholars to understand Cultural Materialists' interpretation of Shakespeare's plays. By combining a close reading of Shakespeare's play texts, the book makes some creative interpretations of Shakespeare in light of Cultural Materialism. Furthermore, the book deepens and clarifies the meaning of those texts and conversely enriches Cultural Materialist criticism. The author insightfully points out the limitations of cultural criticism: Cultural Materialism deconstructs the internal criticism but fails to construct a systematic criticism instead; it is problematic for Cultural Materialism to neglect totally the religious factors in Shakespearean plays.

Despite its contributions, nevertheless, it must be pointed out that the book would have been a better monograph if it traces the academic origin of Cultural Materialism and analyses the social and political background of the Marxist Shakespeare scholars, which are very important for Chinese readers to understand the critical paradigm of Cultural Materialism. If there are more comparative efforts between western Cultural Materialist criticisms and their Chinese counterpart, it would be more easily understood by those scholars in China who are not able to read English works directly. In addition, an equal dialogue between western and Chinese scholars on the same topic will not only make the discussion more interesting, but also more comprehensive and convincing.

Despite the widespread pandemic of covid-19 all over the world in early 2020, the latest western Shakespeare criticisms have been introduced to China in an even more comprehensive way. Perhaps this is because Shakespeare offers us fun, knowledge and hope especially in times of hardship. Shakespeare has been more widely read during this challenging period of time. Readers can obtain more pleasure in reading Shakespeare with the interpretation of specialized critics. Luckily, to our expectation, a more comprehensive selection of the latest western Shakespeare criticisms, *Selected Papers of World Shakespeare Studies* edited by Yang Lingui and Qiao Xueying was published in 2020 timely. Inspired by Russ McDonald's *Shakespeare: An Anthology of Criticism and Theory, 1945–2000* and Yang Zhouhan's *Selected Works of Shakespeare Criticism*, Professor Yang Lingui, a leading Shakespeare scholar in China who published much internationally, organized quality Shakespeare scholars to translate the representative papers of the latest leading Shakespeare scholars in the English-speaking world in New Historicism, Cultural Materialism, Post-Colonialism, Feminism, etc. since the 1980s.

Professor Yang Lingui wrote a long and comprehensive preface titled "Shakespeare Studies and the Turn of Literary Criticism" introducing the developments in Shakespeare studies since the 1950s. He holds that the creation and spread of literary works should never be isolated from three core elements: writers, works, and readers (viewers of dramas and movies) and hence literary criticism should not only be concerned with the deliberation of the meaning of literary texts but also investigate the mechanism of the production and reception of them. In his opinion, there is a fourth dimension of meaning, context, in which the above-mentioned three elements are profoundly and complicatedly involved. According to Yang, the different interpretations of the sophisticated relations of the four elements lead to the various schools of literary criticisms. In Shakespeare studies, the different turns in different periods were the consequences of the changing understanding of history. Since the late 1970s, critics not only put Shakespeare and his works in the historical context but also attempt to demystify the secret meaning of his works and find the possibility of textual participation in the construction of historical meaning. In the 1980s, with the development of theory and criticism, some schools like New Historicism began to replace New Criticism and became the main player in literary studies and cultural education. Then the preface introduces concisely various representative scholars' Shakespeare studies from the perspectives of Reader's Response, Psychoanalysis, New Historicism, Materialism, Feminism, Gender Studies, Postcolonial Studies, etc. Through Yang's introduction, we can gain a complete and profound understanding of the interpretation of Shakespeare's plays by various critical theories.

The selection covers the schools of New Historicism, Cultural Materialism, Feminist Criticism and Postcolonial Studies. The selection is made

elaborately on the basis of an extensive reading of western Shakespeare studies. It borrows some representative papers of the leading critics from Russ McDonald's *Shakespeare: An Anthology of Criticism and Theory 1945-2000*. For Historicism and New Historicism, readers gain access to the Chinese translation of Stephen Greenblatt's "Invisible Bullets: Renaissance Authority and its Subversion, *Henry IV* and *Henry V*," Jean E. Howard's "The New Historicism in Renaissance Studies" and Jonathan Dollimore's "Shakespeare, Cultural Materialism and New Historicism." For gender studies, Catherine Belsey's "Disrupting Sexual Difference: Meaning and Gender in the Comedies," Gayle Greene's "'This that you call love': Sexual and Social Tragedy in *Othello*," Stephen Orgel's "The Performance of Desire," Ania Loomba's "Sexuality and Racial Difference." For Post-colonial studies, Meredith Anne Skura's "Discourse and the Individual: The Case of Colonialism in *The Tempest*." For social studies, Lynda E. Boose's "The Family in Shakespeare Studies; or Studies in the Family of Shakespeareans; or The Politics of Politics." It also includes the relatively more recent studies of the leading scholars in various fields, like Alan Sinfield's "*Macbeth*: History, Ideology and Intellectuals" and Valerie Wayne's "Historic Difference: Misogyny and *Othello*." However, different from Russ McDonald, the editors didn't simply categorize the papers into several groups of isms. This arrangement is more appropriate since with the integration of various critical theories, it is quite hard to simplify the critical methods into one single school of criticisms. Rather, most papers integrate various theoretical approaches in their criticisms. The selection covers most of the leading and latest Shakespeare studies in English academia, which will surely broaden the academic horizon of Shakespeare scholars in China. The publication of the book is a signal literary event in Shakespeare studies in China.

To guarantee the quality and authority, editors invite specialized Shakespeare scholars to do the translation. The translated version is under continuous polishing. For example, the term "containment" in "Shakespeare, Cultural Materialism and New Historicism" was previously translated as "bao rong 包容" meaning "tolerance" in an earlier version by Huang Bikang, a famous professor of Shakespeare at Peking University. But in this selection, it is revised as "yi zhi 抑制" meaning "restraint," with an explanatory note. This rendition is more academically precise and adds to our understanding of western Shakespeare criticisms. With the development of Shakespeare studies in China, we can see Chinese scholars gaining a more profound and more accurate understanding of their western colleagues. Yang also mentions the latest theoretical perspectives in Shakespeare studies, like eco-criticism, cognitive poetics, new reading theory and ethics for interested scholars in China to further their studies. At the end of his preface, Yang admits that Shakespeare studies in the English world are not the whole picture of world Shakespeare studies and plans to continue to edit selections of papers on Shakespeare from non-English

academia. He hopes more and more Chinese scholars will publish internationally and make contributions to world Shakespeare studies. Actually, generations of Shakespeare scholars in China, from the pioneers like Yang Zhouhan, Bian Zhilin, Li Funing, Lu Gusun, and Fang Ping, to younger scholars like Gu Zhengkun, Zhang Chong, Yang Lingui, Luo Yimin, Hao Tianhu, and Liu Hao, have not only introduced western Shakespeare studies to Chinese academia, but also published internationally and contributed considerably to world Shakespeare studies. The introduction and study of western Shakespeare criticisms have long inspired Shakespeare studies in China and will definitely contribute to the shaping of China's academic discourse in Shakespeare criticisms. Shakespeare criticisms by Chinese scholars diversify the picture of world Shakespeare studies and inspire western scholars more extensively. This has set a typical example of cultural cross-fertilization between the West and China.

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Mo Zhi, *Mo Zhi's Notes on Shakespeare's Sonnets*. Shanghai: Fudan University Press, 2019. Pp. 355.

Reviewed by *Jie Tang**

Shakespeare's plays and sonnets, like an everlasting spring, continuously water and nourish every generation. Zhang Qiong is a writer and professor from Fudan University and her inquiries center around Shakespeare's productions and adaptations. Underpinning the 2005-version Arden Shakespeare's 154 sonnets and Tu An's (one of the distinguished Chinese Shakespearean critics and translators) Chinese translation, Zhang Qiong, with the pseudonym of Mo Zhi, presents her sharp and subtle insights on Shakespeare's sonnets with her own Chinese translation scattered throughout *Mo Zhi's Notes on Shakespeare's Sonnets* published in 2019 by Fudan University Press.

Mo Zhi's book engages in a discussion of Shakespeare's aesthetics, poetics, artistry and creativity, and bursts forth her own ruminations on aesthetics and poetics, her own meditation on life, friendship, love, truth, beauty, kindness, and justice. Within her engagement, the author tries to transcend her reading and life experience over time and space for refreshing entertainment and blessedness of soul and mind. She professes in the prologue that free from traditional divisions and established comments, her reading tends to gloss every single piece of sonnet as a self-sufficient and independent item, which is her so-called "intentional misreading" (15). However, she candidly confesses that she unintentionally links up each sonnet like a cluster of pearls since these sonnets are an organic whole after reading Sonnet 17 (37). Therefore, between the so-called self-sufficiency and whole lies a tension entrusting Mo Zhi to trace Shakespeare's subtle and intangible nuances in the sonnets that seemingly repeat again and again the same theme, namely advising the author's friend to get married and give birth to offspring to bequeath his beauty before Sonnet 126, and the love triangle among the author's friend, the dark lady and the author after Sonnet 126.

Following the ebb and flow of Shakespeare's acute emotion, Mo Zhi starts her personal journey of closely reading and elaborating Shakespeare's sonnets from various aspects including wording, touches, rhythm, rhyme and rhetoric, and of deeply probing into Shakespeare's dynamic sensibility and thought in each sonnet (76).

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Mo Zhi unearths new elements and novelty as each sonnet proceeds from Sonnet 1 to Sonnet 126, in which the theme of marriage is cast into these sonnets. She focuses her attention on the theme of marriage from Sonnet 1 to Sonnet 9, in which in order to persuade his friend to get married, Shakespeare employs different similes, such as “rose” (Sonnet 1), “glass” (Sonnet 3), “beauty’s legacy” (Sonnet 4), time and its double effect (Sonnet 5), son and sun (Sonnet 6), music (Sonnets 8 and 9). Shakespeare’s resourceful similes in these sonnets enthrall Mo Zhi who agrees that artful wording with exquisite refinement refreshes the mind and undoes vulgar greed (19). Yet, she does not stick with the theme of marriage from Sonnet 5 on and ponders on the extensions and implications behind these sonnets (13). Mo Zhi recognizes that the poet firstly declares the intimacy between his friend and him in Sonnet 10, and from this point on, the poet often expresses his love, lovesickness, unstable affection, optimism, pessimism, hate and relief as their relationship changes, either in physical distance or in spiritual distance. Apart from communication of these emotions, Shakespeare begins a turn from Sonnet 19 on from the theme of advising his friend to get married and give birth to a discussion of artistry. Mo Zhi focuses on the poet’s disturbance and entanglement in Sonnets 20 to 51 because the poet is trapped by love; thus, “the dull substance of my flesh” is “so much of earth and water wrought” (Sonnet 44). Therefore, from Sonnet 52 on, Mo Zhi is aware of the fact that the poet shrinks from the love relationship, and conceives that the poet’s active and vigorous choice of retreat represents initiative in art creation which dramatically motivates luxuriant poetic diversity and transcends the poem itself (119). And Mo Zhi starts paying her attention to Shakespeare’s aesthetics. Mo Zhi explains that the friend, “thou,” is not the real man, but an ideal beauty within for whom the poet strives from Sonnet 53 on, and the beauty expands from human beings to nature (121). From Sonnets 53 to 70, Mo Zhi also analyses the effect of time on beauty in Sonnets 59, 60 and 65. Mo Zhi concludes that a true and natural beauty without pretension in these sonnets appeals to the poet (154). Mo Zhi indicates that changes in theme and content take place from Sonnet 71 on. Sonnet 78 shows the relationship of patron and writer between the friend and the poet, so the poet seems to flatter his friend and defends his own poems. Mo Zhi assumes that Shakespeare’s creation surpasses other poets because the beauty he creates is rather artificial than self-sufficient without modification (189), and that until Sonnet 105, it is the first time that Shakespeare conveys the trinity of beauty—a whole unity of “Fair, kind, and true” (Sonnet 105). From Mo Zhi’s perspective, the poet, due to the inequality, expresses his leave from his friend in Sonnets 109 and 110, so the friend becomes a metaphor and a certain belief for the poet in Sonnet 112 (252). Following Sonnet 112, Shakespeare, Mo Zhi explains, concentrates on the artistry whose quintessence is true feelings, and concludes in Sonnet 126 that his language is futile and “the rest is silence” (*Hamlet*, 5.2.358).

From Sonnet 127 on, Mo Zhi discusses the theme of love triangle among the dark lady, the poet's friend and the poet. Mo Zhi argues that Sonnets 1 to 126 describe the spiritual love, while Sonnets 127 to 154 the erotic love (347) that features the desire of body and soul. Sonnet 136 repeatedly borrows the loaded word "will" to highlight eros and desire, but this technique, Mo Zhi explains, directly deconstructs them, so Sonnet 137 discloses there is an insurmountable gulf between sense and sensibility. Besides, the dark lady in the sonnets draws Mo Zhi's attention. Shakespeare rebukes the monolithic taste that white is supremely beautiful, and glorifies the beauty of blackness. From Mo Zhi's perspective, the dark lady is a singular woman who challenges common customs and has her own life style and wisdom; therefore, she is carefree and discovers her own fascination and demeanor (298). In Sonnet 144, the poet writes, "The better angel is a man right fair, /The worser spirit a woman coloured ill." Unlike some readers holding that this sonnet divides evil and good by gender, and that Sonnets 1 to 126 depict an ideal and perfect world while Sonnets 127 to 154 a dark and evil world, Mo Zhi avers there is no telling distinction from each other in these sonnets, and Shakespeare deconstructs the binary opposition (332-333). Besides, Mo Zhi also interprets Shakespeare's "mad" (Sonnet 140) love and "My love is as a fever" (Sonnet 147), and ends with the sentence "Love's fire heats water, water cools not love" (Sonnet 154), which Mo Zhi thinks is a hail and salute for the love whose "fire" dies hard.

Indeed, Mo Zhi overwhelmingly falls her eyes on the motif—*Ars longa, vita brevis* when reading the sonnets. For example, Sonnet 15 conveys the poet's works can sustain the friend's beauty, and Sonnet 18 boasts art makes life last. Shakespeare's sonnets are dotted with the capriciousness of love, which uncovers the poet's personal and peculiar love philosophy. It is this kind of personalization and singularity that overwhelmingly impinge upon Mo Zhi who outputs her differently provoking insights and enlightenment for herself and readers. It is safe to say Mo Zhi's individual understandings aroused by the sonnets are the quintessence of the book.

Apart from assessments on Shakespeare's texts, Mo Zhi always aims to express her timely inspirations stirred by the sonnets on life, love, truth, beauty, kindness, etc. Concerning life, what is eternity? What is the essence of making life last and keeping life on? How do we maintain and optimize our life? Mo Zhi is always pondering on those questions. She believes life is endowed with natural rules that always refresh life, and we should follow those rules (4). Life's ultimate end is death, but we have different ways to transcend death (13). As every type of life shares the same end, we do not have to get depressed. Hardly has life ended when there is a new life blossoming and flourishing (27), in which the universal circle of life is the driving force. For love, Mo Zhi explains uncertainty may be the normal condition of love (246), so love brings about sweetness and sorrowness (68). Falling in love is one's own business, regardless

of the beloved (76). Love is selfless that leads a person to lose oneself (83), which results in loneliness when loving someone too deeply (53). However, Mo Zhi encourages people to love, because one who loves another one gains real happiness. We can transcend ourselves in love which broods hurts, healing, failures, gains, etc. To love, and to love bravely and ardently (70), is of paramount importance, no matter happy or heart-broken. At the same time, lovers should give each other space for imagination and freedom (87). As for truth, beauty and kindness, Mo Zhi concedes it is difficult to universalize a consensus standard to judge them (292). However, truth penetrates everything and pretension is doomed to failure (46-48). Truth and beauty are the hearts of art (31) and pretentious techniques must give way to them (72). At the very end of the book, Mo Zhi has to admit unexpectedness is the true condition of individual life. No one can obtain reasonable transcendence because one's mind always sways between good and evil, which is human beings' confusion and reality (333).

Mo Zhi also shows her meditations on aesthetics and poetics in the book. Poems should be repeatedly read, which contributes to newness and novelty (2). Poetry's allurements lies in different understandings according to our different moods (4). Indeed, meaning is continuously constructed, deconstructed and reconstructed (9). Poetry is so flexible and dynamic that reading it over and over again provides readers with another experience to re-taste and reassess (9), and another chance to reenter the wonderland of poesy. As a result, readers are lost in the wonderland filled with the beautiful, and then transient nourishment brings about eternity (7). Poetry's beauty lies in compact and brief expression uncovering tremendous and enormous imagination and inspiration (7). Poetry's ambiguous wording contributes to its self-deconstruction, which is the reason why poetry attracts readers. Poetry reveals not what truth is, but only sorrowfulness, contradictions and entanglements suffered by people, yet poetry traverses through time, and it no less conveys true emotion and helplessness upsetting people as time goes by (305). Poetry motivates individual understandings of life experience.

Poetry and love are holy but also heart-broken (66). Shakespeare presents his undefeated and great love in his sonnets (99), which produces eternity and transcendence (126). In the afterword, Mo Zhi remarks that the arrangement and development of Shakespeare's sonnets have a certain system and structure, but randomly reading one by one can strengthen our reading experiment and enjoyment of the English language. What we do is just to embrace curiosity for and interest in language and literature, regardless of systematic and theoretic analyses. We shall abandon stereotypes, feeling free to read them loudly. The 154 sonnets, including wording, sentences, structures, rhyme, rhythm, etc., produce a variety of ambiguities, so there is no agreed reading methodology. Individual reading experience spanning across decades

and generations is a precious reward, which entertains soul and mind, and absorbs the pleasure of appreciating and contemplating beauty (355).

What's most impressive about this book is Mo Zhi's personal ruminations on the thoughts and aesthetics behind these sonnets, not restricted with established comments. Based on her close reading of the Bard's sonnets, Mo Zhi closely following the flow and subtlety of Shakespeare's emotion gradually displays her singular explorations with her personal life experience. It seems that Mo Zhi transcends herself within Shakespeare's wonderland. Equally impressive is the fact that Mo Zhi has performed an in-depth analysis of Shakespeare's creative faculties.

It would have been more helpful if Mo Zhi could more scrutinize the wordings in these sonnets, rather than just offer her own prose translation. Moreover, it may be better to undertake an in-depth textual analysis. Finally, certain improvement in editing work would surely rectify some minor errors in this otherwise brilliant book.

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Nigel Wood, *Shakespeare and Reception Theory*. London and New York: The Arden Shakespeare, 2020. Pp. 195.

Reviewed by *Guixia Xie**

Nigel Wood's *Shakespeare and Reception Theory* is part of the Arden Shakespeare and Theory series edited by Evelyn Gajowski. This series aims to introduce a wide variety of contemporary theoretical developments that have established a role in the field of Shakespeare studies in the past few decades. Nigel Wood the author is a Professor of literature with specialist research areas of 18th-century literature and the staging of Shakespearean texts in the contemporary age. In this book, he co-opts reception theories to the enhancement of understanding of Shakespearean texts and aims to exemplify several theoretical templates for the study of how dramatic meaning is achieved and how artistic significance might be projected.

The book begins with the four main reception-engaged issues, viz. where the artistic elements exist, what their nature is, the significance of understanding past reaction to literary artifacts, and the possibility of a manufactured reaction during the viewing and reading of an artifact. To seek answers to these issues, Wood presents the two reception-related formative ideas that have contributed to the more recent assumptions about theatrical effects, i.e. hermeneutics, which concerns how people interpret external data, and aesthetics, about how people register the experiences derived principally from art. Three theorists are referred to at this point. Edmund Husserl's philosophical concept of "transcendental phenomenology" is used to ascertain the ways how we make sense of art. Hans-Georg Gadamer's concept of "horizon of understanding" is used to demonstrate that our interpretation of artworks cannot be transhistory. And Roman Ingarden's concretization of literary works of art shows how people approach and interpret artifacts is distinct from other forms of communication. According to Wood, Gadamer's and Ingarden's theories share an interest in aesthetic effects, yet they diverge widely from each other in their perceptions of the subjectivity, viz. whether the aesthetic effects are constructed by the subjectivity based on the received text or it is the text that directs the subjectivity to certain types of aesthetic understanding (21). To explore the topic of subjectivity, Wood then skillfully introduces Jean-Paul Sartre's distinction

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between a passive “having-to-be” self and an active “not-knowing” one, with the former easily surrendering to the received opinions and the latter more active to search for some perception beyond the given. This cognitive sense of response leads to a more explicit discussion of Carolyn Brown and Bruce McConachie, who use a psychoanalytic approach to literature and to audience analysis and who emphasize that the preconscious allegiances or the “epistemic competence” determine any aesthetic qualities in response. These discussions in the first chapter provide a knowledge basis for the coming chapters and raise the aspects to be developed into theoretical templates in the following chapters.

Chapter Two picks up the concept of “preconscious” response in Chapter One and analyzes it from a sociological perspective with a focus on the discussion of how spectators and readers interact with performance. A great section of this chapter is dedicated to the theories of Hans Robert Jauss. His sense of “horizon of expectation” is used to argue that history and aesthetics are entwined and that the individual’s aesthetic judgments are not born out of free choice but historically conditioned. Thus, Wood argues, with examples of different adaptations of *Antony and Cleopatra*, that the reconstruction of the past horizon of expectation could enable us to discover how a work is received by contemporary readers and also allow us to register what is involved in that move of adaptation. While emphasizing the importance of “history” in the understanding of Shakespeare, Wood also identifies other aspects that are important in this process of understanding, including Wolfgang Iser’s ideas about the involvement of readers, which highlights the indeterminacy readers would encounter in the process of sense-making of the profound dramatic action, and Umberto Eco’s idea of implied authorial intention, which emphasizes the role played by the author.

Chapter Three approaches the problem of literary response in a more behavioral way, shifting from the discussion of response caused by external forces, i.e. the text-in-history or the text itself, to more internal ones, meaning that the process of meaning-making is more determined by our deepest impulse brought to the fore by an encounter with fictive expression (68). The first theorist referred to is Norman Holland. His psychoanalytic inquiry of literary response emphasizes that we the reader, with a personal “identity theme,” would encounter a text through our own predilections, working out through the text with our patterns of desire and interacting with the work to make it part of our psychic economy or vice versa. David Bleich’s notion of “negotiation” is introduced at this point to complement Holland’s more personal and psychological ones. According to Bleich, through negotiating with the patterns of a literary work, we might “resymbolize” the experience to make it comprehensible both to ourselves and others. Following this more social vein of discussion, Wood then discusses Stanley Fish’s “interpretive communities,” which is the source of meaning that we confer on texts, and Jonathan Culler’s “literary

competence,” which refers to an understanding of the common rules or laws of traditional good taste encouraged by institutional pressures that structure our reading and spectating habit. The plot and performance of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* are used in this chapter to connect these theories with the text and practice.

Following the psychological and social perspectives, Chapter Four moves on to a more extreme scenario when the co-option of performance becomes a matter of identifying and evokes a resistant response from the audience. Wood shifts our attention to some more authentic responses when we find aspects of Shakespeare questionable or are offended by the plot or characterization about our identity. In this chapter, Judith Butler and Judith Fetterley's viewpoints on gender relationship, Aimé Césaire and Frantz Fanon's discussion of colonialism, as well as other writers and theorists such as Bertolt Brecht, Jacques Rancière, Harold Bloom, E. D. Hirsch, and David Bleich's ideas about performance and interpretation are discussed, so as to raise the readers' pensiveness on the more tutored responses on the one hand and the more instinctual reactions on the other. During the discussion, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Coriolanus*, *The Merchant of Venice*, and *The Tempest* and their different adaptations are referred to bring up the identity problems such as gender, racism, and post-colonialism respectively.

Chapter Five explores how a divide between the private and public spheres might bear upon an approach to Shakespeare's works. He raises the point that “[t]he need to approach audience response via a consideration of how it is placed within the expectations and impulses of specific senses of a ‘public’ is central to locating communal reactions to drama” (129). He then goes over a brief history of how “public sphere” has been formed together with the then rising practice of playgoing and how the opinions towards theater vary among different scholars in the 18th century. In this section, Jürgen Habermas's identification of the changing range of the public sphere is introduced to assist in the analysis of early modern theatrical culture, Henri Lefebvre's views to the discussion about the boundaries of public and private spaces, and Stephen Greenblatt's to the “sustained collective improvisation” created by the theatrical space. Besides arguing about what effects different spaces might have on the audience's response to these theories, this chapter also discusses the differences between the composition of Shakespeare's first audience and the modern one. These modern audiences, who are more privatized and scattered because of the thriving mass media and recorded performance, and whose sense, according to Wood, is “much more conditioned by physical boundaries than most of Shakespeare's spectators” (148), make the tracking of response much more difficult nowadays. The examples used are the different presentations of *Henry V* and *Hamlet*. Such a distinction of the Shakespearean audience into the public

and private groups by Wood provides a new perspective to the discussion of Shakespeare reception.

In the concluding part, Wood briefly discusses how the Covid-19 pandemic and advancement of technology would affect the performance and the audience, making the problem of response even more different from the traditional ones. He also analogizes the way an audience expresses and argues his or her opinions about a play with others to that of the operating mechanism of response theories, justifying his use of reception theories in the analysis of Shakespearean plays. At the end of this section, Wood wraps up the book by concluding four areas where reception theories are key to the theatrical understanding of how drama effects might be registered.

Throughout the book, Wood demonstrates his outstanding ability in adopting specific reception theoretical approaches in the application. As Holub once criticizes reception theories as providing the paths that are not “proved to be as open and productive as originally envisioned”(148), Wood, however, demonstrates to us how a range of response theories bear on the criticism of Shakespearean dramatic texts and on the understanding of how audiences and readers in history or at present have reacted to Shakespeare’s works. His combination of different aspects such as psychology, identity, and public sphere, also has some interdisciplinary significance to the reception theories, a point touched by Jauss when he regards reception theory as “partial” discipline to the communication theory and mentioned by Henry Schmidt when he discusses the application of reception theory with real readers (160). Such an interdisciplinary approach not only enables Wood to discuss the reception problems with new perspectives but also to shift among different reception theories with ease, though a further comparison of different concepts might be needed for a better understanding of the theories for the readers such as the subtle difference of the “horizon” concept of Gadamer and Jauss.

Besides theoretical contributions, this book also has some practical significance. It can serve as a valuable reference for scholars who are keen on reception studies or Shakespeare performance studies, and the theoretical templates developed in the book are wealthy resources for students who seek a systematic introduction of response theories and fields for any further investigation.

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Theatre Reviews

Cabbages and Kings: Posthumanistic Shakespeare on the Contemporary Ukrainian Stage.

Reviewed by *Bohdan Korneliuk**, *Daria Moskvitina***

The current Shakespearean stage in Ukraine is a patchwork of styles, play choices and artistic intentions. In the past three decades, post-Soviet Ukrainian theatre has developed its approach to Shakespeare, which can be characterized as “glocal”. Some native stage practitioners emphasize their openness to up-to-the-minute tendencies, which enable the genuine integration of the Ukrainian theatre into the global Shakespearean context, whereas others mainly focus on the local issues employing Shakespeare’s plays as a source for travesties, burlesques, remakes, and retakes aimed at putting current social problems in the spotlight.

The specifics of the modern technology-driven world and the crisis of anthropocentrism in the media and art forms cannot but reflect on the performing arts both globally and locally. In this respect, a posthuman theoretical perspective undermines the role of the human as the only creature capable of speaking the self. As wisely perceived by John D. Peters,

The chief challenge to communication in the twentieth century is contact with beings that lack mortal form. Communication is something we share with animals and computers, extraterrestrials and angels. As beings who not only speak but communicate, we reveal our mechanical, bestial, and ethereal affinities. The concept respects none of the metaphysical barriers that once protected human uniqueness. (227-228)

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The posthuman approach in the Ukrainian theatre also has a global character. On the one hand, it is determined by a globally shared mistrust in the human and the grand narrative resulting from technological advancement, environmental issues and generally dystopic prognoses about the future. On the other hand, an influential factor is the country's Soviet past, when art was serving a propaganda that stated the invaluable role of the human in the Communist society, whereas the reality was totally different: an individual felt a lack of safety and recognition, could not accommodate their basic needs, and permanently had cognitive dissonance due to the striking contrast between propaganda and reality. The idea of creating "a new human" had been on top of the agenda since the very start of the Communist project, and by the 1970s it got its shape as "homo sovetikus"—"a new, superior type of a human" (Heller, 9). This notion was critically scrutinized and revisited by Aleksander Zinoviev, who reveals its double-faced and perverted nature, roughly defining "homo sovetikus" as "a Bircher being ahead of the utmost progress" (350). Indeed, collectivism, practiced for decades, as well as the purge of the 1930s-1950s, led to a total dissociation of humans from their individuality: the vast majority perceived themselves as cogs in the machine—silent, unheard and unable to take decisions. In order to unite with the self and the humane, people needed to individuate themselves, to create a safe space where they could relax from the official agenda and eventually tie the human to the humane.

This general disbelief in the role of the human promoted by the official narrative was clearly marked at a mundane level: e.g. the Soviet colloquial phraseology included the phrase "to live like a human", meaning to have a decent, high-quality life. As for artistic practices, the manifestation of this disbelief became possible after the USSR collapsed, when art became free from its propaganda duties. A good example here is monumental art. During Soviet decades, monuments to people—both real historic figures such as Vladimir Lenin and symbolic embodiments, such as *The Worker* and *The Peasant Woman*, or *The Metallurgist*—generally prevailed in the USSR. However, when ideology gave way to competition and the necessity to make this or that region attractive for tourists, monuments to humans were rivalled by monuments to non-human objects, such as local products (tomato, gobi fish, cucumber, watermelon), manufactured products (metal, sugar), national food (halushka, varenyk, deruny), abstract notions (greed [symbolized by a toad], bribe [embodied in an orange], happy childhood [a Soviet-style tricycle]). This tendency clearly marks the perplexity about the human and their role in the society, which post-Soviet Ukrainians still feel, and it can be traced in some theatrical performances, Shakespeare-based in particular. The productions selected for consideration in this review were mostly not intended to be remarkably posthumanist, but they definitely invite a posthumanistic reading, which we used here as a viewing strategy.

The first attempts to employ Shakespeare's dramatic legacy as a mirror to reflect Ukrainian contexts can be traced as early as 2004, when *A Prologue to Macbeth* (dir. Vlad Troitskyi), the first part of the Shakespeare-based trilogy *Mystical Ukraine*, premiered in *The Dakh Theatre* in Kyiv. This show represented the story of a treacherous thane: on the one hand, it was transplanted into the Ukrainian cultural context, with the colourful aesthetics of traditional costumes and a soundtrack of folk songs performed by DakhaBrakha ethno-chaos band; on the other hand, it was seen as a commonly recognized ritual that alluded to the times when humanity did not have the gift of speech and was deeper integrated in nature. Staging *Macbeth* as "a prologue" suggested bringing "Shakespearean narrative in its pre-historic, pre-theatrical and pre-Shakespearean form of existence" (Moskvitina).

This 70-minute-long production represented only key scenes from the original play—Macbeth and Banquo returning from the war, the Weird Sisters' prophecy, Duncan's murder, the scenes with Banquo and his bride (invented by the director), Lady Macbeth's madness and the death of both Macbeth and his wife. The choice was not random; Troitskyi deliberately peeled off all the side plotlines, exposing and emphasizing the archetypal conflict of love and betrayal, and the tragedy of infertility, which, as interpreted by the director, is indeed the source of all the clashes in the story.

The ritualistic character of the production was emphasized by the artistic methods employed. Troitskyi definitely alluded to prehistoric animism and totemism, by factually equating humans to animals, or even making the latter the measure, if not of all things, at least of chronology. The performance started with a prologue: "It was a long time ago. There weren't any geese at that time. There were only ducks. Rather there were some geese but they were very wild. So, somewhere, not in our land, and, by the way, we didn't have any geese yet. We only had some ducks. Rather we had some geese but they were wild. So, in one kingdom, in a distant land, once upon a time, there was a king. Well, not really a king. For he was a kind man. And the people... Well, you know what kind of beasts people are. The people like everywhere. Dogs—not people" (copied from English subtitles, left unedited). As we can see, people are compared to beasts and dogs, and, in order to reveal that animal side of the characters, the director deprived actors of vocal tools, allowing them only mimetic movements for artistic expression. Moreover, alongside the king and the nobility, some animal characters of symbolic nature were introduced—for instance, the Bird, accompanying Lady Macbeth. It wore a white gown decorated with Ukrainian traditional embroidery and a plague doctor mask. Owing to its long beak, the Bird unmistakably resembled a stork, which is a traditional symbol of childbirth. However, infertile Lady Macbeth, even protected by the red and white bird, could not have children, and when the witches brought her a doll instead of a real baby, this spurred her next fit of

madness. The Bird was closely tied to Prybluda (Foundling)—an ugly demonic creature that also contributed to Lady Macbeth's mental disorder. To crown it all, the Goat appeared in the finale, not to be sacrificed according to its eternal function, but together with Foundling, to bring Macbeth to his fall and death. The message of this production was quite ambiguous and welcomed an abundance of interpretations, the most obvious of which being that the human is a part of nature, and not the king of the world by default; it takes an effort to really be a human, otherwise animal and demonic parts of character will prevail.

The theatrical trend of introducing posthumanist elements was continued in Kyiv's experimental Free Stage Theatre, founded in 2001 by the Ukrainian director Dmytro Bohomazov. This independent, privately owned venue for under 50 spectators allowed for radical experimentation that was impossible in state theatres. In 2008 Bohomazov premiered an electro-acoustic opera performance ironically titled *Sweet Dreams, Richard*. This 50-minute-long production was based on an episode of the Shakespearean history that many contemporary directors omit or abridge—the nightmare Richard III sees on the eve of the battle with Richmond. Bohomazov masterfully turned the stage action into phantasmagoria combining Shakespeare's text with performance art, unconventional audio-visual techniques and contemporary choreography. Richard was the only human-like figure in the production, whereas ghosts reminded of gruesome monsters typical of horror films. They appeared on the stage in mummy-like costumes, wrapped in bandages, and a video projection created their multiple phantom images, which were reflected on the walls and Richard's body. This approach allowed a rethinking of the dichotomies of real and fake, original and copy, physical being and its multimedia reproduction, creating a tension between the material and the virtual. Special microphones captured the actors' voices, and tailor-made audio software instantly processed them so that the audience heard the transformed audio signal with altered frequency, duration, timbre, dynamics and volume. Variations to the sound were arbitrary, making it technically impossible to predict or reproduce their result. So, ghosts transcended the boundaries of the body when multiplied by video projections, and their voices, enhanced by the innovative technology, became cyborgial. Iryna Chuzhynova notes that "recitative curses of ghosts turn into a kind of 'chant' with complex coloratura passages, sometimes letting out a howl, then a whisper" (61). The otherworldly nature of this performance was further emphasized by the fact that the actors performed in English. Moreover, the use of a foreign language allowed the audience to focus more sharply on the visual imagery and aural transmutations. To this day this production remains one of the few multimedia Shakespearean performances making digital technologies the essential part of the show based on the classical text.

In the solo performance *Richard after Richard* (2007) the character's posthuman transition took place post mortem. Being deprived of his body,

Richard became a post-gender creature: Lidia Danylchuk, who played the part, had a distinct androgynous look and used pitch variations ranging from a deep sound, made with her strong chest voice, to an occasional much higher and softer sound (we will use the gender-neutral pronoun “they” to refer to the character). Nothing in Richard’s postmortem appearance alluded to their kingly status—they were not wearing a crown, instead we saw the protagonist in a formal black suit and a black tie, bearing no hint to the occupation or social role of their owner (a black jacket and tie appear on one of the posters of the production substituting for the typical crown, which has become a common staple of theatre posters for *Richard III*). Richard’s life after death lay in the temporal zone outside the usual earthly time—on several occasions they repeated the question “Ay, what’s o’clock?”, in different languages and to no answer. A round magnet with 12 knives attached to it was constantly hanging over the protagonist—it might be seen as a clock with no hands and as a depiction of the cruel nature of time, which literally kills, and to which Richard himself fell victim. The postmortem time flow in the production was recognizably post-modern in its non-linear nature, with frequent overlapping scenes and multiple verbal repetitions. Danylchuk’s Richard spoke different languages (namely Ukrainian, English, German, Russian and Belarusian) showing their disidentification, as opposed to a single national identity. Using the original text, created in the late 16th century, back-to-back with modern-day translations also enabled blurring the time distinctions. Thus, when freed from their bodily form, Richard loses the identities anchoring them to a certain gender, nation, social strata and time period.

Incorporeal *Richard after Richard* encapsulated the posthuman idea of being beyond dichotomies and linearity. On a greater scale the production depicted not only postmortem but also post-apocalyptic Richard—the inhumane human contributing to the distinction of humanity, at once relishing and suffering from the fruits of his vicious deeds. The production employed minimalist stage design, endowing each prop with multiple functions and several symbolic meanings, which the audience might recognize. In the very centre of the stage one could see a small, square, folding table placed on the plastic mat that Richard pompously rolled out to some brisk music. In the context of the performance these props became multifunctional. In the course of the production this piece of furniture evoked different associations—at first it was used as a desk or a lectern (the latter association was strengthened by Richard’s formal attire), then it became a drum (when the protagonist sung Shakespeare’s lines and created a galloping beat with two knives and the table’s surface), and eventually, when the character started chopping cabbages obsessively, it turned into a kitchen table, or, if one develops the symbolic meaning of a cabbage head to its extreme, a surgical, or even a butcher’s table. Cabbage was chosen as the

central object of the production, and throughout the performance it unravelled its rich symbolic potential. It blurred the nature/culture divide, being a natural object profoundly grounded in the Ukrainian customs and traditions. In Ukraine this vegetable is highly regarded as the indispensable ingredient of the two signature dishes of local cuisine—namely, borscht (vegetable soup including beets, cabbage, carrots, onions, potatoes and tomatoes) and holubtsi (stuffed cabbage leaves). This gave the production its distinct local flair, while still making it understandable for representatives of other cultures, who might not decode the Ukrainian cultural connotations, but would readily grasp the general symbolic meaning. The production also uncovered the darker overtones of cabbage symbolism. For instance, the Ukrainians regard this vegetable as a symbol of birth and healing (according to a well-known legend, new-born babies are found in cabbage; cabbage leaves are used for treating different traumas in traditional Ukrainian medicine), but in *Richard after Richard* its opposite meaning was highlighted—cutting cabbage was the act of killing, and cabbage heads might well be seen as severed human heads. The spectators sat close enough to the stage to smell the cabbage; cabbage juice, and even pieces of freshly-chopped vegetables, flew to the first rows, involving more than just the visual sense of the audience members and making the act of chopping even more reminiscent of a perverted execution. The actress crushed organic objects with man-made tools, thus creating some dramatic posthuman tension—Richard might be regarded both as a superhuman executioner, who decides on the fates of his sullen victims, and a madman, chopping vegetables while talking in iambic pentameter, in different languages. From a posthumanist perspective, Richard's frantic chopping might be loosely seen as a visual metaphor of present-day humanity's attitude to nature, or as a reflection on Ukraine's neglecting some burning environmental issues rising due to greed (irresponsible industrial overproduction, extensively growing crops that reduce soil quality), comparable to Richard's greed for power. Cabbage is also a jargon word for money and wealth—Richard is corrupt, he literally steals the precious lives of his victims, he strives for power and influence, but ended up miserably wriggling in a huge pile of cabbage chops, which is a far cry from a pile of gold, but may well be seen as such in the protagonist's insane mind.

The COVID-19 pandemic and lockdowns first brought theatres on the brink of collapse, but then a boost of online broadcasts was observed, and Ukraine was no exception. For 2019 productions this was mainly a question of survival, as many of them had few chances to be watched after the first night. Among the most remarkable local Shakespeare-related premieres was all-male *Othello. Ukraine. Facebook* (dir. Stas Zhirkov) in Zoloti Vorota [Golden Gates] Theatre in Kyiv, which in 2020 could be booked to watch online. The performance material drew much attention to Shakespeare—it mentioned the

authorship question and popular facts about Shakespeare's legacy. However, during the first minutes of the production it became clear that Shakespeare was a mere clickbait to promote the show, which was a cabaret of political satire, personal anecdotes, dramatic confessions and painful reflections. The name of the show suggested its focusing on current Ukrainian problems—war, corruption, healthcare reform, political unrest, still vivid memories of the gruesome past (Stalin's Great Purge, Holodomor) etc., all those which are being debated about on Facebook. While watching this kaleidoscope of absurd and hilarious jokes, pointless talks, heartbreaking monologues about famine and war, we could not help but wonder where *Othello* could be found in this mess. Shakespeare's story was weaved into the fabric of the performance as fragments of the play (translated by Iryna Steshenko) recited between acts, and as a separate episode where squatting rogues recounted the plot of *Othello* as a common life story in the appropriate argot. The emphasis on Facebook as a platform on which the fate of the country seems to be determined created an impression that social media profiles successfully simulate people, exactly the way that this production simulated Shakespeare's tragedy. After we watched the production online, there was a Q&A session with the director and cast, where we asked directly about the choice of Shakespeare's play for the production, since it was not obvious. They explained that they were fascinated with the fact that Othello, being a foreigner, did so much for Venice, which was not appreciated by anyone. They paralleled the story of Othello to the career of Uliana Suprun, an American-born Ukrainian, who served as a Minister of Health from 2016 to 2019 and initiated healthcare reform, which caused a heavy, controversial debate in Ukraine. However, by 2020, in the middle of COVID-associated problems, the figure of Uliana Suprun had considerably faded, and this cornerstone of the production began to totter. It is quite predictable that *Othello. Ukraine. Facebook* will hardly survive another season, unless its creators find a more stable ground, rather than breaking news. In general, remarkable Shakespearean performances of the past decades in Ukraine have allowed a broad scope of interpretation, posthumanistic included. However, our nation is still in contemplation regarding an intended posthumanistic production that will go beyond preoccupation with post-Soviet anxieties.

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***Romeo and Juliet*. Dir. Simon Godwin. A National Theatre, Sky Arts, and No Guarantees Production. The Olivier Theatre, London, UK. Film.**

Reviewed by *Danielle Byington**

The COVID-19 pandemic interrupted business as usual in the London theatre scene during 2020, vanquishing anticipated auditions, routine rehearsals, and scheduled performances. As this twenty-first-century plague spread upon all houses, the field of performing arts especially suffered, not only with cast and crew persons suddenly unemployed, but also with the infinite dread in wondering when and, perhaps even more so, *how* Shakespeare would again be staged for a live audience.

Director Simon Godwin, whose credits now span even more extensively since my 2016 review of his *Hamlet*,¹ demonstrated a Shakespearean-age resilience, as if the playhouses had just been allowed to reopen. Godwin's *Romeo and Juliet* was scheduled for summer performances at the Olivier Theatre in London during 2020, but as the pandemic warranted widespread shutdowns, the construction of the set was already underway. Not wanting to lose the work of a play practically ready for the stage, Godwin notes that he, as well as Lead Producer, David Sable, along with Executive Producer and Co-Chief Executive of the National Theatre, Rufus Norris, began taking steps to transition the performance to film. The result is a production that not only taps into our humanity with the play's primary theme of desperate love, but also stirs the agency of time, incorporating posthumanist elements through a conflation of rehearsal, live performance and cinematic tropes, becoming the "[ninety-minutes'] traffic of our stage".

The film adaptation opens with the cast entering an apparent backstage area in street clothes, a situation the audience can deduce as a rehearsal and storage setting. Among the numerous props stored in wire cages and metal racks for wardrobe, the cast, blocked in a U-shaped seating arrangement as if for a read-through of the script, begins the process of further solidifying our assumption that this room is a rehearsal setting for the actual drama, as Lucian

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¹ Danielle Byington, "*Hamlet*. Dir. Simon Godwin. Royal Shakespeare Company. Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, UK." *Multicultural Shakespeare: Translation, Appropriation, and Performance* 15 (2017): 195-197.

Msamati, who also plays Friar Lawrence, opens the play with the well-known Chorus lines. Cinematography centering on smirks and quiet giggles exchanged by Romeo (Josh O'Connor) and Juliet (Jessie Buckley) provides viewers with an allusion to intimacy that crosses the play's fourth wall, much the way many other scenes are portrayed within the rehearsal/backstage aesthetic.

The fight scene subsequent to "Do you bite your thumb at us, sir?" is the first example of Godwin's production which blends the extensions—the props—of the actors in a posthumanist fashion. After the Chorus' lines, and as the atmosphere of rehearsal continues while the cast breaks away, two actors, Shubham Saraf (who plays Benvolio) and David Judge (who plays Tybalt), initiate a friendly "quarrel". What we may view as a merrymaking run-through of choreographed sword fighting with the use of short wooden dowels soon escalates as the pair becomes incensed, one even breaking out a bladed weapon. The way in which these props alter the intentions of the actors, transitioning from harmless to threatening, is discussed by Christy Desmet in "Alien Shakespeares 2.0.", where she essentially describes an in-betweenness in how posthumanism looks at objects as divorced from human bodies (2). Arguably, the shift from rehearsal fun to potential assault in this scene is in fact led by the objects/props more than the actors. The instance of the other cast members rushing to extinguish the brawl causes the moment of realism to linger, yet still, in this rehearsal headspace, a residual feeling continues with the Prince of Verona warning the Capulets and Montagues, as well as our introduction to lovesick Romeo in the remainder of Act 1, Scene 1.

The suggested backstage setting carries on through Act 1 as Paris inquires about marrying Juliet and Lady Capulet discusses said marriage with her daughter. However, Paris discusses his interest in Juliet not with Lord Capulet, but with Lady Capulet, played by Tamsin Greig—a production choice that swaps a patriarch for a matriarch for the play's duration. This artistic choice generates a dynamic that especially compliments Buckley's performance, making Juliet less of the hyper-femme, objectified female she is sometimes portrayed as, and more of a current, resilient young woman—hybrid performance leaving tradition behind and favoring progress. Actually, Godwin comments on the matter of age in his production regarding the "star-crossed lovers" in an external commentary, explaining that he did not have the typical early-teen ages in mind, but, instead, sought a pair of actors for the title roles who "embodied youth" ("The Making of *Romeo and Juliet*"). This intention of not aiming for a specific type of adolescence, but simply ambiguous youth, further illuminates the posthumanist qualities of the production, as Godwin chose to manipulate the audience's expectations of certain physical characteristics among the cast.

The Capulets' masquerade finally introduces an alternative location outside the rehearsal space, a very cinematic world without the clutter of props

and costumes, yet still minimalistic—except for the crowd of party-goers. In this discothèque environment, Romeo experiences his first sighting of Juliet, and the lovers kiss amid spliced flashes of the same actors kissing in the rehearsal space from where we began, perhaps pointing to how, though we understand acting as merely imitating reality, the performance is still an extension of the human body, and these two people kissing are, indeed, very real. The eventual union through marriage of the couple in the end of Act 2 is also very stylized, in a dreamlike area cradled among dozens of candles by the Friar's cell, essentially portrayed as a memory as much as those flashes of Romeo and Juliet kissing backstage. Yet, as the newlyweds embrace, clips of Mercutio and Benvolio's intimacy in the backstage setting echo how some non-binary romances are still not widely accepted in the spotlight.

The sometimes unpredictable nature of live performance instills in us at least a hint of uncertainty, maybe because, in a sense of empathy, we don't want to see other humans fail, due to seeing ourselves in the characters, which is surely an objective of theatre. Even when watching this production in the permanence of film, because of its visuals alluding to not just live theatre but rehearsal—the imperfect practicing of human/theatre—we are compelled to recall personal anxieties. To point back to my description of memories in Romeo and Juliet's first-kiss scene as it blends the cinematic world with the rehearsal world, Godwin's production forces viewers to remember where it began—as a rehearsal impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

I am reminded of Anne Bogart's text on theatre, *A Director Prepares*, where her first chapter on performance is "Memory". Among the majority of viewers, it is likely simple to recall what happens in *Romeo and Juliet*, as it is a standard Shakespeare play taught early in education across several cultures; there's no need to be reminded of the plot. We have no need to be reminded of love or its loss, but, as Bogart declares, "[t]he act of memory is a physical act and lies at the heart of theatre. If the theatre were a verb, it would be 'to remember'" (22). Rey Chow, in her book on digital posthumanist theory *Entanglements, or Transmedial Thinking about Capture*, further questions this relationship of theatre and memory, asking, "What happens to memory when images, in which past events are supposedly recorded and preserved, become instantaneous with the actual happenings?" (5).

In the video commentary by Godwin mentioned previously, Tamsin Greig describes the production's acting space as a building full of memories. One of the production design aspects furthering this idea is the use of garage-type doors replacing standard stage curtains. They are rather like bay doors of a warehouse due to their size, instilling a notion of products meant for storage before being sold. These metallic doors are seen frequently, as when they shut during the opening credits, when allowing entrance to the Capulet party, as

well as when they close behind Romeo as he is exiled to Mantua. Not unlike theatre's role in humanity's memory, every instance of rehearsal is stored here, repurposed for the commodification of film as it is recalled. Much of the scenery tells us this exact thing, like the vizards for the masquerade in the caged pens. When these memories can be released, they become a retelling, but, unlike live performance, they can forever be scrutinized in the available transmedial form of this film.

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