The Wooden O

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The Wooden O Symposium is a cross-disciplinary conference that explores Medieval and Renaissance studies through the text and performance of Shakespeare's plays. The symposium is held annually in August in Cedar City, Utah, and coincides with the Utah Shakespeare Festival's summer season. Three plays from Shakespeare's canon are performed each summer in the Adams Memorial Shakespeare Theatre, a unique performance space modeled after the Globe Theatre, Shakespeare's own "Wooden O."

Table of Contents

Architecture of Collaboration: Michael Boyd, Malaya Bronnaya, and the Royal Shakespeare Theatre

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Throughout the twentieth century, theatre artists have created thrust stages to challenge the stagecraft and actor-audience dynamic of proscenium theatres.[1] In 2011, the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC) opened the most recent of these thrust stages: the redesigned Royal Shakespeare Theatre. The new design transformed a proscenium theatre into a thrust stage surrounded by 1040 seats. Rab Bennetts, the architect of the new Royal Shakespeare Theatre, noted the "uncanny" similarity between the 1989 excavation of the elongated Rose theatre foundations and the twelve-sided figure that "won out at the RSC."[2] The inspiration for the redesign, however, was not a desire to recover Shakespeare's original theatre, as with Shakespeare's Globe or The American Shakespeare Center's Blackfriars Playhouse. The new Royal Shakespeare Theatre, rather, was a part of Tyrone Guthrie's legacy of theatre design that reflected his dissatisfaction with proscenium theatres like the 1932 Royal Shakespeare Theatre and his desire to revitalize the staging of Shakespeare's plays. This new Royal Shakespeare Theatre also reflected RSC artistic director Michael Boyd's commitment to ideals of ensemble that he observed in his training at the Malaya Bronnaya Theatre in Moscow with director Anatoly Efros. The redesigned Royal Shakespeare Theatre resembled an Elizabethan playhouse, but the inspiration for the redesign reflected Guthrie's legacy and the RSC's commitment to ensemble.

The dissatisfaction with the 1932 design of the Royal Shakespeare Theatre was legendary.[3] Director William Bridges-

Adam called it "a theatre, of all theatres in England, in which it is hardest to make an audience laugh or cry."[4] The actors felt little connection with the audience, as Balliol Holloway explained: "It is like acting to Calais from the cliffs of Dover."[5] Tyrone Guthrie also noted the Royal Shakespeare Theatre's inadequacy for his vision of Shakespeare's plays: "It's a dreadfully old-fashioned theatre. You can only do old-fashioned work there. Push it into the Avon!"[6] As part of Guthrie's continued dedication to redefining the actor-audience relationship in classical plays, he built "open stages" with designer Tanya Moiseiwitsch, including the Festival Stage at the Stratford Festival (1953) and the stage at the Guthire Theatre in Minneapolis (1963). Guthrie saw the thrust stage and the use of a unit set as the alternative to the "old-fashioned" proscenium theatre with cumbersome set changes for each scene. Theatre artists throughout England and North America would continue to refine the use of these stages for the next sixty years, often through the production of Shakespeare's plays.

When Peter Hall assumed leadership of the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre in 1958, he instituted a series of changes to revitalize the performance of Shakespeare's plays. In 1961, Hall changed the name of the organization to the Royal Shakespeare Company in order to emphasize the centrality of the acting company rather than the memorial to Shakespeare or an unsatisfactory theatre building. Hall instituted actor training programs like The Studio (1962-1965) under the leadership of Michel Saint-Denis and Peter Brook. In order to gain the loyalty and commitment of actors skilled in working together on Shakespeare's plays, Hall signed an ensemble of actors to three-year contracts. Additionally, Hall wanted to rebuild the Royal Shakespeare Theatre to bring the audience closer to the actors. He commissioned a redesign of the playing space that would include "a rake, a new false proscenium arch, and an apron stage that jutted fourteen feet into the auditorium."[7] An unexpected drop of Arts Council funding forced Hall to shelve this plan to re-build the theatre as "a 2000-seat thrust-stage amphitheater,"[8] which would have created a theatre space that reflected the directorial practices of the RSC.[9]

The RSC for much of the 1960s developed a style known for its minimalism in design and emphasis on well-trained actors. Peter Brook's iconic production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* used a white unit set with platforms rising to various levels and

trapeze bars hanging over the stage. Kenneth Tynan called Peter Hall's 1962 *Comedy of Errors* "unmistakably an RSC production."[10] "How is it to be recognized?" he continued; "By solid Brechtian settings that emphasize wood and metal instead of paint and canvas; and by cogent deliberate verse speaking, that discards melodic cadenzas in favour of meaning and motivation."[11] Similar to the conventions of Shakespeare's theatre, this "Brechtian" setting created a theatre emphasizing imaginative rather than pictorial scenery. The lack of visual elements encouraged actors to engage the audience directly with the clarity of their language and the specificity of their actions. The moat between the actors and audience in the Royal Shakespeare Theatre made this direct engagement difficult.

In 2011, artistic director Michael Boyd finally succeeded in bringing the audience closer to the actors by transforming the Royal Shakespeare Theatre from a proscenium to a thrust stage. The transformation of the theatre was only a final step in Boyd's attempts to reform the practices of the professional theatre through the use of ensemble principles. Instead of short contracts and brief rehearsals advocated by his predecessor, Adrian Noble, Boyd contracted actors for thirty months, emphasized actor-training resources like the Artist Development Programme, and fostered collaborative rehearsals. In rehearsals, Boyd instituted ensemble-building exercises, such as daily warm-ups and trapeze lessons for the *Histories Cycle*, and encouraged all actors to express their own interpretations of the play. The ideal of collaboration in rehearsal extended to performance: Boyd wished for the audience to engage directly with the actors and other audience members. This dedication to ensemble in rehearsal and performance reflected Boyd's training and the influence of Anatoly Efros at the Malaya Bronnaya Theatre.

Michael Boyd received a British council fellowship in 1978 and 1979 to study in Moscow at the Malaya Bronnaya Theatre. As Sarah Comptom summarized, "The experience left him with two overriding beliefs: firstly, that theatre mattered and could change society; secondly, that the best way of working was to collaborate as an ensemble, a close-knit group of actors and technicians pulling together to create theatrical magic."[12] Efros had earned renown particularly for his interpretation of classical works with

relevance to modern contexts. As James Thomas explains, "In Efros's hands, classical playwrights became as accessible as their modern counterparts, and modern playwrights seemed to be unintentional historians of the past. 'I can direct only as I feel myself today,' he said. His guiding principle could have been that of the Italian Neo-Realists, above all Federico Fellini, for whose films he had a deep regard: 'Today, here, now.'"[13]

Efros often spent long rehearsals collaborating with actors to find modern relevance in classic plays. Thomas explained, "Efros felt compelled to look at Shakespeare with fresher eyes because the old ones could only see what they were accustomed to seeing. 'Shakespeare was born into the world,' he remarked, 'to release millions of people from . . . artistic constraints.'"[14] Efros's description of Shakespeare's plays as providing a release from artistic constraints manifested in the deep inquiry of collaborative rehearsals that required actors to form physically active performances and psychologically complex characters. Even though the Malaya Bronnaya Theatre used a proscenium stage, Efros's stagecraft reflected the fluid stagecraft Guthrie envisioned. In addition to developing "psychophysics" wherein actors "illustrated the inner lives of characters through virtually continuous stage movement," his scenic design "was abstract, neutral, and unlocalized; scenery that encouraged freedom of movement in the actors within a carefully structured stage environment."[15]

In addition to collaborative rehearsal techniques and minimalist stagecraft, Boyd adopted Efros's definition of the director's role. As Efros explained, "The director is a poet, only he does not deal with a pen and paper, but composes his verse on the platform of a stage, working with a large group of people . . . He is a person who is not afraid of loneliness, and a person who is in love with the craft, the actors, the pupils and the teachers."[16] In 2000, Boyd reflected: "I was impressed by the Russian directors' sense of themselves as artists. I know very few British directors who would call themselves artists. Most say, 'No, no, we're just interpreters of text.' Well, I don't believe that. I am an artist."[17] He further explained his independence from Shakespeare's original context: "Moscow certainly helped me realize that the phrase 'But it's not in the text' is not terribly creative. Many people here are

a bit scared of anything that isn't in the text, to the point where theatre can be a bit dull."[18] For Boyd, then, the plays were to be reinvented through the collaboration of the director and the actors who would discuss, stage, and sometimes revise the playwright's script through the rehearsal process in order to create a play with imaginative stagecraft and contemporary social relevance.[19] Interpretations of Shakespeare's original performance conditions, therefore, had little sway in Boyd's directorial practice.

Prior to his work with the Royal Shakespeare Company, Michael Boyd developed his directorial practice on a variety of stages in the United Kingdom. From 1980-1982, he worked as Assistant Associate Director at the Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, a proscenium theatre with two balconies. He then became Associate Director at The Crucible Theatre Sheffield from 1982-1984. The Crucible Theatre Sheffield, a thrust stage with an audience arc of 180 degrees, was a direct descendant of the Guthrie stage at the Stratford Festival: Tanya Moiseiwitsch advised architects Renton Howard Wood in its design.[20] Such a design was a major limitation for directors trained in visually resplendent stagecraft. Director Michael Elliott reflected on The Crucible Theatre Sheffield's design: "[Guthrie achieved] immense flexibility and pace of stage action . . . by chucking everything else out of the window. At that time it was a huge step forward but perhaps now something more is demanded. These theatres have a certain visual aridity."[21] This "visual aridity" echoed Efros's productions which carefully selected set design elements to keep the focus on the actors. Boyd's later RSC productions would reflect Efros's minimalist stagecraft in order to highlight the actors and their relationship with audience. In 1985, Boyd founded the Tron Theatre in Glasgow where he regularly worked throughout the next eleven years until he became an Associate Director of the RSC in 1996. After winning the Best Director Olivier Award for his 2001 *This England: The Histories*, he was invited to become Artistic Director of the RSC in 2002.[22]

Michael Boyd's commitments to ensemble and minimalist stagecraft helped him succeed with ambitious projects like the four-play T*his England: The Histories* and the eight-play *Histories Cycle* (2007-2008). As artistic director, these commitments required Boyd to alter the hiring, training, and stagecraft practices to make feasible projects like the Olivier-Award-winning *Histories Cycle*.

Instead of hiring established star actors for the major roles in individual plays, Boyd signed an ensemble of thirty-four actors to thirty-month contracts. This ensemble performed the two hundred and sixty roles in eight of Shakespeare's history plays, from *Richard II* through *Richard III* with all the Henries in between. Boyd used the same unit set for all eight plays. Whereas most of the scenes took place on a bare stage, occasionally a set piece would descend from the heavens to dominate the playing space, like the cross-shaped coffin of Henry V at the beginning of *Henry VI, part 1*. By rehearsing with the same ensemble of actors for all eight plays over the course of two years, Boyd was able to develop, over time, collaborative rehearsal methods similar to those of Efros.

Due to the size and scope of the project, the dedication and collaboration of the ensemble was vital to the success of the *Histories Cycle*. Rather than leading actors toward a preconceived director's concept, directors like Boyd and Efros required actors who could contribute to the interpretation of the play: "Actors need to have the ability to understand meaning. No, not merely to understand you when you tell them something about the meaning. But to have the taste to search for the meaning themselves. A classic is impossible without interpretation, without scope, without judgment . . . You cannot play Mercutio without the ability to think. You cannot play Don Juan without a philosophy."[23] Boyd could not dictate the interpretation of even half the two hundred and sixty roles in the *Histories Cycle*, so the company of actors needed to be able to contribute to the meaning of the play on their own initiative. In rehearsal, Boyd prompted actors to contribute to meaning by persistently asking them to clarify given circumstances, character status, and character objectives. Through the interrogative style of rehearsal, the training of actors, and the mutual respect gained through a lengthy and rigorous rehearsal and performance schedule, Boyd challenged the commercial practices of the British theatre that sought to produce the best productions as quickly as possible by fulfilling a single director's vision.

Boyd's dedication to collaboration in rehearsal helped inform his vision of collaboration between actor and audience in performance. Boyd did not have a clear plan for the redesign of the Royal Shakespeare Theatre when he became Artistic Director. In 2003, He focused more on the actors than the performance

space: "My main concern in the stage . . . has been regarding the company rather than the buildings it operates in, important though they are. I hope to be very flexible when it comes to buildings!"[24] The RSC acting company had been flexible in their staging. In 1974, the RSC built The Other Place, a black box space. The RSC took up residency at the Barbican in London in 1982, and in 1986, the RSC built the Swan Theatre, a 450-seat thrust stage. As the RSC approached the redesign of the Royal Shakespeare Theatre, architect Rab Bennetts described "the objective [as] an improved version of the Swan which would be larger without sacrificing intimacy."[25] In 2006, the RSC transformed the Other Place into the 1045-seat Courtyard Theatre as a "1:1 model from which to draw lessons" for the final redesign of the Royal Shakespeare Theatre.[26] After the success of the *Histories Cycle* at the Courtyard, Boyd praised the stage: "We are working in and at the same time building a kind of theatre that really doesn't exist anywhere else. It is a deep thrust space of over 1000 seats that manages to combine the epic and the intimate in a way that I have not witnessed in a theatre anywhere else."[27] When the Royal Shakespeare Theatre opened in 2011 its design mirrored the Courtyard stage with a few redesigns to improve acoustics.

Even though Boyd was aware of stages like Shakespeare's Globe and worked on the thrust stage at The Crucible Theatre Sheffield, he claimed the redesigned Royal Shakespeare Theatre offered a different actor-audience dynamic than other theatres inspired by Shakespeare or Guthrie. Boyd argued that the theatre space reflected an ability of actors and audiences to collaborate in performance. During construction, Boyd claimed, "Time may be right for theatre to offer a better, more honest, more active, more intimate relationship also between the performer and the audience. I sense a new contract being drawn up among young theatre artists, between young theatre artists and audiences that acknowledge the audience as part of this ensemble as well. They are an ensemble that has the ability either to achieve a consensus or disagree. They are not sitting in the dark, they're participants."[28]

Unlike at the Globe, Boyd never directly lit the audience, but he considered the light spill from the stage sufficient for the actors to view the audience. In all but the darkest scenes, the audience could view all audience members sitting on the opposite

side of the stage, and the actors could easily see all the audience members. Boyd's stagecraft often sought to include the audience. When describing the advantage of the stage's redesign, Boyd said, "[The] deep thrust [stage] . . . allows direct and honest address to an audience that is aware of itself and letting down the barriers that isolate the individuals within the audience. The audience relationships with the actors are active. Individuals are invited to be part of the community, as [an] extension of [the] ensemble community."[29] Boyd hoped that the theatre space would extend to the audience the sense of ensemble he fostered in rehearsals.

Despite the fact that Boyd's commitment to ensemble inspired the architecture of the new theatre, individual directors at the RSC did not necessarily share his commitment in their own productions. In 2011, the redesigned Royal Shakespeare Theatre opened with a repertory of Michael Boyd's production of *Macbeth* and Associate Director Rupert Goold's production of *The Merchant of Venice*. Boyd's *Macbeth* reflected his commitment to ensemble and stagecraft styles consistent with his previous work and training. Boyd's staging frequently filled the vertical space above the stage with action and characters. The three weird sisters initially appeared as three dead children hovering over downstage-center on nooses. Lady Macbeth and Macbeth knelt at a silver bowl center stage to wash their hands as a long stream of water fell from an obscured source above. Aside from this moment of hand-washing and the banquet where the ghost of Banquo appeared, few props occupied center stage. The unit set, a crumbling, gothic church-like façade, formed the upstage wall of the stage space. On the balcony of this façade, three cellists observed the performance, underscoring various moments of the action and filling transitions between scenes. In addition to this vertical expansion, Boyd's stagecraft expanded horizontally as well. The actors came into the audience and stood in the aisles to voice their support for the newly crowned Macbeth. The actors, often in soliloquies, spoke directly to the audience. The Porter, for instance, threatened the audience with lit dynamite that he tossed about the stage in mad nonchalance. In all these choices, Boyd's direction sought to blur the boundaries between actors and audience and to take advantage of the sculptural opportunities of blocking on a thrust stage.

Rupert Goold, whose direction was noted for its "eye-boggling technical effects," and designer Tom Scutt created a visually lush,

but emotionally shallow, Las Vegas setting for *The Merchant of Venice*.[30] Goold added a twenty-minute improvisation to the beginning of the play during which actors gambled at various gaming tables and waitresses delivered drinks while a live band on the upstage bandstand underscored Launcelot Gobbo, an Elvis Impersonator. Portia and Nerissa hosted a reality TV show called *Destiny* for the casket-selection scenes. To set the scene, a couch surfaced from an elevator center stage and two video monitors dropped in, oriented toward the downstage center portion of the audience. In the scenes in the real-estate office of Patrick Stewart's Shylock, a large table center stage forced the actors to play their scenes far downstage. Launcelot Gobbo, however, often spoke directly to the audience, and Scott Handy's Antionio hid among the audience to avoid meeting Shylock.[31] In general, the stagecraft remained visually-oriented towards the downstage-center section of the audience rather than the surrounding audience. By filling the center of the stage, actors often had little room to play on the front portion of the stage or at the sides of these central set pieces. The scenic design fulfilled a thematic purpose by counterbalancing the exuberant design with the moments of the simple, heartfelt love between Bassiano and Portia (and Bassiano and Antonio), but the director's vision took priority over any mission to collaborate directly with the audience in performance.

Even though directors used a variety of stagecraft styles on the new Royal Shakespeare Theatre, the RSC promoted their new stage as a key part of the RSC brand. In 2011, the Royal Shakespeare Company erected a portable replica of the new Royal Shakespeare Theatre in the Park Avenue Armory in New York City. The company shipped the one-hundred-and-sixty-one ton stage, one-hundred-and-fifty ton auditorium, and eighty-five tons of scenery and costumes and erected, in eighteen days, the "3-level, 975-seat auditorium where the furthest seat was only 49 feet from the stage."[32] Over the course of the next six weeks, the same ensemble of actors performed five plays by four different directors. Ostensibly, by refusing to transfer the plays to a proscenium stage, the Royal Shakespeare Company argued that their stage was as integral to the RSC brand as the ensemble of actors.

Boyd's vision of ensemble and actor-audience dynamic did not universally appear in other directors' shows, but he was able to hire a director who shared his commitment to collaboration and audience interaction for the Young People's Shakespeare tours. Boyd and Director of Education Jacqui O'Hanlon emphasized direct engagement of school audiences in these seventy-five-minute performances of Shakespeare's plays, so they sought out a director skilled in interactive performance events.[33] For the 2011 Young People's Shakespeare production of *The Taming of the Shrew* Boyd and O'Hanlon hired a director with much experience devising interactive theatre and no experience directing Shakespeare: Tim Crouch.

Tim Crouch's previous plays required minimal stagecraft elements and maximal collaboration between actors and the audience. Many of Crouch's productions required the audience to participate with their imaginations or reactions in order to create the intended (or unintended) theatrical effects. For instance, in his first original play, *My Arm* (2003), Crouch told the story of a 10-year-old boy who decided to put his arm above his head and refused to put it down during the next thirty years of his life. At no time in the performance, however, did Crouch raise his arm above his head. An artistic principle that Crouch described in his work was, "I won't show you, but you will see it."[34] His play, *ENGLAND* (2007), also required the audience members to see actions and characters solely in their imaginations. In November 2009, Hannah Ringham and Tim Crouch performed this play among the paintings on display at the Wexner Center for the Arts. Interwoven with a curatorial talk about the paintings, the actors narrated the events of a story about a transplanted heart that may have been obtained through semi-legal or nefarious means from an unwilling donor. The actors did not act out the scenes for the audience. Rather, they spoke directly to the audience, frequently repeating the catchword "look" to guide the audience members' imaginations from place to place in the story. In the final confrontation between the widow of the heart donor and the narrator, the actors looked into the eyes of audience members and reacted to them as if they were the widow in the scene. In *The Author* (2009), the actors sat among the audience in "two banks of raked seating facing each other, with no gap in between."[35] The actors recounted to the audience

the events of "a violent, shocking, and abusive play written by a playwright called Tim Crouch."[36] The proximity of the actors to the audience allowed them to blur the line between the fictive events of the play and the present theatrical event, itself devised and performed by a playwright called Tim Crouch.[37] Crouch's working styles, therefore, matched Boyd's desire for collaboration in rehearsal and performance.

Rehearsals for Crouch's 2011 Young People's Shakespeare production of *The Taming of the Shrew* shared with his earlier work a focus on the audience and an ethos of collaboration.[38] "I am an outsider here," Crouch noted, "and I am sure that's one of the reasons they brought me in."[39] Jacqui O'Hanlon confirmed that she and Boyd hired Crouch for the Young People's Shakespeare production because young audiences responded well to shows with a direct actor-audience dynamic.[40] Crouch's style of performance also accommodated the smaller budget and prop limitations of the touring productions. Due to the success of *The Taming of the Shrew*, Boyd and O'Hanlon re-hired Crouch for the 2012 Young People's Shakespeare production of *King Lear*. The collaborative rehearsals and performances Crouch brought with him were exactly the sort of work Boyd had envisioned for the company.

Michael Boyd and Tim Crouch shared Peter Hall's vision of challenging the commercial theatre through their dedication to collaboration in rehearsal and performance. Boyd's success with these collaborative methods revitalized the financial and critical fortunes of the RSC in productions like the *Histories Cycle*. The redesigned Royal Shakespeare Theatre was a stage, however, and not necessarily a way of working. Making effective use of stages like the new Royal Shakespeare Theatre required a strong commitment from artistic leadership in order to change the RSC's approach to stagecraft and actor-audience dynamic. Whereas Shakespeare's Globe and The American Shakespeare Center's Blackfriars Playhouse used replicas of Shakespeare's theatre spaces to inspire these changes, Boyd used the clout of his leadership to change the architecture of the theatre and the practitioners using it. Without a mission statement or a visionary leader mandating collaboration between actors and audiences, directors had little incentive to alter their stagecraft to suit the stage; rather, they altered the stage to suit their stagecraft. Although the architecture of collaboration

between actor and audience was in place at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre in 2011, the practice of collaboration still rested with directors, like Boyd, whose artistic visions challenged the stagecraft and performance practices of the commercial theatre.

Notes

1. Throughout this article, the term "stagecraft" refers not only to the technical elements of the performance, but also includes the movement of the actors and the conventions established for the audience in performance.

2. Rab Bennetts, untitled article, in *The Guthrie Thrust Stage: A Living Legacy*, ed. Iain Mackintosh (London: Association of British Theatre Technicians, 2011), 26. Published on the occasion of the 2011 Prague Quadrennial of Scenography and Theatre Architecture.

3. The theatre was originally called the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre until the founding of the Royal Shakespeare Company under Peter Hall in 1961.

4. Iain Mackintosh, *The Guthrie Thrust Stage: A Living Legacy* (Association of British Theatre Technicians: 2011), 6.

5. Ibid.

6. Quoted in Albert Rossi, *Astonish Us in the Morning: Tyrone Guthrie Remembered* (London: Hutchinson & Co, 1977), 26.

7. Sally Beauman, *The Royal Shakespeare Company: A History of Ten Decades* (Oxford: Oxford Universitiy Press, 1982), 239.

8. Beauman, *Royal Shakespeare Company*, 255.

9. Before Hall, the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre had a history of hiring directors who were at least partly inspired by William Poel, founder of the Elizabethan Stage Society: William Bridges-Adams, Ben Iden Payne, Robert Adkins, and Barry Jackson.

10. Quoted in Beauman, *Royal Shakespeare Company*, 251.

11. Ibid.

12. Sarah Crompton, "Michael Boyd: the Modest Man who Saved the RSC," *Telegraph*, September 14, 2012, http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/theatre/theatre-features/9540674/Michael-Boyd-the-modest-man-who-saved-the-RSC.html.

13. James Thomas, introduction to *The Joy of Rehearsal* by Anatoly Efros, trans. James Thomas (New York: Peter Lang, 2006), 16.

14. Ibid.

15. Ibid., 17.

16. Quoted in Thomas, introduction to *The Joy of Rehearsal*, 17.

17. Daniel Rosenthal, "Arts: The Power Behind the Throne," *Independent*, December 13, 2000, http://www.highbeam.com/doc/1P2-5130173.html.

18. Rosenthal, "Power Behind the Throne."

19. For instance, in the 2011 *Macbeth*, three children descended from the rafters with nooses around their necks. Their lifeless bodies dangled ten feet above the downstage area until they revived to deliver their fateful prophecies. Instead of referring to this supernatural trio as the weird sisters, Boyd changed all references to the "witches" to "children" in order to reflect this production choice.

20. Mackintosh, *The Guthrie Thrust Stage*, 15.

21. Quoted in Mackintosh, *The Guthrie Thrust Stage*, 15.

22. *This England: The Histories* consisted of four plays, *Richard III* and the three parts of *Henry VI*. The same ensemble of actors performed these plays back-to-back over the course of several days in 2001.

23. Anatoly Efros, *The Joy of Rehearsal*, trans. James Thomas (New York: Peter Lang, 2006), 186.

24. Michael Boyd, interview by Paul Webb, *Playbill.com*, July 25, 2002, http://www.playbill.com/news/article/71075-Michael-Boyd-Appointed-As-New-Director-of-Royal-Shakespeare-Company.

25. Felix Mara, "Royal Shakespeare Theatre Renovation, Stratford-upon-Avon, by Bennetts Associates," *Architects Journal*, December 16, 2010, http://www.architectsjournal.co.uk/royal-shakespeare-theatre-renovation-stratford-upon-avon-by-bennetts-associates/8609274.article.

26. Mackintosh, *The Guthrie Thrust Stage*, 25.

27. Michael Boyd, "Making Theater and New Communities: A Talk by Michael Boyd" (presentation, New York Public Library, New York, NY, June 20, 2008), Video, 65 min, http://newyorkpubliclibrary.org/audiovideo/making-theater-and-new-communities-talk-michael-boyd.

28. Ibid.

29. Ibid.

30. Ben Brantley, "Theater Review: *Macbeth*, Something Wicked This Way Comes," *New York Times*, February 15, 2008, http://theater2.nytimes.com/2008/02/15/theater/reviews/15macb.html?pagewanted=all&_moc.semityn.2retaeht.

31. On June 14, 2011, the elevator lifting up the couch was off its rails and broke the stage as it rose. In the twenty- minute break that followed, actor Jamie Beamish, who played Launcelot Gobbo, led the audience in a sing-along of Elvis songs while the technicians attended to the repairs. This moment, in spite of the intricate design, helped realize the "conspiracy between performer and audience" that was Boyd's ideal, if not Goold's desire.

32. "RSC by the Numbers," *Park Avenue Armory*, August 31, 2011, http://www.armoryonpark.org/index.php/emails/110831_newsletter.

33. The Young People's Shakespeare tours also presented 15-minute versions of these plays for "Shakespeare in a Suitcase" performances. The technical demands of these shows were minimal, usually requiring only costumes and key props that could easily fit in a suitcase.

34. Tim Crouch, "Tim Crouch Speaks on his Work with Shakespeare and Young People" (lecture, The Ohio State University and Royal Shakespeare Company Stand Up For Shakespeare Professional Development Day, Columbus, OH, February 16, 2013).

35. Tim Crouch, "*The Author*: An Article by Tim Crouch," *Tim Crouch Theatre*, accessed July 28, 2012, http://www.timcrouchtheatre.co.uk/shows/the-author/the-author.

36. Ibid.

37. Even though Crouch receives credit as playwright, he collaborated with other actors and directors to create all of his shows.

38. In the RSC's 2011 season, Crouch also performed his one-man shows, *I, Peaseblossom*, and *I, Malvolio*. These plays retold the events of *A Midsummer Night's*

Dream and *Twelfth Night* from the supporting characters' points of view using direct audience address.

39. Tim Crouch, interview by author, Stratford-upon-Avon, UK, June 16, 2011.

40. Jacqui O'Hanlon, telephone interview by author, Stratford-upon-Avon, UK, August 20, 2011.

Rethinking "Local" Shakespeare: The case of *The Merchant of Santa Fe*

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The Merchant of Santa Fe, a radical adaptation of Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*, was written and staged in 1993 amidst a surge of scholarly and popular interest in New Mexico's "hidden Jews," or early modern *Judeoconversos*, who continued to practice, albeit secretly, their ancestral faith.[1] This interest was not and is not limited to the state's colonial past: it is also about modern-day New Mexico. Descendants of early modern *Judeoconversos*, some of whom continue to observe Jewish customs with no or partial knowledge of their significance, have mixed reactions to these revelations. In addition, the emergence of Jewish ancestry has complicated issues related to identity politics and resource allocation among New Mexico's Native, Anglo, and Hispano communities.[2] In its engagement with New Mexico's complex histories of ethnicity and economics, *Santa Fe* represents an outstanding example of "local" Shakespeare. As I argue, however, the play is also bound up with histories of theater and culture that reach beyond the borders of New Mexico.

Santa Fe follows the broad contours of *The Merchant of Venice*—it includes the "merry bond," test of caskets, and legal trial—but these plotlines are profoundly reshaped by issues specific to the play's setting in mid-seventeenth-century northern New Spain, including Hispano culture, crypto-Jewry, and Indian violence. Don Antonio believes his *honra*, or honor, to be affronted when Don Saùl (the play's Shylock figure) requires the merchant to sign a contract in order to borrow money to finance Rafael's (Bassanio's) expedition to woo the beautiful heiress, Doña Portía. Antonio avenges this insult when Salazar (a character who, in his design to

bring the Inquisition to Santa Fe, combines the vicious mockery of Shakespeare's Salanio and Salarino and the historical conditions of persecution of *Judeoconversos*) reveals to him that Saùl is a crypto-Jew. Specifically, the merchant assists Lorenzo in eloping with Saùl's daughter, Rebeca (Jessica), which deception Antonio justifies in terms of saving her from the Inquisition. When Saùl learns that Antonio aided his daughter's flight and that Indians attacked the merchant's caravans, he seeks to exact the penalty for default—the well-known pound of flesh.

Meanwhile, Rafael solves the riddle of the caskets, weds Portía, then leaves his bride in order to aid his benefactor. Portía assumes the guise of a lawyer in an attempt to save Antonio, and although she speaks many of the same lines as Shakespeare's Portia, it is not Portía's legal knowledge or rhetorical subtlety that saves Antonio, but the merchant's and Saùl's recognition of a shared Hispano culture of *honra* and non-denominational desire for life. Indeed, *Santa Fe* does not conclude with Saùl's punishment; his Jewishness remains an open secret, and he is not compelled to a second baptism. In addition, Salazar's harassment of Santa Fe's crypto-Jews is brought to an abrupt end when he reluctantly announces that the Inquisition has no intention of leaving the security of Mexico City for the wilderness of the northern territories, where the violence that leads to the Pueblo Revolt of 1680 has begun.

At first blush, the uniquely New Mexican context of *Santa Fe* renders it an unambiguously "local" adaptation. As I begin to argue in this essay, however, the play's investments extend beyond the local to regional, hemispheric, and global networks. Part of a larger project that grapples with the relationship between adaptation and conversion, this essay focuses on the ways *Santa Fe* draws on regional histories of theater and culture.[3] I introduce these histories in terms of two interrelated stories: the first concerns the seemingly unique strategies employed in the adaptation of *The Merchant of Venice* for a New Mexican audience; the second introduces the scenes of cross-dressing in *Santa Fe*, which complement Shakespeare's complex representation of gender. These stories are connected by the way they situate *Santa Fe* within the development of Hispano theater in the American Southwest over the past half-century. Moreover, this intersection of local and regional histories speaks to the broader question of

what we mean when we talk about Shakespearean adaptation as "local."

In the only dedicated study to date of *Santa Fe*, Elizabeth Klein and Michael Shapiro describe the intricate local contexts of the play's development from concept paper to final script.[4] They describe, for example, the three *tertulias* (Spanish versions of salons) at which academics and community members had opportunities to discuss the colonial history and modern-day politics of New Mexican crypto-Jewry. In an instance of capacious collaboration, participants in the *tertulias* also provided feedback on drafts of the script. Although representative of diverse areas of scholarly expertise—including theater arts, social history, and sociology—and faith traditions—Catholic, Jewish, and Native—participants in the *tertulias* were bound together by a common tie of locality; all those named or referenced in Klein and Shapiro's article were native or current residents of New Mexico.

The *tertulias* are among "the strategies adopted to make this play [i.e., *The Merchant of Venice*] relevant in New Mexico," but also "representative of pressures felt far beyond its geographical borders."[5] What Klein and Shapiro mean here is that *Santa Fe* participates in a global movement in which Shakespearean adaptation is emphatically local. While this observation is certainly accurate, it obscures the way the *tertulias* and other seemingly local aspects of *Santa Fe* have regional origins and reverberations. Specifically, the play draws on the strategies of Hispano theater and brings those strategies into the service of the unique dispositions, language, and collective memories of New Mexico's diverse, if predominantly Hispano, population, including its secret history of crypto-Judaism.

Santa Fe was developed under the auspices of La Compañía de Teatro de Albuquerque. Founded in 1978, La Compañía emerged in part from the same social and intellectual contexts, such as the Chicano movement and post-colonial discourse that spurred the creation of *teatros* throughout the American West in the 1960s. Community involvement in the development of plays, or *actos*, is a hallmark of the *teatros*. However, the *teatros* drew principally from working-class Chicano communities, whereas La Compañía made concerted efforts to include New Mexico's diverse communities in the development of *Santa Fe*. Also like the *teatros*, for the past thirty-

five years La Compañía has used bilingual performance to address issues of social injustice, economic disparity, and judicial abuse. Yet the Spanish-language portions of *Santa Fe* include grammar and vocabulary that are distinct to populations in northern New Mexico and southern Colorado. Likewise, anyone who is not a native of or a well-informed transplant to the state would likely not recognize how the "discovery" of Jewish ancestry among New Mexico's Hispano population complicated long-standing disputes over land and water.

Another significant way in which this "local" adaptation participates in regional histories is in its representation of women. Critics and practitioners have charged the *teatros*, and El Teatro Campesino in particular, with precluding women from leading roles both onstage and offstage. Men held proprietary control over playwriting, and their plays tended to confine female performers to the secondary and stereotypical roles of whores, virgins, and wives.[6] Beginning in the 1990s, however, Chicano/a Theater began to amend this trend by featuring the work of female playwrights and offering female performers more complex roles.[7] *Santa Fe* participates in this development as well. On the most obvious level, the play was co-written by a man and a woman, Ramón Flores and Lynn Butler. More subtly, it depicts women as agents in the complex dynamics of identity transmission.

Santa Fe achieves these effects specifically by adding to and reworking the scenes of cross-dressing in *The Merchant of Venice*. The first instance of cross-dressing in *Santa Fe* has no counterpart in Shakespeare's play. Doña Portía, mistress of the Manzano estate, enters with Nerisa, her *genizara* servant.[8] The two women are discussing their efforts to make apple brandy based on instructions left by Portía's father. Their conversation turns to Portía's father's instructions for the selection of a husband for his daughter and then to her ridiculous suitors. When the arrival of another suitor—a "puro castizo," or Spaniard of pure Christian blood—is announced, Portía disguises herself in a comic precursor to the casket test.[9] She "smears dirt on her face and messes her hair" and explains to Nerisa that she wants to see if her lineage-conscious suitor will be able to "pick the real mistress of Manzano" (30). The suitor fails this new test (he never attempts the casket test): taking the women's appearances as indicative of their stations and

ancestry, he begins to woo Nerisa, who is neither of high birth nor Hispano. Only after Nerisa alerts him to his error does the suitor turn to address Portía, who continues to enact a lower-class, possibly Anglo, persona by "affect[ing] a 'hick' accent" and expressing an enthusiasm for castrating pigs and "wrassl[ing]" (31).

This scene subtly signals, albeit to only the most intuitive playgoer, that Portía is a hidden Jew. Specifically, her making of apple brandy and then her cross-dressing are indicative of strategies for the concealment of Jewish identity. While observant Jews are forbidden to drink wine that is not kosher, other kinds of alcoholic beverages do not require special preparation. The consumption of apple brandy and other cordials, then, may have been a strategy by which *Judeoconversos* who wished to maintain biblical dietary laws could do so without calling attention to their avoidance of non-kosher wine. However, the connection between Portía's efforts to follow her father's recipe and any attempt to maintain Jewish observance is effectively occluded throughout the play. Just as Portía successfully conceals her social status and ethnicity from her *puro castizo* suitor, she keeps secret her Jewishness from her husband and from the theater audience. Only in the final moments of the play, Portía reveals that her ancestors were Portuguese Jews. "Welcome to the family," Portía says to Rafael; the play ends as "Lights [come] down as Rafael realizes who his children will be" (127).

Through the episode of Portía's initial cross-dressing, *Santa Fe* enacts the significant role that women throughout the Sephardi Diaspora historically played in the transmission of Jewish identity. After the Inquisition, Jewish communal worship and textual study—the provinces of men—were replaced by more private performances, specifically domestic practices and oral traditions, which tended to be the provinces of women.[10] Portía's efforts to make apple brandy thus reflect how in crypto-Jewish communities the communication of ancestral faith to the next generation fell increasingly to women. At the same time, they indicate the limits of that transmission. Portía's father left behind the recipe for apple brandy, but because he failed to make all the ingredients legible, his daughter has succeeded only in turning cider into vinegar.

The play also suggests that Portía may be no more successful than her father at passing on her Jewish heritage. In the trial scene, which replicates Shakespeare's play more than any other scene in *Santa Fe*, Antonio's death is not prevented by the cross-dressed Portía, but by the litigants themselves. This alteration is significant because Portía's arguments are based not in Christian or secular law, but in Jewish law. In a final effort to dissuade Saùl from exacting the pound of flesh from Antonio, she says, "Don Saùl, from what little I know of Jewish law, it is written that 'Even though your enemy has risen up to kill you, when he comes hungry and thirsty to your house, give him food and drink'" (101). Here Portía does not, as far as I have been able to discover, invoke a well-known codification. Instead, she appears to combine precepts from Proverbs and the Talmud (the record of rabbinic commentary on the oral law) that urge charitable treatment of one's enemies, on the one hand, and justify preemptive violence against one's enemies, on the other.[11] The effect of Portía's combination of precepts is two-fold: first, like her cross-dressing as an attorney, her attempt at religious exegesis performs a role usually occupied by Jewish men; and second, like her earlier cross-dressing as a "hick," it suggests that beneath her Shakespearean counterpart's lines about mercy and justice, which appear in abbreviated form in *Santa Fe*, is a Jewish attitude toward the law.[12] Yet Portía's exegetical citation of Jewish law fails to move Saùl, who "turns away" from Portía and "approaches Antonio" (101, s.d.). Just as in the apple brandy scene, where she falls short of realizing domestic practices, in the trial scene Portía is unable to deploy effectively her Jewish inheritance. Rather than oversimplifying the roles of women in the concealment and transmission of Jewish identity, then, *Santa Fe* uses scenes of cross-dressing to illustrate the difficulties that women (as well as men) faced in fulfilling these responsibilities.

The complication of gender stereotypes within the representation of New Mexican crypto-Jewry also emerges through Rebeca, Flores and Butler's Jessica-figure. In *The Merchant of Venice*, Jessica's cross-dressing as a page reveals anxieties about the way Jewish gendered and textual bodies challenge masculine, Christian authority—specifically, the resistance of Jewish women to the physical impression of Christian men and the resistance of Jewish scripture to Christian appropriation.[13] In *Santa Fe*

these anxieties are reworked to celebrate female sexual agency and to explore the limits of transmitting Jewish identity. Rebeca is introduced in stereotypically gendered terms as a prospective bride, beautiful, and skillful in the kitchen. She also participates dutifully in the performance of Jewish Sabbath rituals, including the lighting of candles that is designated for women. When she cross-dresses in order to elope with Lorenzo, however, Rebeca complicates the roles of virginal daughter and Jewish tradent. Emerging from her father's house "dressed as a boy," Rebeca "giggles" and asks Lorenzo, "Do you like my new sex?" (61). Unlike Jessica, who describes her "transform[ation] to a boy" as a cause for "blush[ing,]"[14] Rebeca is unashamed of her masculine apparel and actually revels in it as a source of sexual titillation. In addition, before she exits with her Christian beloved, Rebeca says, "Adiòs, mi vida de antes," and then, "Welcome, my new life!" (63). Rebeca's shift from Spanish to English, like her assumption of male apparel, marks her connected conversions from daughter to wife and from Jew to Christian.

These conversions are put under pressure once Rebeca resumes her feminine apparel. For example, when her *genizaro* servant decides to return to the Apache tribe from which he was separated as a child, Rebeca responds, "I can understand wanting a new life. But I hate to see you throw away your old life" (113). For the *genizaro*, "a new life" involves not simply a rejection of his "old life" as *genizaro*, in which he is neither Spanish nor fully Native; it is also a return to his (other) "old life"—that is, his originary tribal life in which he was uniquely and emphatically Apache. Rebeca faces a different choice. She cannot safely occupy an "old life" of open Jewish observance; yet she is reluctant to abandon her "tribe" in favor of a "new," wholly Christian life.[15] Inverting her sentiment from the earlier scene—what was an enthusiastic *adiòs* becomes an anguished "throw[ing] away"—Rebeca, like many modern-day New Mexicans who choose to acknowledge their crypto-Jewish ancestry, seems intent not on supersession, but on synthesis. This desire to conjoin new and old lives reappears at the end of *Santa Fe*, when Rebeca sends a letter to her father in which she asks for his forgiveness. Rebeca is clearly reluctant to sever all ties—or, we might say, bonds—to her Jewish ancestry. Whereas the cross-dressed Portía represents the challenge of

simultaneously concealing and transmitting Jewish identity, the cross-dressed Rebeca represents the ambivalent desire for the recovery and incorporation of Jewish identity into the dominant Hispano identity of New Mexico.

In this essay, I have argued that *Santa Fe* explores the local history of hidden Jewry, but the histories used to perform it are regional theater and culture. This intersection of local and regional histories becomes visible in the play's scenes of cross-dressing, which enact the vital, yet fraught, roles of women in New Mexico's crypto-Jewish past. In so doing, the play also participates in recent developments in Chicano/a Theater, which have closed the gap between the social and political realities of Hispanic women's lives, on the one hand, and their dramatization and performance onstage, on the other. Of course, these scenes are also indebted to Shakespeare, whose plays routinely use cross-dressing to put pressure on ideologies of gender and performance. The way in which *Santa Fe* brings Shakespeare's cross-dressing heroines into the service of both local and regional histories is thus significant for understandings of Shakespearean adaptation as a "local" phenomenon.

The story of transmission and recovery that *Santa Fe* tells through Shakespearean adaptation, especially its cross-dressing heroines, extends beyond New Mexico's borders and throughout the Sephardi Diaspora. Recent studies in the fields of Latin American theater and culture, for example, reveal similar uses of Shakespeare to challenge dominant histories of ethnicity and nationality and to allow "those traditionally excluded and marginalized"—such as Latin American Jewry—"the opportunity to reclaim their agency."[16] However, in my adopted state, in contrast to Latin America and other formerly colonial regions, Shakespeare is not perceived as a hegemonic authority who must be appropriated through cannibalization or grafting.[17] And although at times I have encountered an attitude of hostile indifference ("What is Shakespeare *to us*?"—meaning native Hispanos), just as frequently I have discerned a sense of entitlement. Many New Mexicans identify strongly with their Spanish origins, and it is perhaps ironic that this identification with the "Old World" is strongest in northern New Mexico.[18] Because of its distance from the Inquisitorial offices in Madrid and Mexico City, this area of New

Spain, which includes Santa Fe and its environs, was particularly attractive to conversos intent on continuing to practice Judaism. For these New Mexicans, Shakespeare is part of a European literary, cultural, and intellectual inheritance to which they have as much claim as land and water granted by colonial royal charters. In this sense, *Santa Fe* is a case of "local" Shakespeare because particularly in northern New Mexico, Shakespeare is always and already local.

Notes

1. Ramón Flores and Lynn Butler, *The Merchant of Santa Fe*, unpublished script (1993). I am grateful to Mr. Flores for sharing with me the final draft of *Santa Fe*.

2. I follow Stanly M. Hordes, *To the End of the Earth: A History of the Crypto-Jews of New Mexico* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), in using "Hispanos" to refer to descendants of Spanish colonial settlers in what became New Mexico.

3. In this larger project, I examine *Santa Fe's* scenes of disguise, including the scenes of cross-dressing discussed here, in terms of the discourses of authenticity and loss that inform debates about both religious conversion and Shakespearean adaptation.

4. Elizabeth Klein and Michael Shapiro, "Shylock as Crypto-Jew: A new [sic] Mexican Adaptation of *The Merchant of Venice*," in *World-wide Shakespeares: Local Appropriations in Film and Performance*, ed. Sonia Massai (London: Routledge, 2005), 31-39.

5. Ibid., 33.

6. See especially, Yolanda Broyles-Gonzalez, *El Teatro Campesino: Theater in the Chicano Movement* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994). For an early example of resistance against this trend, see Laura E. Garcia, Sandra M. Gutierrez, and Felicitas Nuñez, eds., *Teatro Chicana: A Collective Memoir and Selected Plays* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008).

7. W. B. Worthen, "Staging America: The Subject of History in Chicano/a Théatre," *Theatre Journal* 49, no.2 (1997): 101-20. See also Linda Saborío, *Embodying Difference: Scripting Social Images of the Female Body in Latina Theatre* (Madison, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2012).

8. *Genizara/o* is an anachronism for a de-tribalized, non-Pueblo Indian.

9. *The Merchant of Santa Fe,* 30, s.d. (hereafter cited in text). This phrase is another self-conscious anachronism, as the writers note in the glossary appended to the script: "In New Mexico and New Spain, the term *castizo* was not used with this meaning [i.e., 'pure blood,' not mixed through marriage with Moors or Jews] in the latter half of the Spanish colonial period. Rather *castizo* described a particular mixture of Spanish and Indian blood. However, *castizo* was used with the 'pure blood' meaning in medieval and Renaissance Spain so the writers chose to used [sic] it in this play" (128).

10. David M. Gitlitz, *Secrecy and Deceit: The Religion of the Crypto-Jews* (1996; Albuquerque: University of New Mexico, 2002); Janet L. Jacobs, *Hidden Heritage:*

The Legacy of the Crypto-Jews (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); Renee Levine Melammed, *Heretics or Daughters of Israel? The Crypto-Jewish Women of Castile* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); and the response in Seth D. Kunin, *Juggling Identities: Identity and Authenticity Among the Crypto-Jews* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), chapter 3.

11. Proverbs 25:21 reads, "If your enemy is hungry, give him food to eat; if he is thirsty, give him water to drink," and Babylonian Talmud *Sanhedrin* 72a, "If someone is coming to kill you, rise early and kill him first."

12. This ascription is not to deny or efface the importance of mercy and justice in Christian theology or Hispano culture. Rather, without devaluing other religious and cultural traditions and practices, *Santa Fe* responds to the representation of a hard-hearted and unjust Jewishness in *The Merchant of Venice* by aligning the arguments for mercy and justice with Jewish sources, both textual and human.

13. See Michelle Ephraim, *Reading the Jewish Woman on the Elizabethan Stage* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008); Lisa Lampert, *Gender and Jewish Difference from Paul to Shakespeare* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004); as well as Janet Adelman, *Blood Relations: Christian and Jew in* The Merchant of Venice (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008).

14. William Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice, in The Complete Works of William Shakespeare*, David Bevington, ed., 6th ed. (New York: Pearson Longman, 2009), 2.6.38-39.

15. In *The Merchant of Venice*, both Jewish and Christian characters refer to the Jewish community as a "tribe" (1.3.48, 54, 108; 3.1.73).

16. Rick J. Santos, "*Mestizo* Shakespeares: A Study of Cultural Exchange," in *Latin American Shakespeares*, ed. Bernice W. Kliman and Rick J. Santos (Madison, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2005), 12. See also Jeffrey Lesser and Raanan Rein, eds., *Rethinking Jewish-Latin Americans* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2003), chapter 3.

17. For these responses to Shakespeare, see, for example, Santos 11-12 and Pooman Trivedi, "Reading 'Other Shakespeares,'" in *Remaking Shakespeare: Performance Across Media, Genres and Cultures*, ed. Pascale Aebischer, Edward J. Esche, and Nigel Wheale, Palgrave Shakespeare Studies (Basingstoke, Hampshire, U.K.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 56–73.

18. As Gustavo "The Mexican" Arellano, writer of the syndicated column *¡Ask a Mexican*! explains with his characteristic biting humor, "Santa Fe is the Mecca of this mixed-up mythology, which allows Las Vegas, Taos and Española Mexicans to believe that they are all descendants of the Spanish royal court"; interview by Joseph Baca, *The Alibi* 19, no. 10 (March 11-17, 2010).

Horned Gods, Horny Men, Witches, and Fairies: Pagan Remnants in Shakespeare's *The Merry Wives of Windsor*

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Fairies, witches, and horned men dancing around in a haunted forest at midnight: such elements may be approached with skepticism and laughter by theatrical audiences today. Just as we find ourselves amused by quaint notions of cuckoldry and horniness that seem out of place, we also scoff at the idea that, once upon a time, theater-goers (and the general populace) might have believed in witchcraft, fairy lore, and horned gods.

Although *The Merry Wives of Windsor* contains a cornucopia of references to horns, cuckolding, horny men going horn-mad, and the horned hunter Herne (as well as witches, fairies, and midnight forest rituals), a lack of access to historical and religious contexts of pagan practices and beliefs often obscures modern understanding of the significance of these elements within the play. By examining cultural remnants of paganism and witchcraft and how Shakespeare employs them, we can achieve a more dynamic and contextual approach to interpreting and performing *The Merry Wives of Windsor*.

Twenty-first-century audiences, although familiar with jokes about horny men, are likely to be less conversant with the multiple layers and associations the word "horn" conjured in the minds of Shakespeare and his contemporaries. *The Merry Wives of Windsor* is strewn with horns: "horn-mad" jealous men, horned Actaeon, the horns of cuckoldry passed to wronged husbands, the financial horn of plenty that a horny Falstaff hopes to get by seducing the wives, and Herne's horns borne by Falstaff in act 5. In order to

analyze and appreciate the complex word-play around which the themes of *Merry Wives* revolve, we must first look at the etymology of the word "horn"—the word used to signify sexual desire, virility, manliness, cuckolding, fecundity, and abundance. "Horn" and its derivatives come from the Old English "cern," a word that is also the root of "cornucopia," a horn of plenty overflowing with ripe fruit and harvest bounty.

Nature provides one explanation for the associations: rutting stags lock horns in battle to establish sexual dominance and mating rights with fertile does. For both humans and animals, being "horny" or having horns implies lust, springtime mating antics, male rivalry, and sexual conquest. The more virile animal wins the fight and the female, while the loser is forced to symbolically wear the horns—or fall under the dominion of—his winning rival. Francisco Vaz de Silva, approaching sexual horns as a signifier, explains how this animal symbolism plays out in *Merry Wives*: "His horns connote transgressive virility, the otherworldly origin of which is clear. . . . In short, Shakespeare's usage of horns imagery suggests that a man, in seducing another's wife, transfers his own horns of virility onto the cheated husband's head even as he asserts male supremacy over the cuckold."[1] While "horns," "horny," "horn-mad," and "dis-horned" all have masculine associations, the root word has feminine meanings as well.

"Cern" also signified the horn of plenty, a cornucopia overflowing with the products of Nature's bounty—an image still popular today, especially during harvest festivals and holidays such as Thanksgiving. Any culture dependent upon plants and animals for food and survival would have recognized and celebrated the importance of female fertility as well as male virility. Thus, the "horn" of plenty referenced both phallic potency and feminine ability to conceive and bear fruit—horticultural and human. Falstaff's desire to claim the wives' horns of plenty in both physical and financial senses plays on the multiple layers of meanings attached to the words horn and "cern."

Yet another layer, that of pagan religious remnants still in play in early modern culture, wraps itself around "cern." It is also the root of Cernunnos, the Celtic horned god. The Gaulish *karnon* and the Latin *cornu*, cognates to "cern," help us trace the lingustic and religious path of horned gods from ancient civilizations

to the Elizabethan stage. In act 2, Pistol compares Falstaff to Actaeon, whom the Goddess Diana turned to a stag after he saw her bathing (2.1.117).[2] Ancient Greeks worshiped Pan (also known as Hermes), a horned deity associated with nature and sexual prowess. Egyptians revered Apis, a bull deity, and Ammon-Ra, a horned ram deity. These universal images of virility persisted and traveled into Europe, rooting themselves in particular locations and legends that still endure.

Northern Europeans also left abundant evidence of horned-deity worship. The Gundestrop Cauldron, a second-century CE artifact found in Denmark, is one example of Celtic horned god art that traveled from country to country.[3] Another is the first-century Pilier des Nautes (Pillar of the Boatmen), discovered in 1710 beneath the Cathedral of Notre Dame, which displays the name and horned likeness of Cernunnos together.[4] Inscriptions to Cernunnos in France, Luxembourg, northern Italy, and on Hadrian's Wall in England further confirm the extent of his influence.

The horned god entrenched himself in London and the surrounding English countryside, abetted by invading tribes. Writer Seán Mac Mathúna explains that London's St. Paul's Cathedral was built on a site originally linked to the Stag Goddess. He includes as evidence an account drawn from John Stone's 1598 *Survey of London* by Alan Moore and Eddie Campbell to confirm that Elizabethans still enacted horned-god rituals on the site: "A buck and a doe (Diana's sacred animals), would be slaughtered at the high altar upon a certain date each year, after which the head would be paraded about the cathedral upon a pole while horns were blown to announce the sacrifice, these being answered by horn blasts from every quarter of London. Commentators at the time remarked: 'It seems we have our Diana worship back.'"[5]

Edain McCoy, in *Celtic Myth and Magic*, explains that Herne is the British name of the European horned god Cernunnos. She notes that he was "probably the most widely-worshipped God-form in European paganism."[6] McCoy also illuminates the multiple roles Cernunnos played: "He was the randy goat representing the fertility rites of Bealtaine, and the master of the hunt who came into his full power in late summer and early fall. He was the primal fertility God, consort to the Great Mother, and the male

creative principle. He is also honored as a death deity, and the hunt is sometimes viewed as metaphor for rounding up the souls of the living to take to the Underworld's gates, and as a God of the woodlands, animals, revelry, and male fertility.[7]

Cultural rituals took place throughout England. Remnants of horned-god worship included May Day dances, festivals, maypoles, and picnics to celebrate spring, fertility, and merrymaking. Elizabethan Londoners held major May Fairs in Greenwich, Southwark, Hay Market, and, from May first to the fifteenth, in the area still known today as Mayfair (even though festivities there were suppressed in 1764). Until 1718, a 134-foot maypole stood by the Church of St. Mary in the Strand, less than two miles from the Globe Theater. More rituals and events occurred during the harvest, when, according to tradition, the horned god led the Wild Hunt, was sacrificed, and then became god of the Underworld. These autumnal observations coincided with Samhain, a Celtic fire festival associated with the end of the harvest, the beginning of the dark portion of the year, death, and the spirit world.

Charlton's Horn Fair, one such celebration, featured a procession that ended at the Church of St. Luke, whose feast day occurs on October 18. Editors Ben Weinrub and Christopher Hibbert explain in *The London Encyclopedia* that during this pagan festival, "The Men would be dressed as women . . . all would wear horns, blow horns, carry horns, and at the fair, would buy trinkets carved from iron."[8] The "dance of custom" round Herne's oak could well be part of such seasonal rites (5.5.76).

Herne himself appears as a local Berkshire figure—Richard II's favorite huntsman who hangs himself (for a variety of reasons) from an oak in Windsor Forest and returns as a ghost, a demon, or a phantom leading a train of souls captured during his Wild Hunt. Shakespeare uses both local legend and broader horned-god mythos. In act 4, scene 3, Mistress Page reminds her fellow conspirators of Herne's associations with death and the Underworld:

> There is an old tale goes, that Herne the hunter,
> Sometime a keeper in Windsor forest,
> Doth all the winter time, at still midnight,
> Walk round about an oak, with great ragg'd horns,
> And there he blasts the tree and takes the cattle,

> And makes milch-kine yield blood, and shakes a chain
> In a most hideous and dreadful manner:
> You have heard of such a spirit; and well you know
> The superstitious idle-headed eld
> Received, and did deliver to our age,
> This tale of Herne the hunter for a truth. (4.4.30-42)

When the conspirators decide that Falstaff must wear horns to his midnight rendezvous at Herne's Oak, they simultaneously associate him with the virility and potency of the Horned God and its opposite, the cuckolded husband, whose horns signify his lack of masculine prowess. Falstaff's act 1 decision to seduce Mistresses Ford and Page makes him a hunter, but by act 4, he becomes the hunted—the quarry of women bent on exposing and emasculating him. Falstaff re-enacts Herne's roles as god of revelry and god of death during act 5 when his public humiliation kills his own prospects as lover and facilitates Anne Page's elopement and two false marriages of her would-be suitors to young boys.

Pagan deities are not the only remnants of non-mainstream religion to make their way into *The Merry Wives*. Shakespeare used witches and witchcraft as well. Although current audiences may automatically view witches as stereotypical Halloween hags, sexy enchantresses from films and television shows, or mall-Goth teenagers, early moderns had very different views. Whatever we may think of it today, witchcraft was a cultural and religious reality to Elizabethans. The *Malleus Maleficarum*, printed sixteen times between 1574 and 1669, specified that witches were real and that they derived their powers from the Christian devil, an entity whom they also believed was real. In 1562, the Elizabethan Witchcraft Act, which forbade "Conjuracions Inchauntmentes and Witchecraftes," was passed. Two hundred and seventy individuals faced trial as witches during Elizabeth's reign, indicating that church and government took witchcraft seriously. In 1597, the same year that *Merry Wives* may have first been performed for the Queen, James VI of Scotland (the future James I of England) published *Demonology*, a treatise that reiterated the ties between witches, demons, and devils. After James took the throne, he passed even more stringent laws to discover and punish them. Anti-Christian witches, real or imaginary, populated early modern culture.

In *Merry Wives*, characters treat witches in a matter-of-fact way that assumes their existence. When Master Ford encounters Falstaff in drag during act 4, scene 2, he not only accepts his wife's explanation that the fat crone is her maid's aunt, the witch of Brentford, but reminds her that he has forbidden entry to this woman because of her previous visits (4.2.158-59). To Ford (and everyone else), witches are obviously real; they even make house calls. After naming the woman a "witch . . . an old cozening quean" (thereby linking witchcraft and licentiousness), Ford lists the activities that define witches: fortune-telling, charms, spells, horoscopes, and other trickery of which he knows nothing (4.2.160-64). Rather than an imaginary witch that might inhabit children's bedtime stories and fireside folk tales, Shakespeare presents a physical witch whom Ford deems enough of a threat to his masculine authority and power that he thrashes "her" soundly.

When the Host of the Garter catches Falstaff in act 4, scene 5 consulting with the old, fat lady from Brentford, Falstaff admits that he has spent time with a "wise woman" who "hath taught me more wit than ever I learned before in my life" (4.5.59-62). Simple also seeks her advice to learn whether Slender will marry Anne Page (4.5.46-48). These characters act as if such consultations were ordinary, even routine, and they assume that whatever advice they receive is accurate—another indication that witches and wise women were part of the communities in which they lived. Like fairies, witches feminized and subverted the authority of male priests and rulers, appropriated secret wisdom, and had power over time, love, physical health, household affairs, and even fate (such as marriage arrangements). What we do not see in *The Merry Wives* are evil hags who cast malevolent spells on innocent targets or consort with the devil; instead, Shakespeare shows women and some men seeking the advice and knowledge of the local witch, while jealous or authoritative men react to her with fear and anger—not because she is an agent of Satan, but because she has power in the secret, domestic realm where he cannot meddle. Complex attitudes towards witches, then, provide us with multiple understandings of their places in early modern society: they operated outside state-mandated Christianity, they exercised power and abilities that men could not control, and they were part of everyday life in the villages and towns where they lived.

Even more than witches, fairies play a key role in *The Merry Wives*, not only as a plot device to effect Falstaff's humiliation and Anne Page's elopement, but, like witches, as a location of Otherness that tested religious and cultural tensions. Attitudes towards fairies also occupied a spectrum ranging from cultural belief to sophisticated skepticism, creating the multiple levels of receptivity that Shakespeare used in *The Merry Wives*. H.W. Herrington observed in *The Journal of American Folklore*, "Fairy mythology in England is ancient, far antedating the accession of Elizabeth. . . . Oberon, Robin Goodfellow, Queen Mab, and all their crew, formed for Elizabethans a real mythology, received with wavering degrees of faith, with skepticism, with an amused tolerance, or with a purely poetical acceptance."[9]

Early Modern writer Reginald Scot (1584), referenced by Wendy Wall in 2001, was one of the skeptics, anxious to discredit fairy belief by relegating it to the nursery. Wall explained how Scot linked fairy belief with children and the lower classes: "What the lower classes are imagined to consume becomes identical with what 'old wives' whisper to elite children in their 'nursery days,' with the result that non-discriminating readers of cheap print are coded as immature."[10] Keith Thomas, writing in 1971, also narrowed the cultural location of Early Modern fairies by defining fairy lore as "a store of mythology rather than a corpus of living beliefs."[11] By retroactively collocating superstitious old wives, young children and fairies in this mythological cradle of cheap print, we may too easily elide the possibilities of actual and cultural remnants of fairy belief in Shakespeare's England and the ways in which it represented and tested religious and sociopolitical transitions both on and off the stage. Regina Buccola, in her book *Fairies, Fractious Women, and the Old Faith*, explains that fairy lore and religion are essential in our quest to understand such writing: "The fairy tradition is every bit as significant in our critical attempts to situate early modern texts in their historical contexts as the references to classical texts and struggles associated with state-mandated religious beliefs are widely agreed to be."[12]

Although twenty-first-century audiences tend to relegate witches and fairies to the same basket of superstition and scorn that contains aliens, Bigfoot, and Santa—beings credible only to children or those with child-like minds—remnants of fairy belief

added another complex, multi-layered element to early modern culture. They appeared in works by Edmund Spencer, John Lyly, and others, representing an amorphous, ever-changing Other with glamour, power, and the ability to turn the ordered world of their writers, readers, and audiences upside-down. Steeped as they were in centuries of lore, tradition, myth, folk culture, and even religious practice involving fairies, Elizabethan readers and theater-goers had a far different store of associations and received beliefs to draw upon than do twenty-first-century audiences. As Buccola writes, "Many early modern theatergoers considered it possible to interact with an otherworldly, fairy realm even as the characters that they watched on stage were supposed to do."[13] When we let go of the idea that only poorly-educated, superstitious folk admitted the possibility of fairies, we open ourselves to their use, not only as a symbolic or representational location of forbidden desire, secrets and power to change social order, but also as a real possibility to enact those desires and changes.

Shakespeare plays on these multiple levels of fairy belief in act 5 of *The Merry Wives*. Although Falstaff insists in scene 5 that guiltiness and surprise created a "received belief" in the fairies "in despite of the teeth of all rhyme and reason," he does so only after the Fords and Pages appear and reveal that the entire ritual was a staged performance (5.5.24-29). Moments earlier, however, Falstaff "lies down upon his face" (5.5.49-51) because he cannot see fairy rituals and live to tell about it; he also expresses fear that the "Welsh fairy" will turn him to cheese (5.5.82-83). Welsh parson Hugh Evans further illustrates the mix of Christianity and unauthorized fairy belief when he says he will instruct the children how to impersonate fairies (4.4.69). Either Evans or Anne Page, then, is very familiar with the precise steps of fairy rituals to cleanse, sweep, and bestow fairy blessings, as evidenced by Anne's detailed injunction at the ritual's start (5.5.60-77). Even as we acknowledge comedic and ironic intentions in this scene, we also see that the characters act as they do because cultural remnants of pagan and fairy beliefs inform their actions.

When we consider act 5 from the perspective of an audience with some degree of fairy belief, new possibilities emerge. The merry wives and Ann Page both become far more subversive if their audience believes that fairies can help them overturn

male authority and control their own bodies and romantic fates. Plausibility, rather than absurdity, moves the text into a space where the secret, female realm holds power and control beyond the purview of jealous husbands—just as Ford fears. Falstaff's humiliation and punishment moves from incomprehensible silliness staged by otherwise-competent adults to just—if hilarious—consequences witnessed by a sympathetic audience (who may, themselves, have been the subjects of fairy mischief).

Remnants of paganism, witchcraft, and fairy belief not only help explain The Merry Wives, but they also form a shadow text that tests the social and religio-political tensions of early modern Christianity in Elizabethan England. Despite state-sponsored Protestant reform, both Catholicism and pre-Christian practices persisted beneath the official surface. Shakespeare's use of horned gods, witches, and fairies highlighted the ongoing threat they posed in a shifting religious environment. As Buccola points out, "Religious reformers . . . were also uneasy about the potential challenge fairy belief posed to the primacy of the Christian tradition."[14] Francis Dolan further explained how reformers conflated non-Christian remnants with Catholicism, creating a double target: "Some early modern writers connected Catholic women not just to illiteracy and materialism but also to superstition, oral transmission, and the occult. This set of associations . . . works to discredit Catholicism and relegate it to the past."[15] The 1566 *Examination of John Walsh* linked "fairy-endowed healing abilities to witchcraft and sorcery, witchcraft and sorcery to priests and 'papistry,' and . . . so-called fairies and what they have to teach to priests and papistry."[16]

By feminizing and conflating the Otherness of fairy belief, witchcraft, folk magic, and paganism with superstition and papism, reform Protestants sought to overwrite and subsume traditions they viewed as threatening and destabilizing. Buccola explained the importance of fairy tradition in this fight: "In fact, fairy beliefs and the popular plays and public debates associated with them played an important role in the, at times, violent doctrinal battles waged throughout the period."[17] By portraying Christian characters who openly incorporated these pagan remnants into their everyday lives, Shakespeare explored questions of assimilation, assumption, and identity central to this contested ground.

Such open questioning is possible only in a space where everyday life is suspended, then re-presented free of normal constraints. Theater creates just this kind of liminal space, where nothing is quite what it seems. When audiences enter the theater zone, they leave the demands and concerns of daily life behind. They must suspend disbelief, accepting the stage as a representation of other realities for the duration of the play. Time, place, and identity are fluid, with actors portraying humans and mythical creatures, boys portraying female characters, and events occurring onstage that are not possible in real life. Such a liminal space allows questioning and subversion of order and authority, enactment of hidden desires and socially unacceptable goals, and expression of alternative (forbidden) ideology.

The liminal zones of *Merry Wives* include the physical spaces in which Shakespeare's characters act out their subversive desires and goals. Buccola states, "The fairy space in which the wives' ultimate triumph unfolds is a liminal zone: a wood on the margins of the Windsor community, delineating the space between ruler and ruled."[18] Dark, wooded areas also served as traditional sites for pagan rituals, witchcraft, and fairy rites, as well as the boundary between human society and Nature. Herne's Oak as the location of the midnight ritual incorporates all of these associations: fairies, Nature, magic, and the horned god of the Wild Hunt and the Underworld, whose antlers represent his virility and his animal nature. He cannot be controlled by human authority, just as remnants of his religion persisted in spite of Christian efforts to extinguish it. Finally, all the action takes place before the rulers arrive and outside their domains, suggesting that pagan fairy rituals occurred long before the arrival of Protestant rulers and continue in dark, secret spaces beyond their reach.

The characters themselves embody liminality through their shifting identities and behaviors. The unruly wives pretend to succumb to Falstaff's advances, but are really out to trap him. Parson Evans leads some of his congregants in pagan fairy rituals. Falstaff pretends to woo the wives, but is really after their husbands' money. Later, he impersonates a horned god figure, but gets pinched, burned, and humiliated by children impersonating fairies. To derail Anne Page's would-be abductors, boys impersonate Anne, while she impersonates the Queen of the

Fairies. Liminal spaces within the theater and the play itself allow the text to embody non-Christian, alternate realities that co-existed with state-mandated religion.

Although we can read *The Merry Wives* as simple comedy or farce in which the would-be cuckold gets his come-uppance at the hands of unruly but smart women, Shakespeare's persistent play with the word "horn" and its associated terms points towards Herne's Oak, where Falstaff's horns symbolize the horned god and pagan remnants of ancient beliefs. Such remnants persisted into Elizabethan times as festivals, fairs, May Day celebrations, harvest rituals, and other observances, creating a shadow text that informs *Merry Wives*. Fairy belief and witchcraft, alternative paths that existed outside and beyond the reach of official Christianity, also percolate through the efforts of Mistresses Ford and Page to enact a ritual that will affirm their dominance, humiliate their would-be seducer and, unwittingly, give the Ford's daughter her own matrimonial freedom. While the play's characters use pagan remnants to get what they want, they also test the boundaries of religious and social conflict. By understanding how Elizabethans viewed horned gods, fairies, and witchcraft, and cultural sites these remnants occupied, we enrich the interpretive possibilities of *Merry Wives* for actors, directors, and audiences alike.

Notes

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2. William Shakespeare, *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare*, Illustrated (Ann Arbor: State Street Press, 2001). All Shakespearean citations refer to this work.

3. *Celtic Art & Cultures*, s.v. "Gundestrop Cauldron," http://www.unc.edu/celtic/catalogue/Gundestrup/kauldron.html (accessed July 20, 2012).

4. "Pilier des Nautes," *Seemarvels.com*, http://seemarvels.com/pilier-des-nautes/ (accessed July 1, 2012).

5. Alan Moore and Eddie Campbell, F*rom Hell: Being a Melodrama in Sixteen Parts, Vol. 2*, (Northampton, MA: Kitchen Sink Press/Mad Love Publishing, 1994), quoted in Seán Mac Mathúna, "Evidence of Worship of the Horned God in early Celtic London," *Flame* 1, no. 3 (Winter 1999), http://www.fantompowa.net /Flame/herne_the_hunter.htm (accessed July 12, 2012).

6. Edain McCoy, *Celtic Myth and Magick: Harness the Power of the Gods and Goddesses* (St. Paul, Minnesota: Llewellyn Publications, 1995), 269.

7. Ibid.

8. Ben Weinrub and Christopher Hibbert, *The London Encyclopedia* (New York: Macmillan Reference, 2011), quoted in Seán Mac Mathúna, "The Horn Fair in South London: London's First Carnival?" *Flame* 1, no. 3 (Winter 1999), http://www.fantompowa.net/Flame/the_horn_fair.htm (accessed July 12, 2012).

9. H.W. Herrington, "Witchcraft and Magic in the Elizabethan Drama," *The Journal of American Folklore* 32, no. 126 (Oct. - Dec., 1919): 447-85.

10. Wendy Wall, "Why Does Puck Sweep? Fairylore, Merry Wives, and Social Struggle," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 52 no. 1 (Spring 2001): 69.

11. Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century England* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1971), 608.

12. Regina Buccola, *Fairies, Fractious Women, and the Old Faith: Fairy Lore in Early Modern British Drama and Culture* (Selinsgrove, Pennsylvania: Susquehanna University Press, 2006), 8.

13. Ibid., 40.

14. Ibid., 94.

15. Frances E. Dolan, *Whores of Babylon: Catholicism, Gender, and Seventeenth-Century Print Culture* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999), 28.

16. Walsh, John. *The Examination of John Walsh: Before Maister Thomas Williams, Commissary to the Reuerend Father in God William, Bishop of Excester, Vpon Certayne Interrogatories Touchyng Wytchcrafte and Sorcerye, in the Presence of Diuers Gentlemen and Others. The. Xx. of August. 1566*. Imprynted by John Awdely, quoted in Buccola, *Fairies*, 173.

17. Buccola, *Fairies*, 8.

18. Buccola, "Shakespeare's Fairy Dance with Religio-Political Controversy in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*," in *Shakespeare and the Culture of Christianity in Early Modern England*, ed. Dennis Taylor and David N. Beauregard (New York: Fordham University Press, 2003), 167.

Reading Rehearsal Toward a Theory of Shakespeare "Activity"

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My paper looks at two Shakespeare productions that serve as heightened instances of one of the most basic conditions of creating theater: the entanglement of text with other vocabularies and circumstances of performance, from gesture to lighting to the body of the actor. Declan Donnellan's statements in the *The Actor and the Target*, his widely assigned acting textbook, that the text is "a *tool* to change what the target is already doing" (italics mine)[1] or, more suggestively, that "words don't work"[2] and must be put rigorously to work, likely strikes practitioners of theater, including many of us in the Shakespearean Performance Research Group, as obvious. The idea that the text gets subordinated to a larger performance project in ways that differ from production to production is not necessarily reflected, however, in mainstream and academic Shakespearean performance criticism, which tends to proceed—as one of our co-conveners, W. B. Worthen, frequently points out—as if the text, in large part because of its entrenched status as literature, provides a blueprint or template for performance.[3] But then again, observes Michael Dobson, "Writing about Shakespeare in the theater while mentioning Shakespeare as little as possible" would seem to "demand contortions of language and expression that might tax even the most ingenious of performance critics."[4] Are we indeed at "something of a stand-off" in Shakespeare studies, as Margaret Jane Kidnie suggests, between two modes of conceiving of performance, one that mines it for what it says about Shakespeare and the other for what it says as performance, about performance?[5]

I propose to enter the dialogue from a new perspective, that of contemporary Shakespeare rehearsal, of directorial approach and the mundane stuff of script formatting, blocking, and acting exercises. My case studies are Andrei Serban and Karin Coonrod's productions of *Love's Labour's Lost*, performed, respectively, at Riverside Church at Columbia University in 2010 as part of the university's graduate acting program and at the Public Theater in 2011.[6] Serban and Coonrod both have long careers in "reinventing" classic work, whether through significant textual adaptation or the incorporation of highly stylized movement and visual imagery. *Love's Labour's Lost* appealed to both of their aesthetics as a play that constantly calls attention to its own form and obsesses over the delights and failures of language. It tracks no less than four pairs of lovers, only to snatch away, famously, the expected consummation of their flirtation.

"In perhaps no other play," says James Calderwood, "does language so nearly become an autonomous symbolic system where value lies less in its relevance to reality than in its intrinsic fashion."[7] Serban and Coonrod tend to treat language—the words on the page—as one among many available signifiers of a blatantly *artificial* reality. Their practices for this play, then, provide richly heightened examples of what takes place in rehearsal rooms around the country: that is, what we might call, borrowing a phrase that Oskar Eustis, the Public Theater's artistic director, used to describe its 2011-2012 season, "Shakespeare activity." Shakespearean activity entails a messy, mutually informative, dynamic relationship between text and performance that inevitably gets transferred to the stage. By providing "backstage" insight into these productions, I hope to demonstrate, in a new way, the need for criticism more responsive to the dynamics of how performance actually gets made.

Love's Labour's Lost at Columbia

Andrew James Hartley, a scholar, director, and author of *The Shakespearean Dramaturg: A Theoretical and Practical Guide to the Role of the Scholar in the Theatre*, advises an admittedly "middle ground" approach to script preparation for Shakespeare production. By the first "read-through," he instructs, the "script should look finished, even if some details are still under discussion."[8] His

proscriptive method, and those of two other practical guides to producing Shakespeare, Sidney Homan's *A Scholar Onstage*[9] and Michael Flachman's more recent *Shakespeare in Performance: Inside the Creative Process*,[10] not only conflict with the ever-evolving nature of the performance script in Serban's *Love's Labour's Lost*, but also with the responsiveness of textual editing to rehearsal processes in theater practice more generally. With Columbia's 2011 graduate acting class, the script changed every single day and never in the same way. "I learn the play as I am doing it," Serban has said.[11]

Many of the script decisions made prior to rehearsal were abandoned when Serban got in the room with the actors, for those decisions—as Hartley et al. advise—had been guided by a *general* notion of "performance playability" with a 90-minute, intermission-less evening in mind. The actors had received that script a month before rehearsals, in the form of a Word document with cut lines "struck through" and certain lines redistributed more evenly to balance parts. This method of formatting, with black lines still legibly revealing the text underneath, at once signals the script's mutability (its potential to change) and creates the illusion of an original, full, "real" version lurking underneath those lines. Here, it meant that Serban—who approached the play's tricky "linguistic doodling" by asking of every scene, line, and word, "How do we make people understand this?"—could easily emend the text as a solution, cutting lines, restoring lines previously cut, rearranging and reassigning lines, rearranging scenes, and creating new lines.[12] When the assistant director commented in a read-through that Holofernes's final line, "This is not generous, not gentle, not humble" (5.2.617), functions similarly to Malvolio's infamous last words in *Twelfth Night*, "I'll be revenged on the whole pack of you!" (5.1.365), Serban directed the actor to make Malvolio's line her last (in this production, a woman, Holoferna).[13] Over the course of rehearsals, the actors' scripts accumulated enough scribbling—arrows, notes, x's, highlighting, erasure dust—to render them recognizable only to the individual owner. Contaminated by the marks of performance and then abandoned for performance, the script's evolution reflects its gradual appropriation by the theatrical event.

It is somewhat misleading, however, to separate a discussion of the development of the script from the movement vocabulary that

grew alongside it. From the very first moment of rehearsal "on its feet," Serban launched an approach that would become standard rehearsal procedure and the defining feature of the production, though no one, including Serban, knew it at the time. "What is 'cormorant devouring time'?" he asked of the play's opening speech (1.1.4). "Cormorant, a ravaging bird that feeds on corpses," chimed in various people in the room, referencing different editions' glossaries. Serban asked the actor to say "cormorant" more forcefully, evoking a bird of prey. The actor added a growl to his voice. "Not enough," he replied. This time, the actor growled the word, flung out his arms to the side and curved them downwards to indicate a pair of wings. After working through the first scene in this manner, he called in the rest of the cast to "see the kind of vocabulary" they were beginning to establish for the production. Serban enlisted four "movement consultants" to help "score" the scenes in hallways and empty offices near the main rehearsal space. That he called it a "vocabulary" is appropriate, since for audiences it rivaled language as a system of meaning and in rehearsal frequently generated the kind of textual changes I discuss above.

These characteristics of the rehearsal process—namely, the fluid nature of the script and the development of a distinct, illustrative movement vocabulary—contributed to the production's incompatibility with critique anchored in notions of Shakespearean literary authority. One audience member commented that it "was not *Love's Labour's Lost*." It was not a recognizably Shakespearean *Love's Labour's Lost*, at least, so much had the production crafted its own "theatrical logic," to cite David Kastan from his pithy discussion of the differences between text and performance in *Shakespeare and the Book*.[14] A more productive dialogue, perhaps, would address how Serban and company used the text as part of their performance project, an acting thesis after all. One could say that they thematized the indulgent verbal play and capitalized on the lack of significant plot by bestowing theatricality and artificiality on all aspects of the production, from the bare set to the stylized gestures to the clownish costumes. The production produces comic pleasure and genuinely moving moments, such as the lovely collapse of language and gesture in Katherine's memory of her dead sister, but Serban's unrelenting stylization—and the

inconsistency of the student actors' attempts to ground it—often creates the effect of a shrill, hollow charade. Then again, one could observe that production, unwittingly or not, translates the play's critique into visceral audience experience.

Robert Brustein, celebrated critic and producer, among his many contributions to American theater, has said that there are two versions of Serban the director, one uniquely capable of getting to the "original energy" of a text and another "who is probably making the same effort but . . . being led off into gesture and illustration."[15] "It is unnecessary . . . It is illustrative. It is not poetic," he says of the latter.[16] An audience's frustration with the non-signification or inappropriateness of certain production gestures (such as the ramped-up artificiality of the ending, complete with paper-scrap snow and a blatantly fake screaming baby) is also the response voiced by the play's characters to excessive displays of wit. Rosaline's final instructions to Berowne insist on a corrective to such verbal philandering: "Your task shall be / With all the fierce endeavor of your wit / To enforce the pained impotent to smile" (5.2.840-42). She presses him to espouse wit toward a productive end, mirroring the kind of critique one could levy against Serban's production generally. What I am attempting here, clearly, is a mode of performance criticism that, without (according to Dobson) "contortions of language and expression"[17] comprehends the production as a kind of "activity" of authorship. This means asking questions of the production, such as "To what extent is it generating its logic from the play?" and "From where else is it taking its cues?" An awareness of rehearsal practice, of which Serban's methods provide a heightened example, illuminates the legitimacy and necessity of such an approach.

Love's Labour's Lost at the Public

Indeed, a comparison considering the perspective of rehearsal to Karin Coonrod's production reveals that features of the text/performance dynamic that might seem exclusive to Serban's extreme theatricalizing apply to a more "mainstream" production as well. Coonrod's approach to rehearsals differed from Serban's in two central ways: The script and her basic understanding of the play were essentially "frozen" before rehearsals began, and she actively pushed psychologically realistic acting by encouraging the

actors to "own," "land," "really speak," and "think the thoughts of" the language.[18] Still, Coonrod established from the outset that the play *as defined in performative terms*—what she wanted to *do with the play* in the space—would be the production's authorizing power, the "control."

As she told the cast on the first day of rehearsals, "I want to create a company, I want to create American Shakespeare, and I want to rock the room." (Hence the missing "u" in the British "labour.") She tells her directing students at the Yale School of Drama that they need to "write in the space" with Shakespeare, and a 1996 *New York Times* feature on Coonrod quotes her saying that directing, for her, is "staging sculpture."[19] She wanted the "shape" of *Love's Labor's Lost*, which she defined as the movement from "monologue to dialogue," to be in the actors "DNA" from the beginning. The play's shape, as defined by Coonrod, infused not only the cuts to the text, but also the ways in which she formatted the script and presented it to the company. The email from Coonrod that accompanied the script several weeks before the first rehearsal shows performance and text collapsing into each other in interesting ways. "Below is the text in 11 scenes," she wrote, without noting that most editions consist of five acts with seven scenes. She speaks to them about the play almost exclusively as she has been thinking about it for performance:

> Have been a-thinking about this play for a long while and now I find myself imagining you all . . . in orchestration, in movement . . .
> The lean budget drives us toward deep simplicity . . . and we shall take no prisoners . . .
> There are three main groups: the lovers, the clowns and the messenger. Yet the story of the play divides into the King and his pals (the mainstream) and everyone else (the margins).[20]

The script itself bears out this vision, with the character listing divided into those three groups and act markings excised in deference to the eleven scenes. It takes up eighty pages of clean type formatted in the standard mode of contemporary play drafts: character headings centered and capitalized.

Coonrod facilitates the development of an irreverent Shakespeare aesthetic in a highly controlled environment. It is

only after the actors "have their text"—that is, once it is grounded in action and intent—that she licenses the departure from it. If the physicality in Serban's production arose from stylized interpretation of literal meaning, the movement in this production often stemmed from the stylized expression of the actors' internalization of the text. Both modes illustrate Donnellan's contention that "words don't work" and that the text is a "tool" toward a performative end.[21] Coonrod conducted what she calls the "holy exercise" with the company, in which they have permission "to occupy the entire space with the text." "Do anything you want—if you want to lick somebody in the face . . . go behind the audience . . . whatever you have to do, do it." She takes copious notes, sometimes pictures, and afterward the company talks about what happened. Much of the "wild stuff" that emerged in the exercise made it into the performance—including a moment when the King, when his own betrayal of the oath is discovered by Berowne, runs up through the audience, out of the theater, and back in through another entrance. "And it was the funniest thing every night," she recalled. The effect was achieved not only through the actor "having" his text, but also because he "voiced" it in a specific, boldly extra-textual way. Consider the number of different "authors" in this moment: director, performer, playwright, as well as the attributes of this particular theater.

This production is also a useful companion piece to Serban's because it was reviewed by a range of publications and therefore registers more formally how Shakespeare performance is frequently encountered "on the basis of a prior reading and interpretation of the dramatic text" rather than on the "textures and interstices of a particular performance."[22] The reviews give an overall impression of neglect and excess, of the production at once ignoring the "bittersweet," more serious elements in Shakespeare's play and spilling gratuitously over its boundaries.[23] Elizabeth Vincentelli in the *New York Post*, pointing out the unusually high number of romantic pairings in *Love's Labour's Lost*, states, "But this wasn't enough for director Karin Coonrod, who . . . put the turbo on and upped the pace and antics times 10, while dropping the "u" in "labour." She describes the production's "exertions, all this expense of energy" as "draining" and without "the organic, effortless sense of mayhem" of a recent touring production of

Comedy of Errors.[24] *New York Magazine's* Scott Brown also referred to the "pointedly and irksomely Americanized" title (admittedly calling himself a "grumpy Anglophile") and registered frustration that Coonrod "goes way out outside the text for laughs," including "spotlit pop-culture references" that "feel" a "little random."[25]

The quibbling of these critics with the changed title is a case in point of the illusory nature of an assumed authoritative alternative, for the title page of the first quarto from 1598 in fact announces, "A Pleasant Conceited Comedie Called, Loves Labors Lost." It was on similar grounds that the *Village Voice* disparaged the production, consistently citing the play that Coonrod had failed to bring life: "At times, it's as if we're watching a different play, some knockabout farce, that has been dubbed into Shakespearean . . . By simplifying *Love's* down to a slap-happy rom-com about hijinks among four matched pairs of generic lovers (with some wacky hangers-on), Coonrod is apparently aiming to create *A Midsummer Night's Dream* 2.0."[26] I do not mean to invalidate their responses, but to demonstrate that "prior readings" of the play function as important criteria in their methods.

My hope is that a glimpse into the rehearsal period again reveals the unsuitability of such an approach and that the difficult task of extricating oneself from a notion of what the play should be in production, in order to evaluate the particular nature of the activity on stage, more closely aligns critical terms with those of the theater. If we now expect that Shakespeare literary scholars should have some basic knowledge of the material conditions of his theater, is it unreasonable to expect that performance critics should have a sense of the practices and conditions of the theater about which they write? Tiffany Stern's excellent *Rehearsal from Shakespeare to Sheridan* (2000)[27] is one of numerous works that have irrevocably changed how scholars think about play-texts in early modern England. How can knowledge of *contemporary* rehearsal technologies change how scholars and critics think about plays and performances in our own time? If critics understand their preconceived notions about a play to be the gauge of a production's effectiveness, then they are indeed operating on totally different terms from Serban, Coonrod, and their companies. Out of the linguistic tangle and metatheater of *Love's Labour's Lost*, Serban and Coonrod forged distinctly performative controls—for Serban his

extra-linguistic vocabulary, for Coonrod her sense of the play's movement and shape. These, appropriately, as the term "off-book" implies, exerted greater influence as rehearsals went on. I suggest that a more nuanced understanding of professional practice can enable critics to better account for and evaluate a production's intended effects—what it wants to *do* with Shakespeare.

Notes

1. Declan Donnellan, *The Actor and the Target* (New York: Theatre Communications Group, 2002), 67.

2. Ibid., 183.

3. See, for example, W. B. Worthen's *Shakespeare and the Authority of Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); "Texts, Tools, and Technologies of Performance: A Quip Modest in Response to R.A. Foakes," *Shakespeare* 2, no. 2 (December 2006): 208-19; or, most recently, "Intoxicating Rhythms: Or, Shakespeare, Literary Drama, and Performance (Studies)," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 62, no. 3 (2011): 309-39.

4. Michael Dobson, "Writing about [Shakespearean] Performance," *Shakespeare Survey* 58 (2005): 169.

5. Margaret Jane Kidnie, *Shakespeare and the Problem of Adaptation* (London: Routledge, 2009), 27.

6. I served as dramaturg for both productions.

7. James L Calderwood, *Shakespearean Metadrama* (Minneapolis: University of Minnosota Press, 1971), 56.

8. Andrew James Hartley, T*he Shakespearean Dramaturg: A Theoretical and Practical Guide to the Role of the Scholar in the Theatre* (New York: Palgrave, 2005), 95.

9. Sidney Homan, *Directing Shakespeare: A Scholar Onstage* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2004).

10. Michael Flachman, *Shakespeare in Performance: Inside the Creative Process* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2011).

11. Ed Menta, *The Magic World Behind the Curtain: Andrei Serban in the American Theatre* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1995), 123.

12. Calderwood, *Shakespearean Metadrama*, 56. I was regularly present in rehearsals for this production and I quote Serban from my experiences there.

13. For *Twelfth Night* I cite William Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night,* in *The Norton Shakespeare*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt, et al. (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2008). For *Love's Labour's Lost*, here and going forward, I cite William Shakespeare, *Love's Labour's Lost*, ed. H.R. Woudhuysen, Arden Shakespeare, 3rd ed. (London: A & C Black Publishers, Lts., 1998). All subsequent citations are to this edition.

14. David Scott Kastan, *Shakespeare and the Book* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 9.

15. Quoted in Menta "The Magic World Behind the Curtain," 134, from Ed Menta's personal interview with Robert Brustein, 12 December 1989.

16. Ibid.

17. Dobson, "Writing about [Shakespearean] Performance," 169.

18. Karin Coonrod, interview by Emily L. Madison, 25 February 2012. All quotes from Coonrod come from this interview I conducted with her after the production had closed.

19. Steven Drukman, "Realizing Her Dream of a Surrealistic Henry VI," *The New York Times*. 15 December 1996.

20. Karin Coonrod, "LLL: Some Thoughts and the Text," e-mail message to cast, 28 August 2011.

21. Donnellan, *The Actor and the Target*, 67.

22. Rustom Bharucha, "Foreign Asia/Foreign Shakespeare: Dissenting Notes on New Asian Interculterality, Postcoloniality, and Recolonization," *Theatre Journal* 56, no.1 (2004): 18.

23. Andy Propst, "*Love's Labor's Lost*: Theater Review" *Theatre Mania* 31 Oct. 2011, Web.

24. Elizabeth Vincentelli, "More Giddy than Witty: Theater Review," *The New York Post* 31 October 2011.

25. Scott Brown, "Theater Reviews: Off-Broadway with Tennessee Williams, Brian Friel, William Shakespeare, and Celine Dion's Dietary Habits," *New York Magazine* 2 November, 2011.

26. Jacob Gallagher-Ross, "*Love's Labor's Lost* Plays with Shakespeare at the Public" *The Village Voice* 2 November, 2011.

27. Tiffany Stern, *Rehearsal from Shakespeare to Sheridan* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

King of Legend, King of History: Shakespeare's Reclamation of the Leir Story

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The earliest historical accounts of the origins of Britain, those penned by Gildas (ca. 540) and Bede (ca. 731), begin with the Roman conquest of the British Isles by Julius Caesar, implying that Britain prior to Roman occupation is unknowable. It is not until Geoffrey of Monmouth's publication of *Historia Regum Britanniae* (ca. 1136) that the people of Medieval England gain a national narrative predating Caesar's arrival upon British shores. Geoffrey's story, known as the Galfridian account, claims to have been translated from an ancient text and reckons the history of Britain all the way back to Brutus, grandson of Trojan Aeneas. In its time, it was accepted as history, but by the British Renaissance, historians had all but abandoned the Galfridian tradition of British antiquity as imaginative non-history.

As many of Geoffrey's kings had become the subject of history plays by that time, their loss of historicity threatened the future for stage adaptations of the stories of Gorboduc, Locrine, Leir, and others. However, King Leir is rescued from being lost to the annals of forged history and re-popularized by William Shakespeare in his play *The Tragedy of King Lear*. While other playwrights adapting tales from *Historia* held tight to the Galfridian tradition of history, Shakespeare abandoned its trappings to write his *Lear*, thus situating its themes on a timeless foundation of an interweaving national narrative pointing toward the country's new monarch and a unified future determined by action rather than fate.

If Shakespeare believed in national unity, he also believed that the Leir story did not communicate the totality of Britain's

national narrative as it progressed toward that unification without incorporating multiple other sources that reflected important themes and highlighted cultural touchstones in British history. Through his application of these numerous inspirations, he shapes a version of the tale that is a medley of stories, symbols, and themes all pointing toward a Shakespearean vision of monarchy and nation for the early seventeenth century. Only by denying the historicity of Leir could he give birth to a new Lear, one who is of his own time and kingdom, but lives for all time and crosses national borders.

To illuminate the way in which Shakespeare discards Leir's historicity, reclaims and reshapes the story, and fashions it into a new national narrative, I will first discuss the major divergences and disconnects the play makes from Galfridian tradition and its successive historical accounts. From there, I will identify some of the historical and dramatic sources that are more important to Shakespeare's *Lear* and analyze their connections. And in conclusion, I will elaborate upon the implications of favoring these sources and what the playwright's choices say about the vision of British history and monarchy his play promotes.

The most notable divergence Shakespeare makes from Geoffrey's original story is also one of the most meaningful: his alteration of the play's outcome. As the tale of Leir deals in themes of royal succession, division of the kingdom, and monarchical privilege, how the narrative concludes directly affects its thematic statements concerning what a king (or queen) should and should not be and do. Therefore, when Geoffrey's Leir divides his kingdom among his elder daughters and denies it to his youngest daughter, Cordelia, based solely on their professions of love for him, it is important that by the story's end he come to see the error of his ways, be restored as monarch, and pass his crown to Cordelia, the rightful heir. This course of events not only underlines the story's moral values, but also ensures a proper succession of the throne leading into the next generation of Geoffrey's account.

Though Shakespeare's Lear makes the same mistake in spurning Cordelia for her honesty, his final reconciliation with her is brief and tragic. Both characters die in the play's final scene, Cordelia from a hanging and Lear from the despair of losing the only daughter who truly loved him. With the "happy ending"

destroyed, Shakespeare's Lear is not easily reduced to a moral, as Geoffrey's might be. Characters who are virtuous, like Cordelia, and redeemed, like Lear, do not overcome the evil actions of their enemies, but are instead brought to ruin along with them, eliminating the natural progression of the lineage. John E. Curran refers to this outcome, pointing out that "the play's lack of futurity de-emphasizes any political message or lesson that might be extracted from it. Such maxims as 'manage the succession well,' or 'do not divide the kingdom,' or 'avoid civil strife' seem of little use with all the putatively historical characters dead; apocalypse, not politics, prevails."[1] Furthermore, the deaths of the older daughters, Regan and Goneril, without issue cuts off the narrative from its surrounding historical context. Curran also mentions that "Geoffrey of Monmouth's version . . . required that each daughter have a son so that the family feud could live on into the next generation."[2] These effects of the discontinued lineage present in Shakespeare's adaptation indicate his decision that the Leir story is legend, and therefore, a source similar to a ball of clay: to be manipulated, added to, and metamorphosed into a new creation.

Shakespeare's determination that Geoffrey's original story is legend rather than history most likely derives from his use of other historical accounts of King Leir contemporary to his own. Traditionally, Raphael Holinshed's *Chronicles* is referenced as a major source for the play, and assumed to be a work that Shakespeare often turned to when writing his histories. However, there are some reasons to doubt that the content concerning Leir in *Chronicles*, which includes the story as unsubstantiated historical fact, had as much influence on Shakespeare's *Lear* as once suspected. Robert Adger Law, in discussing the influence of Holinshed on *King Lear*, asserts that any of the material present in Holinshed is also present in several other versions of the story (Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*, John Higgins's version in *The Mirror for Magistrates*, and the anonymous *King Leir and His Three Daughters*), as is additional information that appears in Shakespeare's play. He states, "In fact, despite the oft-repeated assertion that Holinshed is the principal source for Shakespeare's great tragedy, I cannot find any convincing evidence that Shakespeare ever read a single line of Holinshed's account of King Leir . . . I cannot find in the entire drama of Shakespeare a single phrase echoed apparently from

Holinshed."[3] Higgins again divorces *The Tragedy of King Lear* from its "historical" roots and aligns it closer with the aforementioned fictional versions of the Leir legend.

There is, however, a historical source that does contain the "echoes" to which Law is alluding. It is a brief, but significant reference to Leir in William Camden's *Remains Concerning Britain*. Camden, a strong proponent for the abandonment of the Galfridian tradition, mentions Leir in a section on "Wise Speeches" referencing a seventh-century Saxon monarch, King Ina, and a story told concerning his rule. He recounts how Ina was a father to three daughters, who demanded them to describe their love for him above all others, and how his eldest daughters did as he asked, but the youngest was honest rather than flattering. Camden then adds, "One referreth this to the daughters of king *Leir*,"[4] claiming that this is the origin of Geoffrey's Leir story in *Historia* and that Leir is then a fabrication by Geoffrey. Camden's passage is tied directly to Shakespeare in two ways. First, its publication in 1605 makes it a close contemporary of Shakespeare's play. More significantly, though, Camden quotes an anonymous account of the youngest daughter's "wise speech":

> That albeit she did love, honour, and reverence him, and so would whilst she lived, as much as nature and daughterly dutie at the uttermost could expect: Yet she did thinke that one day it would come to passe, that she should affect another more fervently, meaning her husband, when she were married; Who being made one flesh with her, as God by commaundment had told, and nature had taught hir she was to cleave fast to, forsaking father and mother, kiffe and kinne.[5]

Wilfrid Perrett, author of *The Story of King Lear*, the most comprehensive account of the Leir story's transformation between Geoffrey of Monmouth and Shakespeare, discusses Camden's version of this speech as directly related to Cordelia's monologue in *King Lear*. In her reply to her father's request, Cordelia states,

> Why have my sisters husbands, if they say
> They love you all? Haply, when I shall wed,
> That lord whose hand must take my plight shall carry
> Half my love with him, half my care and duty:
> Sure, I shall never marry like my sisters,
> To love my father all. (1.1.98-103)[6]

Perrett rejects Camden's claim that the Ina account is the inspiration for Monmouth's original story. However, addressing the inclusion of Cordelia's love for her future husband in Shakespeare's version of her response and its relation to Camden's anecdote, he concedes,

> This part also appears to arise quite naturally out of the situation. We must remember that in Shakespeare alone Goneril and Regan are already married, and that consequently the objection occurs at once to Regan's declaration . . . that she loved Lear 'farre aboue all other creatures of the world' . . . Cordelia does not say that she should love her husband more than her father as in Polydore Vergil and [Camden] but that her husband should share her love, care, and duty. But if [this part] is taken from anywhere in particular, it must be from Camden.[7]

For Shakespeare to have read Camden enough to utilize this reference as a large part of Cordelia's speech to her father suggests an awareness of the original story's fictional nature and a willingness to utilize other sources outside of the Galfridian account as material for his version of the story.

Furthermore, Shakespeare's awareness of the divorce between *Lear* and "Leir" is made plain by a question asked by Shakespeare's Lear during his reunion with Cordelia: "Am I in France?" (4.7.77). Heather Hirschfield, in an essay named after this question, points out the importance of Lear's complete confusion at his surroundings, "a concern made more poignant in comparison to his earlier geographical authority."[8] However, rather than seeing this question as marking Lear's ignorance of the landscape he himself divided, it instead displays his knowledge of the details involved in his original narrative. In *Historia*, Leir embarks upon a voyage from Britain to Gaul, the kingdom that occupied what, by Shakespeare's day, had become France. Hirschfield concludes, "'Am I in France?' then, is best understood in terms of metadrama . . . Lear's line here, however, is a unique species of this kind of dramatic self-consciousness, calling attention to the interplay between stage and source. Lear literally announces the contrary facts of his chronicle; he makes the absence present. The line thus offers a sly wink to the audience, puncturing the dramatic illusion with a gesture to Lear's mad knowledge of his own back story."[9] The question thus implies of Shakespeare, not only an awareness of the play's break

from the Galfridian tradition, but a purpose in it, as the playwright acknowledges the events of his source material only to declare them irrelevant to his adaptation.

While Shakespeare does not take Lear to France, in some respects he takes him further south to Rome via the dramatic traditions of Senecan tragedy. It is well-known that several of Shakespeare's plays reflect influence of Senecan drama, but *King Lear* has a unique connection to Seneca's *Phoenissae* in that it reconfigures two of the major plotlines featured in the Roman original and applies them with new meaning to the story of Lear. While Geoffrey's original story may have borrowed the trope of siblings warring over rightful claims to the throne from Polynices and Eteocles of *Phoenissae*, Shakespeare's version incorporates additional material from Seneca's play that highlights strong themes present in his own.

The struggle between nature and chaos is one of these themes that appears in both *Lear* and *Phoenissae*. In Seneca's text, Polynices answers his mother Jocasta's pledge to help him make peace, saying, "I am in fear; no longer do nature's laws avail. Since this example of a brother's faithlessness, even a mother's pledge may not be trusted."[10] Here Polynices equates natural law with familial loyalty. Seeing his brother's betrayal makes him doubt the validity of those natural laws and spurn the promises of his own mother. Similarly, Lear shouts to the heavens as he stands raving upon the heath,

> Rumble thy bellyful! Spit, fire! spout, rain!
> Nor rain, wind, thunder, fire, are my daughters . . .
> But yet I call you servile ministers,
> That have with two pernicious daughters join'd
> Your high engender'd battles 'gainst a head
> So old and white as this. O! O! 'tis foul! (3.2.13-14, 20-23)

Again, the natural order of things, namely his monarchical power, is disrupted by his daughters' treachery, and he sees nature as being in collusion with Regan and Goneril, refusing to obey his commands.

Secondly, the symbolism of blindness is appropriated from the character of Oedipus and applied literally to Gloucester and figuratively to Lear himself. Like Oedipus, Gloucester finds himself wandering in the wilderness with his own child as

his guide. While both Oedipus and Gloucester have the same intended destination in their journey, that of death, Shakespeare heightens the suspense of the drama by making Gloucester's guide unknown to him, though he is his own exiled son, Edgar. Gloucester's physical blindness and inability to recognize his most worthy son and heir directly parallels Lear's blindness to his daughters' true affection for him. In this way, Shakespeare adopts not only the plot details of *Phoenissae*, but utilizes its themes and symbols to increase suspense and meaning within *King Lear*. These connections increase the universality of the story by applying it to cultures beyond the national borders of Britain and outside the temporal setting of the Leir legend.

Yet the parallel subplot of Gloucester, Edgar, and Edmund has roots within British history, as well. Tony Perrello ties this plot thread to the Anglo-Saxon namesake of the play's hero, the tenth-century King Edgar, and his sons, Edward and Æthelred. He claims that "generations of scholars have failed to connect key elements in the Gloucester subplot of *Lear*—the bastardy, the anomalous nomenclature, the portentous star—to the Anglo-Saxon legend that it so strikingly resembles."[11] Apart from the obviously more Anglo-Saxon names (Edmund could be a reference to Edgar's first son, Edmund Ætheling), the "portentous star" that Perrello mentions is perhaps the most readily apparent connection between the historical tradition of King Edgar and *King Lear*. He quotes the monk Florence of Worcester telling of a meteor seen in the sky at Æthelred's coronation and associates it with Edmund's response to his father's talk of nature's wisdom:

> An admirable evasion of whoremaster man, to lay his goatish disposition to the charge of a star! My father compounded with my mother under the dragon's tail; and my nativity was under Ursa major; so that it follows, I am rough and lecherous. Tut, I should have been that I am, had the maidenliest star in the firmament twinkled on my bastardizing. (1.2.116-22)

This incorporation of nature imagery once again highlights the conflict between the chaos of men's actions and the natural order of the world, as Edmund denies the influence of the stars as omens of destiny.

That Shakespeare culls this symbol from an Anglo-Saxon source to couple with similar themes connected to Roman tragedy

in a Medieval history purporting to tell the story of a pre-Roman British king shows a blending of sources that unifies the national narrative of Britain despite the years and stories that divide it from its parts. But although it reflects a rich past, it also points to a hopeful future. The same decision to end Lear's line of succession by killing him off and all three of his daughters, allows Edgar to assume the throne instead. Meredith Skura sees Edgar as an amalgamation of both the Saxon King Edgar and another well-known British ruler, writing, "Insofar as Edgar inherits this role, he is like Shakespeare's own new monarch, James I, prince of the newly united realm of Britain and first in a new dynastic line."[12] James's coronation brought England and Scotland into a union that connected the whole isle of Great Britain, just as Edgar's rule will reunite the portions of Lear's kingdom that he divided between Regan and Goneril. Skura goes on to quote James's own words on division of kingdom from the *Basilikon Doron* (1599): "Dividing your kingdomes, yee shall leave the seed of division and discord among your posteritie; as befell to this Ile, by the division and assignement thereof, to the three sonnes of Brutus, Locrine, Albanact, and Camber."[13] That James would be so familiar with Brutus and use him in his political rhetoric speaks to the potency of the Galfridian tradition in late sixteenth-century Britain despite its erosion, as well as to its relevance to James's own political philosophy.

Shakespeare tapped into that potency by telling the story of Leir, but he also reclaimed it by his alterations and utilized it as a veiled tribute to James's ascension to the throne. If Edgar stands in for James, he also stands as a symbol of defiance to the natural order of both the national narrative and the Galfridian narrative. Edgar breaks with the tradition of Geoffrey's original by usurping Lear's descendants' lineage, as well as with the tradition of royal succession. Joseph Alulis asserts, "Edgar has no conventional claim to the throne as does Albany . . . In this context, on behalf of Edmund, a contrary claim is raised: 'In his own grace he doth exalt himself,'" (5.3.68). By the same token, Edgar's ascension raises the issue of a nonconventional claim to rule, a claim of "grace" as opposed to blood.[14]

This new claim to the throne is reminiscent of James's own ascension through appointment by Elizabeth I. However, the play's

disregard for both the story's original outcome and the natural order of royal succession implies a denial of fatalism that echoes Lear's acknowledgement upon the heath of disturbance in the natural order. The Britain depicted in Shakespeare's *Lear* is shaped not by an unfolding destiny, but by the actions and decisions of its rulers and people, who can ascend to any height or fall to terrible depths via their own agency. It is therefore, the responsibility of the nation to maintain the unity portrayed by Edgar's victory and made reality in James's coronation.

Shakespeare utilized a broad palette of inspiration and adaptation to reconstruct Leir's story, tying together unifying strands of the past while incorporating inklings of hope for the future. Enduring myths such as Lear's still hold sway and influence upon their culture because they appeal to such national ideals that remain perennially relevant. Though Locrine, Gorboduc, and Bladud no longer survive in the cultural consciousness of Britons, casualties of the collapse of their "history," Lear remains relevant because Shakespeare rescued him from history and housed him in a legend that tells a compelling story: the story of Britain.

Notes

1. John E. Curran, Jr., "Geoffrey of Monmouth in Renaissance Drama: Imagining Non-history," *Modern Philology* 97, no. 1 (1999): 1.

2. Ibid.

3. Robert Adger Law, "Holinshed as Source For *Henry V* and *King Lear*," *Studies in English*, no. 14 (1934): 41-42.

4. William Camden, *Remains Concerning Britain*, ed. R. D. Dunn (1605; Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), 210.

5. Ibid.

6. William Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of King Lear: A Conflated Text*, prepared by Barbara K. Lewalski in *The Norton Shakespeare*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2008), 2493-567. All line references are taken from this text.

7. Wilfrid Perrett, *The Story of King Lear: from Geoffrey of Monmouth to Shakespeare* (Berlin: Mayer & Muller, 1904), 238.

8. Heather Hirschfeld, "'Am I in France?': King Lear and Source," *Notes & Queries* 56, no. 4 (2009): 588, 590.

9. Ibid., 590.

10. Seneca, *Phoenissae*, trans. Frank Justus Miller, 478, http://www.theoi.com/Text/SenecaPhoenissae.html.

11. Tony Perrello, "Anglo-Saxon elements of the Gloucester sub-plot in King Lear," *English Language Notes* 35, no. 1 (1997): 14.

12. Meredith Skura, "Dragon Fathers and Unnatural Children: Warring Generations in *King Lear* and Its Sources," *Comparative Drama* 42, no. 2 (2008): 142.

13. James I, *Basilikon Doron*, in *The Political Works of James I*, ed. Charles Howard McIlwain (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1918), 37.

14. Joseph Alulis, "Wisdom and Fortune: The Education of the Prince in Shakespeare's *King Lear*," *Interpretation: A Journal Of Political Philosophy* 21, no. 3 (1994): 376.

Shakespeare and the Star Actress on the Eighteenth-Century Regional Stage

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The importance of Shakespeare to the London stage in the long eighteenth century (the period roughly encompassing the reopening of the theatres in 1660 to the Parliamentary Inquiry into the State of the Drama in 1832) has been well documented in recent years, but scholars have devoted less attention to Shakespeare's role in theatrical production outside of the capital. Women shaped Shakespeare's reputation in the period through their work as actresses, critics and audience members,[1] but their contributions to the thriving theatrical culture of the rest of Britain remain underexplored. This paper constitutes a first step in determining women's influence on Shakespeare in the regional theatre in the long eighteenth century. Focusing on two of the most important sources for the study of the provincial stage, regional manager Tate Wilkinson's accounts of the Yorkshire circuit found in his *Memoirs* (1790) and his *Wandering Patentee* (1795),[2] I will explore the significance of Shakespeare to the regional careers of Sarah Siddons (1755-1831) and Dorothy Jordan (1761-1816).

Siddons and Jordan were two of the leading London actresses of the day, famed for their Shakespearean roles. Both actresses began their careers in the provinces and returned to regional stages as touring performers after they had become stars in the capital. I examine both what the regional performance experience was like for these two Shakespearean actresses and the part that Shakespeare played in their repertoires outside London. In her 1939 work *Strolling Players and Drama in the Provinces 1660-1765*, still the most comprehensive study of theatre outside London in the period, Sybil Rosenfeld claims that audience taste in the regions

followed that of London, particularly as far as "the widespread popularity of Shakespeare" was concerned.[3] But the evidence from Yorkshire suggests that this expectation regarding repertoire was not necessarily the case for Siddons and Jordan. My aim in this paper is to develop a fuller picture of the careers of these two important actresses, as well as to begin to understand more about Britain's vibrant performance culture outside the capital.

Both Jordan and Siddons began acting in the regions and Wilkinson sheds light on both of their early careers. Whereas Jordan became known primarily as a comic actress in London, performing Shakespearean parts such as Viola in *Twelfth Night* and Rosalind in *As You Like It*, as well as the title role in *The Country Girl*, David Garrick's adaptation of William Wycherley's Restoration comedy, when he auditioned her for the Yorkshire circuit, Wilkinson initially envisioned her as a tragic actress: he saw "not the least trait of comic powers" in her.[4] Indeed, Wilkinson had the actress debut as Calista in Nicholas Rowe's tragedy *The Fair Penitent* and local man of letters Cornelius Swan later trained her as Zara in Aaron Hill's play of the same name.[5] Jordan impressed her tutor, who pronounced her equal in the role to Susannah Cibber, the leading tragedienne of the previous generation. As for the role of Peggy in *The Country Girl*, which was to become such an important part of her repertoire across the country, Wilkinson tells us that Jordan's inspiration to perform the part (and others like it) came not from any London actress but from a fellow regional performer: "I do believe that seeing Mrs. Brown play Peggy and several of the principal girls' characters, was what luckily, I may say for her, drew her attention to such parts, which have turned out so greatly to her credit, fame, and rapid fortune."[6] Jordan made her London debut as Peggy at Drury Lane in 1785. According to the actress's modern biographer, *The Country Girl* had been a flop when Garrick staged it fifteen years earlier but Jordan achieved great success in the part.[7] It is significant that the actress chose to differentiate herself from her London predecessors for her debut but followed the role selection of a regional actress. This choice suggests that the theatrical taste of the capital was not as widely followed as Rosenfeld suggests.

Siddons's first recorded role was Shakespearean: she appeared as Ariel in *The Tempest* at Coventry in 1766.[8] She was eleven years

old at this time and Ariel was probably a common part for children to play in the regions. But it was the part of Belvidera in Thomas Otway's *Venice Preserved* that led Lord Bruce to recommend the actress to Garrick as suitable for the London stage, after he saw her perform the role at Cheltenham in 1774. Siddons debuted at Drury Lane in 1775 in a Shakespearean part, that of Portia in *The Merchant of Venice*, but did not succeed. Wilkinson records the opinion of a Mr. Woodfall, who claimed that although she "spoke sensibly" as Portia, "her powers were unfit for a London stage and were only calculated for such small places as she in the country had been accustomed to."[9] Wilkinson takes her failure as "proof that a London audience, though beyond doubt the true criterion, is not always infallible, any more than the most eminent physician" and notes that Siddons went on to achieve success in Manchester and Bath, where her "real fame and confirmed reputation, mixed with wonder, attention, and unceasing applause, restored her to London, where they have embraced and locked her fast."[10]

Siddons first appeared at York in 1777 and, according to the manager, "all bowed to her shrine."[11] But Wilkinson suggests that Shakespeare was not a major part of her repertoire at this time: he lists her parts this season as Rosalind, Matilda, Alicia, Lady Townly, Lady Alton, Indiana, the Irish Widow, Arpasia, Horatia and Semiramis (the latter for her own benefit).[12] When she returned to Drury Lane in 1782, it was in the title role of *Isabella; or, the Fatal Marriage*, Garrick's adaptation of Thomas Southerne's Restoration she-tragedy, and not in a Shakespearean play; it seems that the choice of dramatist was less important than the ability to evoke an emotional response in the audience. Siddons apparently overcame the problems of scale in the London theatre suggested by Woodfall's comment on her 1775 performance: Wilkinson writes of seeing *Henry VIII* at the Haymarket in 1792 that Siddons "though lessened by the distance, looked most majestically."[13]

Regional performance remained important for both of these actresses, even after they had become celebrities on the London stage. Wilkinson points to a shift that he sees occurring towards the end of the eighteenth century which led to the increasing importance of tours outside the capital to the careers of London performers. He writes that

> thirty years ago Mr. Barry or Mrs. Cibber would not have disgraced (as they at that time judged) their current London stamp for being paid in July in Birmingham coin on any account: Indeed such would have been thought by their London patrons a most disagreeable and disgraceful exploit: And the Londoners will be astonished to be truly informed, that *now* Mrs. Siddons, Mrs. Jordan, and others, make their true golden harvest on their summer excursions out of the metropolis.[14]

From the 1750s and 1760s onwards, there was a boom in construction of new theatres in the regions and many were given royal patents.[15] The establishment of fixed playhouses in the provinces had the effect of making the regional theatre scene more respectable: casual itinerant troupes were replaced by established companies operating regular seasons on official circuits; inn yards, booths and town halls gave way to venues dedicated to theatrical performance. The growing legitimacy of the regional theatre scene encouraged many performers to tour outside the capital: "Great theatrical personages, who formerly used to look upon a city or town as a *bore*, now, on the contrary, in the summer grant they are commodious, respectable, and even alluring; and with great good manners, compliance, and condescension, will consent to trifle away a few nights at such insignificant places."[16]

The motivation for performing outside London was of course primarily economic. Wilkinson implies that such tours could be even more profitable than stars' performances in the capital: for Jordan, regional appearances "yielded great profits, silver medals and subscriptions falling at her feet in plentiful showers."[17] Siddons and Jordan were able to exploit the increasing respectability of the regional theatre and capitalize on their novelty value outside London by using summer tours of the country to add to their earnings. Regional managers such as Wilkinson benefited in turn from these tours as London stars could draw playgoers to the theatre. Wilkinson remarks that "it is and ever will be difficult to draw a run of full houses at Wakefield out of the time of fashionable resort, unless Mrs. Siddons, that powerful theatric engine, or something wonderful, or esteemed as most wonderful, is to be seen" and that the same is true everywhere else on his circuit.[18]

Wilkinson suggests that such tours simply involved actresses reprising their most famous roles from the capital: "London performers, when in the country, have only the trouble to repeat their tasks like young scholars sent for a six weeks vacation, who for the credit and pride of their papas and masters are expected to return perfect, and repeat when sent back to school."[19] But other evidence presented in his works suggests that roles popular on the London stage did not always go down well in theatres elsewhere. Although she learned the role of Peggy in *The Country Girl* from a regional actress and achieved fame with it in London, the Yorkshire audience did not enjoy Jordan's appearances in the part. Wilkinson describes the play as "coarse" and notes that "to the credit of Yorkshire, that comedy has never been classed as a pleasing play, even when Mrs. Jordan performed the part of the Country Girl."[20] Some exception could be made for Jordan's star status but the Yorkshire audience could never entirely approve: "though the Country Girl might fill the houses in London, it was *not* held by the ladies of York in estimation, but termed rude and vulgar, which no performer could induce them to wish to see, but the fashion of Mrs. Jordan excepted."[21] That the opinions of Yorkshire playgoers could diverge from those of their London counterparts is also suggested by their preference for Harriet Esten over Jordan as Rosalind in *As You Like It*, one of Jordan's most famous roles on the London stage (although Wilkinson notes that audiences deemed Jordan's rendition of the Cuckoo song in that part superior): he writes of Jordan "not receiving plaudits" as Rosalind, whereas Esten "received wonderful approbation at York in that character."[22] Esten does not seem to have been considered better than Jordan in the capital, however, although she regularly performed the part on the London stage.

As for Siddons's regional repertoire, Wilkinson describes the actress's sensationally popular visits to Yorkshire in 1786 and 1789 and gives some details of the parts she played. These included tragic roles such as Isabella, Zara, Belvidera, Euphrasia, Elwina, Calista and Margaret of Anjou.[23] The Shakespearean parts for which Siddons had become famous on the London stage—Lady Macbeth, Isabella in *Measure for Measure*, Constance in *King John*, Desdemona, Rosalind and Ophelia—were apparently not repeated in the regions, apart from her most significant Shakespearean role

in this period, and indeed of her whole career, Lady Macbeth, which Wilkinson notes she also performed on his circuit. In 1789, Siddons returned to Yorkshire and again Wilkinson records her repertoire: Garrick/Southerne's Isabella, Belvidera, Jane Shore, Euphrasia, Dianora, Mary Queen of Scots, Calista and Lady Macbeth.[24] She also recited "an Ode on his Majesty's Recovery, with the character of Catherine."[25] Again, Shakespeare constituted only a minor part of her selection of roles in the regions.

It is important to note, however, that both actresses did have some opportunity outside the capital to tackle Shakespearean parts that they did not perform on the London stage. Jordan performed Lady Anne in *Richard III* and Catharine in *Catharine and Petruchio* (Garrick's version of *The Taming of the Shrew*) at the Smock Alley Theatre in Dublin and Emilia in *Othello* for Wilkinson's company in the early 1780s. Once she had achieved star status, she later played Mrs. Ford in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* by royal request at Cheltenham in 1788.[26] Similarly, we know that Siddons performed Beatrice in *Much Ado About Nothing* at Bath in 1778 and 1781.[27] Even more significantly, Siddons tackled the role of Hamlet on the regional stage. She first performed this part at Worcester in 1775 and repeated it at Manchester in 1777 (opposite her brother, John Philip Kemble, as Laertes) and at Bath, Bristol and Liverpool before making her name at Drury Lane. After she had become famous she tackled the role again several times at Dublin in the early nineteenth century.[28] However, she never performed this male role on the London stage. Thus it seems that while Shakespeare did not make up a substantial part of the regional repertoires of these two celebrity actresses, Siddons's and Jordan's appearances outside London did offer them the possibility of testing out new Shakespeare parts on occasion, although these interpretations rarely migrated to the capital.

Wilkinson's suggestion that London performers like Siddons and Jordan needed only to repeat the parts they played in London to please regional audiences and that tours of the country were an easy way to make money is problematized by what he relates of the actresses' experiences on his circuit. Siddons apparently told him "that acting Isabella out of London, was double the fatigue; for there [in London] the applause on many of the striking passages, not only invigorated her whole system, but the space

it occasioned, assisted the breath and nerve."[29] Without such encouragement from the audience, the actress tires more quickly and her mind "chills and deadens" so that she sinks into herself and away from the character.[30] Siddons's comments suggest that she saw the London audience as more sophisticated in its ability to appraise the drama and to recognize the "striking passages." Or perhaps playgoers in the capital had simply become accustomed to reacting in a certain way after seeing Siddons in the role multiple times, a luxury that regional audiences would not have had.

The Yorkshire manager also writes of the difficulties he had with Jordan when she acted for him in 1791. He advertized her for an upcoming performance as Nell in *The Devil to Pay* but she "positively *refused*" to act the part.[31] Wilkinson was upset "as Mrs. Jordan in 1786 would have sung two or three songs in addition, had it been requested; but Mrs. Jordan of 1791 said her health was in so dangerous a state, and her spitting of blood from exertion was so frequent, that she would not play Nell on the Monday," despite the disappointment it would cause the audience.[32] Jordan's performance schedule was a punishing one and so it is entirely plausible that she had either made herself ill by overdoing it on the London stage or by other regional performances before she arrived in Yorkshire. Her exhaustion came across to the playgoers as indifference, however, and Wilkinson's audience would not accept second-rate performances. When Jordan failed to live up to their expectations as Rosalind their reaction to her was only lukewarm, which further exacerbated the situation: "When the applause sank into more and more languor, she fell into a feeble vapour, and merely got through the part, very little better than would an actress of less renown . . . so that when the night's entertainment was over it would have been a moot point to have decided whether the audience or the actress were the most tired."[33] Audiences outside London were certainly no pushovers.

Despite such difficulties, regional tours remained important to both Siddons and Jordan throughout their careers. However, the cases of these two performers and the evidence presented about them by Wilkinson do not substantiate Rosenfeld's claim that Shakespeare's works were as important in the regions as they were in the capital, at least not as far as these star actresses were concerned. Rather than desiring them to repeat their famous

Shakespearean parts in the regions, it seems that audiences outside London were interested in the other roles that made up their repertoires. Perhaps the Shakespeare performances were seen more as stock plays that the regional companies could perform regularly and with little difficulty (Rosenfeld repeatedly emphasizes the importance of Shakespeare to the repertoires of companies outside the capital) so that these audiences preferred to see star actresses in more novel roles. Further research on Siddons's and Jordan's performances in other parts of the country is necessary in order to draw more detailed conclusions. A more challenging task (because of the lack of evidence available) is to examine the repertoires of actresses who performed on regional circuits but did not achieve London fame. Rosenfeld notes that "in Shakespeare's plays especially, the large number of characters constituted a difficulty for travelling companies and frequently necessitated a resort to the practice of putting women in minor male roles."[34] She highlights the case of a Mrs. Sunderland, active on the Norfolk circuit, who tackled many male characters in Shakespeare, including the Provost in *Measure for Measure*, Benvolio and Paris in *Romeo and Juliet*, the Usher in *King Lear*, one of the witches in *Macbeth*, Lorenzo (with songs) in *The Merchant of Venice*, a Gentleman in *All's Well That Ends Well* and Osric in *Hamlet*.[35] It seems that further research may yield surprising insights into the status of Shakespeare in the regions in the long eighteenth century but that Shakespeare's power outside London did not rest with celebrity London performers.

Notes

1. See Fiona Ritchie, *Women and Shakespeare in the Eighteenth Century*, forthcoming from Cambridge University Press.

2. Tate Wilkinson, *The Wandering Patentee; or, a History of the Yorkshire Theatres, from 1770 to the Present Time: Interspersed with Anecdotes respecting Most of the Performers in the Three Kingdoms, from 1765 to 1795*, 4 vols. (York, 1795); Tate Wilkinson, *Memoirs of His Own Life, by Tate Wilkinson, Patentee of the Theatres-Royal*, York & Hull, 4 vols. (York, 1790).

3. Sybil Rosenfeld, *Strolling Players and Drama in the Provinces 1660-1765,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1939), 10.

4. Wilkinson, *Wandering Patentee*, 2:135.

5. Wilkinson, *Wandering Patentee*, 2:136, 2:145.

6. Wilkinson, *Wandering Patentee*, 2:185.

7. Claire Tomalin, *Mrs Jordan's Profession: The Story of a Great Actress and a Future King* (London: Penguin, 1994), 50.

8. Robert Shaughnessy, "Siddons, Sarah (1755–1831)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/25516.

9. Wilkinson, *Memoirs*, 4:103-4.

10. Wilkinson, *Wandering Patentee*, 1:206-7.

11. Wilkinson, *Wandering Patentee*, 1:254.

12. The plays in which these characters appear are as follows: *As You Like It*, Richard Cumberland's *The Carmelite*, Nicholas Rowe's *Jane Shore*, John Vanbrugh's *The Provoked Wife*, George Colman the Elder's *The English Merchant*, Richard Steele's *The Conscious Lovers*, Christopher Bullock's *Woman is a Riddle*, Nicholas Rowe's *Tamerlane*, William Whitehead's *The Roman Father*, George Ayscough's *Semiramis*.

13. Wilkinson, *Wandering Patentee*, 4:23.

14. Wilkinson, *Memoirs*, 4:95, emphasis Wilkinson's.

15. Rosenfeld, *Strolling Players*, 1-2.

16. Wilkinson, *Memoirs*, 4:95, emphasis Wilkinson's.

17. Wilkinson, *Memoirs*, 4:95.

18. Wilkinson, *Wandering Patentee*, 3:65, emphasis Wilkinson's.

19. Wilkinson, *Memoirs*, 4:96-97.

20. Wilkinson, *Wandering Patentee*, 1:164-65.

21. Wilkinson, *Wandering Patentee*, 3:238, emphasis Wilkinson's.

22. Wilkinson, *Wandering Patentee*, 3:266, 3:241.

23. The plays in which these characters appear are as follows: Garrick's adaptation of Southerne's *Isabella*, Hill's Zara, Otway's *Venice Preserved*, Arthur Murphy's *The Grecian Daughter*, Hannah More's *Percy*, Rowe's *The Fair Penitent*, Thomas Francklin's *The Earl of Warwick*.

24. Dianora appears in Bertie Greatheed's *The Regent* and Mary Queen of Scots is the title character of a play by John St John.

25. Wilkinson, *Wandering Patentee*, 3:77-78. It is unclear to which Catherine Wilkinson refers.

26. This information is taken from Philip H. Highfill, Jr., Kalman A. Burnim and Edward A. Langhans, "Jordan, Dorothy, née Bland, sometimes Miss Phillips and Miss Francis, 1761-1816, actress, singer," in *A Biographical Dictionary of Actors, Actresses, Musicians, Dancers, Managers & Other Stage Personnel in London, 1660-1800*, 16 vols. (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1973-93), 8:254-64 and the "Appendix: Mrs Jordan's Roles" in Tomalin, *Mrs Jordan's Profession*, 333-39.

27. For details of Siddons's roles, see Roger Manvell, *Sarah Siddons: Portrait of an Actress* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1970), especially 353-55.

28. For an exploration of these performances, see Celestine Woo, "Sarah Siddons's Performances as Hamlet: Breaching the Breeches Part", *European Romantic Review* 18 (2007): 573-95.

29. Wilkinson, *Wandering Patentee*, 3:102.

30. Ibid.

31. Wilkinson, *Wandering Patentee*, 3:237, emphasis Wilkinson's.

32. Wilkinson, *Wandering Patentee*, 3:237-38.

33. Wilkinson, *Wandering Patentee*, 3:242.

34. Rosenfeld, Strolling Players, 247.

35. Rosenfeld, Strolling Players, 76, 79, 82, 85.

Shakespeare as Man and Monument in Two London Museum Exhibitions: Theatricality and the Interplay of Subject and Object in the National Portrait Gallery's *Searching for Shakespeare* (2006) and the British Museum's *Shakespeare: Staging the World* (2012)

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The National Portrait Gallery's *Searching for Shakespeare* in 2006[1] and *Shakespeare: Staging the World* at the British Museum in London in 2012,[2] invited visitors to make connections between surviving records of early modern material culture and the regard for and use of Shakespeare today. Each required the visitor to bring previous knowledge and past experience to bear, along with a willingness to create and acknowledge new layers of understanding prompted by these exhibitions. Each used very different curatorial strategies to skirt potentially dangerous receptive implications. Because this article's main interests are in the areas of overlap between artifact and performance, the greater weight of attention below falls to the exhibition at the British Museum.

Seven years ago, the National Portrait Gallery (NPG) shot straight at its viewers' desires to know more about Shakespeare's biography by bringing together available documentation from his life record. Last year, The British Museum presented over 190 objects from its own collection as well as 38 outside lenders that could easily have seemed to be unrelated cultural artifacts, from Africa to the New World and from ancient Rome to the

Searching for Shakespeare (2006) Museum Exhibition
Photo provided by National Portrait Gallery

Shakespeare: Staging the World (2012) Museum Exhibition
Photo provided by the British Museum

most recent productions by the Royal Shakespeare Company. Museum staff curated the exhibit with narrative information and "digital interventions" of excerpts from Shakespeare's plays performed by past and present actors from the Royal Shakespeare Company, which amplified the interdependence of Shakespeare's

oeuvre with the Empire that both fostered and benefitted from it.[3] Ultimately, both exhibitions embraced Shakespeare not only as a defining element of what it means to be English, but also as a synthesizing force in the development and influence of British culture within Western civilization. Beyond the differences in the missions and scopes of these exhibitions (one as portraiture and the other as cultural anthropology) is the way that the NPG offered a conventional museum display where the visitor-as-student was asked to gaze into static cases presenting evidence as if part of a legal argument. The exhibition avoided overt acts of interpretation or the performance of Shakespeare's drama. The British Museum more actively immersed the visitor along a circuitous path through time and place and more directly implicated the visitor in the worldly and temporal legacy of Shakespeare, Elizabethan theatre, and the British Empire. The exhibition provided a more sensory experience, one that embraced drama, performance, spectacle, and narrative in a way that was itself boldly theatrical.

The opposite would have been dangerous: The NPG would have been at odds with the mission, scope, and reception of its display if it had used theatricality in its "portrait" of Shakespeare. Conversely, the overt use of theatricality and performance by The British Museum safely softened what could have been a more exclusive, more colonial, "Rule-Britannia" celebration of empire. Indeed, if the *Searching for Shakespeare* exhibit had used obvious theatricality in its display, it would have risked making the exhibition less serious, more superficial, and appearing full of guesswork; it would have perhaps unintentionally, but certainly undesirably, amplified the "authorship question" by posing the possibility of "finding" the biography of Shakespeare (or some other contender) in authorial fancy of action and character contained in the plays and poetry. It would have given those involved in curating *Searching for Shakespeare* (such as Mark Rylance, associate advisor to the exhibition and Chair of the Shakespeare Authorship Trust) the power of interpreting the drama as part of the evidence offered by the exhibit, and could have skewed its mission toward finding the "true" poet in the drama.[4] Instead, the NPG exhibition stayed safely within its simpler approach, bringing together available documentary evidence (e.g., Shakespeare's last will and testament) to piece together a portrait of the playwright's biography.

The NPG's conventional display of artifacts, visual art, and documents was like walking into an archive collection of the source material of Samuel Schoenbaum's *William Shakespeare: A Documentary Life* (1975).[5] It allowed the visitor to choose his or her own path through the exhibition's displays of documents, manuscripts, clothing, maps, and portraits. The visual spectacle of the exhibit was made up almost entirely of historical artifacts and by the people in the room navigating around each other, queuing to see popular displays, and politely sharing the space by moving on in a timely manner.

The companion book for *Searching for Shakespeare* likewise focused on biography in scholarly contributions from Stanley Wells, "Sweet Master Shakespeare 1564-1616"; James Shapiro, "Shakespeare's Professional World"; and Tarnya Cooper, "Silent Oratory: Portrait Painting in England around 1600."[6] The exhibition catalog was then divided into two sections, one for portraiture ("Shakespeare's Face, Likeness and Myth") and the other for artifacts that helped bring a narrative of his life together (The Early Years; Elizabethan Theatre; The Established Playwright; At Court; Poets and Playwrights: Shakespeare's Contemporaries; and Death and Legacy).[7] Anyone with more than a passing interest in Shakespeare would find portions of the catalog both obvious and thrilling: the parish register of Holy Trinity Church showing the baptism of daughter Susanna (1583); the Grant of Arms document (1595); the New Place contract (1597); first and early editions of the plays in print; the DeWitt drawing of the Swan interior (after Buchell, 1596-97); the "platt" (or plot) of *The Second Part of the Seven Deadly Sins* (c. 1592), complete with its square hole; the manuscript page and drawing of *Titus Andronicus* (1594); *The Book of Sir Thomas More* (c. 1592-1604), showing "Hand D"; the First Folio (1623); the first Royal Patent for the King's Men (1603); excavated items, including a bear skull found near the new Globe, along with buttons, pins, and an oak baluster from the Rose Theatre; and the last will and testament of William Shakespeare (1616). In keeping with its primary mission of exploring the art of portraiture, the National Portrait Gallery also brought together for the first time six available contested portraits of Shakespeare: The Chandos Portrait (c. 1600-1610), which was the first painting establishing the NPG in 1856 (150 years before this exhibition in

2006); the Grafton Portrait (1588); the Sanders Portrait (1603); the Droeshout engraving (1623); the Soest Portrait (1667); and the Flower Portrait (1820-40), as well as a plaster cast of the bust of Shakespeare near his tomb in Holy Trinity Church in Stratford-upon-Avon.

To help the visitor place Shakespeare in his context and better populate the world where Shakespeare lived and worked, it also displayed several portraits of his contemporaries: Queen Elizabeth I; King James I; Henry Wriothesley; Robert Devereux; Ben Jonson; John Donne; Edward Alleyn; Richard Burbage; John Fletcher; Christopher Marlowe; Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford; and others.[8] The exhibition both questioned and proved what Shakespeare's life was like, what he did, when, and with whom. It put biographical record on display, including the mysterious portraits side-by-side, so that the visitor might discern a picture of the man, or at least a picture of the palette from which he or she might create a picture of the man.

The NPG exhibition was designed to transfer to the Yale Center for British Art (23 June to 17 September 2006), so architectural requirements were minimal, unintrusive, and not site-specific. The collection could have been presented with similar effect in nearly any large room. The British Museum exhibition, however, was designed specifically for its central rotunda and was timed to participate in the national celebrations of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee, the London 2012 Festival, the Summer Olympics, the Cultural Olympiad, and as part of the World Shakespeare Festival. Its mission was to provide "a unique insight into the emerging role of London as a world city, seen through the innovative perspective of Shakespeare's plays."[9] Exhibition designer, Alan Farlie, described his interdisciplinary strategy: "Our challenge was to blend the visual language of performance-based design with that of object-based exhibition design and to come up with something new and unexpected."[10] To accomplish this goal, he collaborated with Tom Piper, Associate Designer at the Royal Shakespeare Company. Together they transformed the Reading Room into an exhibition that was both museum display and theater, where the visitor played a number of active parts.

The unusual design and scope of *Shakespeare: Staging the World* evoked four categories of overt theatricality: 1) the Monumental:

the architecture and authority of The British Museum in its presentation of Shakespeare; 2) the Ephemeral: the temporal nature of performance in the video and audio recordings of actors from the Royal Shakespeare Company performing the drama; 3) the Conjectural: the mimetic theatricality of "make believe" (using contemporary events and people to tell stories "as if" particular things could happen within the world of a play) versus "make belief" (the use of drama and the performance of drama to define or reinforce the condition of the "real" world); and 4) the Political: the performance of power as seen in Elizabethan and Jacobean spectacle created for and demonstrating the role of the State.[11] All four categories of theatricality moved the visitor from passive learner about past events focused on finding a clearer perception of a single person (as in the NPG exhibition) to implicated participant—to inheritor of the rich theatrical and literary tradition and a part of the tradition's legacy in the social and cultural structures of the present.

The Monumental

While visitors approached the NPG exhibition through what seemed like a humble side-door of the National Gallery, the exhibition visitor's approach to the British Museum provided much more of a grand experience. After reaching the middle of the block on Great Russell Street, one passed through the imposing south-facing gates and across the British Museum's large plaza filled with visitors from all over the world. There were many layers of protection and reminders of occasion imposed by the architecture as the visitor moved toward the entrance to the 2012 Shakespeare exhibition: the visitor crossed the plaza, passed under the nineteenth-century pediment depicting *The Progress of Civilisation*, ascended the wide front stairs, moved through a double row of classical stone columns and through the stately doors of English oak. The visitor entered the vestibule, met one or two sets of security guards, and passed through an entrance hall dominated by a central, well-lit acrylic donation box holding a visible mound of foreign currency given in support of the Museum. This spot is a gathering place for people from around the world.

A bit further along, the visitor entered into sunlight again when he or she came to the Great Court with its now-iconic glass

roof designed by Sir Norman Foster in 1997. Many visitors were probably aware that just a short walk around to the left one could see the Rosetta Stone from Egypt and the Elgin Marbles, now renamed the Parthenon Marbles, from Athens. As of this writing, off to the right is a gallery housing many of the artifacts from British Museum Director Neil MacGregor's *A History of the World in 100 Objects*, including the oldest of the Museum's artifacts, the 1.8 million-year-old Olduvai Stone Chopping Tool. Straight ahead, and around to the right of the central rotunda, was the entrance to the *Shakespeare: Staging the World* exhibition, held in the very core of the complex. The British Museum is not about individual portraiture (indeed, it is hard to find a set of eyes to stare into). It is more broadly about civilization. It is about empire.

Once through the glass doors and into the small reception area of the exhibit, allowed entry by another set of security guards, and set up with an audio guide, the visitor was invited through the last doors to the exhibition space, housed in the former central Reading Room of the old British Library. The exhibition visitor was segregated from others in the museum upon entering a dark hallway with black walls, ceiling, and floor, very much like a backstage area of a modern theatre space. On the carpeted floor, one could no longer hear one's footfalls. It was quickly apparent, and perhaps somewhat disorienting, to be primed for the interior space of the exhibition by passing through the transitional space from "out there" to "in here." The first presentation the visitor encountered once inside the exhibition was an audio recording of an audience as it arrived for a performance of *Twelfth Night* at the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC) in Stratford-upon-Avon on 15 May 2012. This entrance and recording implicated the visitor in its action, though it was unclear whether one was to join in with this audience or about to walk onstage in front of it. The exhibition entrance seemed familiar from art installations figured as movement from darkness into light, and seemed to suggest as a part of its framing that "all the world's a stage," and that all stories are performances.[12] The exhibition's entrance suggested a theatrical event created for and including its visitors.

Unlike the NPG's open layout of documentary displays, upon entry into the British Museum exhibition, there was a path through a series of specially defined galleries and the visitor was to follow

it. The weight of Empire surrounded the visitor; the only color visible was in the emergency exit lights, the dim glow of the audio guide, and the gilt and mahogany leather-bound books one could see lining the circular walls of the old British Library above. The curving hallway with overhanging library walkway and murmuring audience from the RSC on the accompanying soundtrack made the early part of the journey much like the trek to find one's seat in one of the upper galleries at the new Globe.[13] And then one heard Neil MacGregor's voice saying that since Shakespeare's theatre "is for *everyone* about *everything*, it is no accident he called his theater The Globe" (emphasis MacGregor's).[14]

The exhibition did some things that are obvious: it was framed around the questions of both how the British Empire was made possible by Shakespeare and how Shakespeare's career was made possible by burgeoning empire. In his forward to the exhibition's companion book, Neil MacGregor describes how "the professional theatre was a new phenomenon in Shakespeare's time, the first mass medium for the presentation of the cultures of the world to a wide public," and that "in Shakespeare's time the globe was brought to life on a bare platform of the Globe Theatre in Southwark."[15]

In keeping with the British Museum's wider cultural focus, the visitor was invited by curators Jonathan Bate and Dora Thornton to think generally about life in the country, not specifically about Shakespeare's life in the country: "Our approach . . . is new and distinctive: through a series of case studies, focused on a wide range of locations, cultures and themes, we create a dialogue between Shakespeare's imaginary worlds and the material objects of the real world of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. . . . Both Shakespeare and his world are seen anew when we use objects to illuminate dramatic texts and dramatic texts to illuminate objects."[16]

MacGregor provided an illuminating example of the interplay in this exhibition between objects, texts, performative events and understandings: "To look at a woodcut of a Jewish household in Venice and a sixteenth-century Caribbean wood carving of a spirit imprisoned in a tree and a pack of playing cards in which Cleopatra and Queen Elizabethan appear side-by-side is to be given a new historical and intellectual perspective on the characters of Shylock,

Ariel and Cleopatra. The journey through our exhibition opens up the diverse cultures of the early modern world as it stood on the threshold of globalization."[17]

In this way, the exhibition used artifact to inform the drama and performance, and the drama and performance to inform the artifact. The visitor was implicated as inheritor of the far-reaching scope of the story and storytelling, partly defined by the relationship of Shakespeare and his drama to the world in which he lived.

The Ephemeral

The first and last performances selected for the exhibition were obvious choices: After leaving the RSC *Twelfth Night* audience in the hall behind, the visitor was welcomed by the consummately theatrical, even meta-theatrical prologue from *Henry V*:

> O for a muse of fire, that would ascend
> The brightest heaven of invention:
> A kingdom for a stage, princes to act,
> And monarchs to behold the swelling scene.
> . . . Can this cock-pit hold
> The vasty fields of France? Or may we cram
> Within this wooden O the very casques
> That did affright the air at Agincourt?
> O pardon: since a crookèd figure may
> Attest in little place a million,
> And let us, ciphers to this great account,
> On your imaginary forces work. (1.1.1-4, 11-18)

The passage invited the visitor to use his or her imagination in a way similar to how Shakespeare asked his audience to imagine the action on stage in the theater. The passage primed exhibition visitors to fill in the gaps between event and memory through reading the performances and artifacts displayed.

At the end of the exhibition Sir Ian McKellen's dulcet and assured performance of Prospero redelivered the visitor to the everyday world:

> Our revels now are ended. These our actors,
> As I foretold you, were all spirits, and
> Are melted into air, into thin air;
> And, like the baseless fabric of this vision,
> The cloud-capped towers, the gorgeous palaces,

The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve;
And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,
Leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff
As dreams are made on, and our little life
Is rounded with a sleep. (4.1.148-58)

The Conjectural

Between these opening and closing selections from *Henry V* and *The Tempest*, the exhibition used performance in each of eight galleries to show how Shakespeare found inspiration from the real world to inform the plays ("make believe") and how the plays defined and reinforced desirable cultural and political understandings or expectations of that world ("make belief"). Richard Schechner describes these two aspects of mimesis: "Make believe" in performance "maintain[s] a clearly marked boundary between the world of the performance and everyday reality," with the spectator knowing that the actor's reality is not the character's reality. "Make belief" is where performances "intentionally blur that boundary" in order to create or reinforce an ideology of how the world works, or how it should work.[18] Schechner describes the distinction thus: "In make believe performances, the spectators more or less know that what they are witnessing is not really real; that the social and personal worlds of the characters are not the worlds of the performers. Or, to put it in a few words, Juliet's world is not the same as the world of the actress (or actor) who plays her. In make belief performances, there is an intentional blurring of the boundary between what is fictionalized, constructed, made to order and what might be actually real."[19]

The Museum presented a special interplay of historical record, historical artifact, and dramatic performance as a symbiosis using both "make believe" and "make belief." It associated the historical accounts of how real people behaved for real effect with dramatic excerpts from Shakespeare's drama, and presented both alongside preserved artifacts from the time and place described in the plays. The convergence of performance with historical objects created a many-layered receptive effect for its subject that would have been difficult to achieve in a more conventional museum display.[20]

To make the case that Shakespeare's drama helped define the historical record and the dominating narrative woven by those in power, the exhibition created a performance by Geoffrey Streatfield of the "St Crispin's Day" speech from *Henry V* (1599) in conjunction with a display of the King's funerary "achievements" (shield, helmet, and saddle) from the funeral procession of 1422. Streatfield, wearing a t-shirt, not clothing or costume from Henry's time, his upper body projected on the wall above the historical artifacts, delivered the famous speech as if he were playing to visitors in the gallery as his "band of brothers." Simply, Streatfield was playing Henry V ("make believe"), and through the performance of that speech, the visitor was led to ponder and let resonate the thematic issues of honor, violence, sacrifice, camaraderie, mortality, kinship, legacy, sadness, war, loyalty and beauty ("make belief").

The visitor's association of performance and artifact in *Shakespeare: Staging the World* was complicated by the exhibition's constant reminder that Shakespeare was a product of his time while also helping to define it. As curator Dora Thornton reminds us, Shakespeare knew about these artifacts, referring to them as Henry's "bruised helmet" and "bended sword." She makes clear that Shakespeare's audience would have been able to see these very objects on display high above Henry V's tomb in Westminster Abbey where they were perched on a chestnut beam from 1422 to 1972.[21] In this 2012 exhibition, the curators made the viewers aware that these aspects taken together offer a new convergence and new meaning: the artifacts from Henry's reign, the familiarity of Shakespeare's audience with these artifacts, the words from Shakespeare's play, and the performance by RSC actor Geoffrey Streatfield come together to inform not only reception of a fragment of the play and a conjured image of a King, but also the political benefit that the Tudors would have enjoyed from Shakespeare's retelling of the King's success at Agincourt in 1415. The convergence ultimately resulted in the creation of a new story in the visitor's time. It is a story that combined the historical King Henry V and Shakespeare's knowledge of him, together with Shakespeare's play about Henry V, which was performed at a time when his audience would have also not only known about the

King and his victory at Agincourt, but would also have been able to see the very same artifacts on display.

Peter Kirwan aptly describes the multifaceted impact in this particular gallery: "The words exist divorced from their theatrical context, and serve to universalize the language in a way that enables appropriation, in this case affixing the words to the objects and thus positioning medieval artifact and Renaissance verse in a symbiotic and nostalgic relationship, each performing to the other in ways that evoke the *idea* of Henry V, neither entirely theatrical nor merely historical name."[22] In this way, the curators privileged the experience of the visitor as the arbiter of the moment's meanings, when historical artifact, Shakespeare's characterization of the King, and the passage of time collided as both "make believe" and "make belief":

> This story shall the good man teach his son,
> And Crispin Crispian shall ne'er go by
> From this day to the ending of the world
> But we in it shall be rememberèd,
> We few, we happy few, we band of brothers. (4.3.56-60)

After Streatfield finished the speech, he stayed in character and remained silent. Dora Thornton asserts in a videotaped presentation while standing next to King Henry V's wooden effigy in Westminster Abbey that this silence allowed the audience a moment of "inspiration" and of "making history":

> What is particularly lovely about the performance in the exhibition is the way that you hear his words and you see him and you really feel inspired by what he's saying and you know that you are making history with him. But then he fades out into silence and you just see his face above the funerary achievements from Westminster Abbey. And I find that moving. Almost more moving than the words because the feeling of the presence of the man who, who said these things and did things with the objects that were supposed to take you very close, inspire a great feeling of reverence and affection for the man.[23]

As was made clear by the "St. Crispin's Day" performance and funerary achievements, the exhibition used material artifact, Shakespeare drama, and performance of that drama to reinforce the notion that we find stories in artifacts and use artifacts to

inform stories. Shakespeare's Henry says, "But we in it shall be remembered . . . ," and the audience is at the moment remembering both Henrys: the historical King of England and the character in Shakespeare's play. As Peter Kirwan stated, the presentation of narrative, performance, and object invited the visitor to find the *idea* of the man and the moment.

Equally effective is the video performance of actor Jonjo O'Neill who contorted his body to take on the character of Shakespeare's Richard III.[24] The video, fragmented on three stacked television-sized screens, showed the head-to-toe transformation from healthy actor to the twisted character of King Richard. The screens were positioned just around a corner from where the visitor could also see an unflattering portrait of Richard (c. 1523), with a "savagely broken" sword of state in hand representing his broken kingship.[25] Shakespeare's depiction of Richard as a despot would have served to elevate the Tudors as saviors of England after the Civil War and justify Henry VII's new dynasty in 1485.[26] The play and the "make believe" performance were used didactically to influence the belief of the audience and confirm the dastardly nature of Richard's character in contrast to the nobleness of the then-ruling Tudor line. The museum exhibition, by showing an actor's transformation into character, showed how motivations of those offstage can become manifest onstage. Shakespeare's Richard III creates and reinforces the popular belief, as it did in Shakespeare's day, that the Tudors were in the right and King Richard III was corrupt.

The British Museum produced ancillary performances for the exhibition. It offered outdoor screenings of the BBC's *The Hollow Crown* series (*Richard II* through *Henry V*) on the East Lawn of the Museum; it invited performance artists to create artistic responses to the presentation of artifacts and perform short works in the exhibition space for special audiences two times in November; it produced a new podcast "Shakespeare's Unsettled World," by Museum Director Neil MacGregor; and it created special marketing videos that both promoted the exhibition and reinforced the idea that Shakespeare drew inspiration and content from world events and that the world came to learn Shakespeare's drama.

In one of these videos, Shakespeare's characters make their way through the streets at night on their way to the British

Museum, as if called together for some special convergence. A disoriented Othello carries the dead body of Desdemona north through Picadilly Circus; Falstaff finishes a pint before reluctantly picking up his helmet and leaving the pub; a dazed Lady Macbeth and a determined Richard III make their way through rain-soaked and brick-lined alleyways of what one may imagine to be Jack the Ripper's East London; and, most strikingly, Henry V leads his English army clanking across the Millennium Bridge into the City and towards Bloomsbury. The enthusiastic voice-over resounds with a patchwork adaptation of Ben Jonson's "To the Memory of My Beloved, The Author Mr. William Shakespeare, and What He hath Left Us" from the preface to the First Folio:

> Sweet swan of Avon, what a sight it were
> To see thee in our waters yet appear!
> Soul of the age, the applause delight,
> The wonder of our stage, my Shakespeare rise!
> Thou art a monument without a tomb,
> And art alive still while thy book doth live.
> Triumph my Britain! Though has one to show
> To whom all scenes of Europe homage owe.
> He was not of an age, but for all time.[27]

The short video ends with a wide shot of the characters slowly walking across the front plaza toward the main steps of the British Museum, as if, perhaps, they are willingly taking their places for the exhibition, like actors arriving at a theater before the visitor arrives to see them there. This short moment in an online video produced as a marketing tool for the exhibition, brilliantly demonstrates the convergence of "make belief" and "make believe." Shakespeare, as the exhibition constantly reminded the visitor, borrowed from the real world to create the action and character of his drama ("make believe"), and he also created how his audience might come to regard aspects of the real world recognizable within these plays ("make belief"). The characters in the video arrive at the front stairs of the British Museum, from the real world of the present, to be on display as mirrors of both Shakespeare's imagination and that of the exhibition's visitors. They are both fictional ("make believe") and makers of meaning ("make belief").

Shakespeare not only created history and defined elements of the State, but as royal servant he had access to the Court and

would have experienced events there that could have been adapted for the action of his plays. For example, the exhibition made the claim that Shakespeare was likely influenced by the diplomatic visit of the Moroccan ambassador Abd el-Ouahed ben Messaoud ben Mohammed Anoun (portrait c. 1600), representative of the King of Barbary, who allied with Queen Elizabeth against Spain. Shakespeare wrote *Othello* a few years later.[28] In this way, the exhibition made clear that Shakespeare's plays contain elements influenced by cultural and political events in his time in the "make believe" mimetic world on stage.

One of the most pervasive elements of the exhibition was that the audio recordings of the individual performances were not isolated to the spaces where the videos were projected in correlation with specific artifacts on display. The duration of the visitor's experience was accompanied by the blended voices of the actors' performances echoing throughout the exhibition. These performances continued audibly during the visitor's engagement with unrelated historical artifacts. The exhibition tangled performance and history together with thought-provoking implications, as each type of presentation at once informed and contaminated the other.

The Political

The exhibition made clear that the theatre was informed by the activity of the State and that government learned how to use the spectacle of theatrical performance in the display of State power. Two examples involve royal pageantry and capital punishment during Shakespeare's lifetime. To illustrate the Government's use of "new theatrical means" of creating and demonstrating power, the exhibit presented Hoefnagle's pen-and-ink drawing of Queen Elizabeth's progress at Nonsuch Palace (1568). It depicts Queen Elizabeth as imperial votress and vestal virgin in the pageantry of a royal entrance—an event claiming territory and control. The second and much more violent example of the theatricality of State power is the show of public execution. The exhibition used the silver ocular reliquary of Blessed Father Edward Oldcorne's eye to connect the museum visitor to historical event in a visceral way. In 1606 Oldcorne was executed for presumed affiliation with those involved in the Gunpowder Plot. After he was dead,

but before his handlers were finished with the spectacle of his punishment, his head was boiled to preserve it somewhat so that it would last longer when impaled on a spike and put on public display. At some point during the process, one of his eyes fell out and was secreted away by a loyal follower. Eventually, it was placed in a silver reliquary. The curators included it as part of the 2012 exhibition, where the show of Oldcorne's execution, and of King James's authority, continued. The preserved gray eye, flattened through time and dehydration, was aimed at the visitor, iris and pupil still discernable, as a physical artifact of the State's performance of power. The spectacle that was Oldcorne's death and the exhibit's gruesome presentation of his desiccated eye, connect the historical event to the present. The visitor could appreciate the magnitude of royal power made palpable by this relic of performance.[29]

While artifact alone has the power to inform, to persuade, to connect the observer in the present with an object of the past, mimetic performance presents opportunities to connect the hearer-observer with specific moments and at levels potentially deeper and more visceral. Documentary evidence, material artifact, and portraiture seek to conjure a past in the mind's eye of the observer, but performance can create moments of a past-infused present. The created gaze greeting the viewer of portraiture invites a particular relationship with the work of art and its subject. The eye of the actor in soliloquy, or the eye of the traitor in reliquary, meeting the gaze of the patron in performance, whether live or of past power, creates yet a different kind and moment of relationship, one in which the viewer is a present-participant in the event of transmission as it plays out in the present-participant's time.

Where documentary evidence helps to place Shakespeare within his context, and provides the observer with perspective upon it, live performance, or that reconstructed through immediate object, demand that the exhibition's visitor examine his or her own context, along with that context's relationship to Shakespeare, his world, and the worlds that have passed in between.

The last caption and the final display of the British Museum's exhibition, under which visitors walked as they made their way

down a short set of stairs and into the gift shop, was a 1997 quote from Ahmed Kathrada, former political prisoner on Robben Island, who shared the use of the "Robben Island Bible"—the secreted copy of Shakespeare's Complete Works on display in the exhibition—during his captivity in South Africa. Kathrada recalled, "Somehow Shakespeare always had something to say to us."[30]

The presentational strategies of the exhibits considered here demonstrate the opportunities not only of their respective media, but of the differing ways Shakespeare can still speak, or be made to speak, to the exhibit-goer, through a curatorial consistency of medium and message, of object and subject, of making believe and making belief, in the present.

Notes

1. *Searching for Shakespeare*, exhibition, National Portrait Gallery, London, March 2-May 29, 2006, and Yale Center for British Art, New Haven, Massachusetts, June 23-September 17, 2006.

2. *Shakespeare: Staging the World*, exhibition, British Museum, London, July 19-November 25, 2012. In keeping with the at-once historical and contemporary nature of the exhibit, the British Museum described it as covering the four hundred years from 1612-2012.

3. British Museum, *Shakespeare: Staging the World*, press release, 2012, http://www.britishmuseum.org/about_us/news_and_press/press_releases/2012/shakespeare_staging_the_world.aspx.

4. Fortunately, the British Museum exhibition did not engage the authorship question either.

5. S. Schoenbaum, *William Shakespeare: A Documentary Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975).

6. Tarnya Cooper, *Searching for Shakespeare* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 5.

7. Ibid.

8. It was a strange omission to exclude the Cobbe portrait made public in 2009 but which was known to scholars during the preparation of this exhibition. It looks very similar to the portrait of an unknown gentleman, "possibly Thomas Overbury" (1581-1613), known now as the Janssen Portrait. It would have been interesting to compare as part of the same exhibit (portrait in Cooper, page 68).

9. British Museum, *Shakespeare: Staging the World* (press release).

10. Alan Farlie, Exhibition Designer, RFK Architects, Ltd., "A Wooden O" (blog), British Museum, S*hakespeare: Staging the World*, August 22, 2012, http://blog.britishmuseum/category/exhibitions/Shakespeare-staging-the-world/.

11. For more on "make believe" and "make belief" see Richard Schechner's *Performance Studies: An Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2002), especially page 35.

12. William Shakespeare, *As You Like It* in *The Norton Shakespeare*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt, Walter Cohen, Jean E. Howard and Katharine Eisaman Maus (New

York: WW Norton & Company, 1997), 2.7.139. Shakespeare citations are to this edition.

13. At 140 feet across, the round Reading Room is only 40 feet larger than the footprint of the new Globe. Taking the temporary exhibition walls into consideration, which enclosed the exhibit, the diameter may have been even closer to the diameter of the new Globe.

14. Neil MacGregor, *Shakespeare: Staging the World*, audio guide, British Museum. July 19-November 25, 2012.

15. Neil MacGregor, "Director's Forward" in *Shakespeare: Staging the World*, by Jonathan Bate and Dora Thornton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 9.

16. Jonathon Bate and Dora Thornton, *Shakespeare: Staging the World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 10.

17. MacGregor, "Director's Forward," 8-9.

18. Schechner, *Performance Studies*, 35.

19. Richard Schechner, *Performance Studies Textbook*, 2nd Draft, July 1995, http://www.nyu.edu/classes/bkg/schechner.

20. Or in conventional theatrical performance. The Royal Shakespeare Company created controversy by using a real skull in the 2008 production of *Hamlet* starring David Tennant. André Tchaikowsky, a Polish pianist, bequeathed his skull to the RSC in hopes that it would be used by the Company in a production of *Hamlet*. Knowing that the skull would distract its audience, the RSC tried to keep the story secret. When the truth came out, the RSC decided to stop using it because that real object pushed the boundaries between the real and the presented, the "make belief" and the "make believe," if you will, when the (fictional) Yorick's skull was simultaneously the (real) skull of André Tchaikowsky. See "David Tennant's Hamlet Featured a Real Skull All Along, Admits RSC," *The Telegraph*, November 25, 2009, http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/celebritynews/6645908/David-Tennants-Hamlet-featured-real-human-skull-all-along-admits-RSC.html.

21. Dora Thornton, "Hero and Villain: Henry V and Richard III," video, British Museum, *Shakespeare: Staging the World*, July 19-November 25, 2012. http://www.britishmuseum.org/whats_on/exhibitions/shakespeare_staging_the_world/videos/hero_and_villain.aspx

22. Peter Kirwan, *"Shakespeare Staging the World* @ the British Museum." (blog), British Museum, *Shakespeare: Staging the World*, September 22, 2012, <blogs.nottingham.ac.uk/bardathon/2012/22/shakespeare-staging-the-world-the-british-museum/>

23. Thornton, "Hero and Villain," British Museum video.

24. Jonjo O'Neill, "Since I am to prove a villain," video, British Museum, *Shakespeare: Staging the World*, July 19-November 25, 2012, http://www.britishmuseum.org/whats_on/exhibitions/shakespeare_staging_the_world/videos/richard_iii.aspx.

25. Thornton, "Hero and Villain," British Museum video.

26. Bate and Thornton. *Shakespeare: Staging the World*, 104.

27. "Sweet Swan of Avon," video, British Museum, *Shakespeare: Staging the World*, July 19-November 25, 2012, <http://www.britishmuseum.org/whats_on/exhibitions/shakespeare_staging_the_world.aspx >

28. Bate and Thornton, *Shakespeare: Staging the World*, 37.

29. Shakespeare's *King Lear*, with its blinding of the allegedly traitorous Gloucester, was performed at Court on the day after Christmas 1606, some eight months after Oldcorne's execution.

30. Ahmed Kathrada, interview by Anthony Sampson, 2/7/1997, for *Mandela: The Authorized Biography* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1999), 230; quoted in British Museum, *Shakespeare: Staging the World*, exhibition, London, July 19-November 25, 2012.

Hamlet in (and off) Stages: Television, Serialization, and Shakespeare in *Sons of Anarchy*

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"The crow flies straight, a perfect line /
On the Devil's back until you die."
—*Sons of Anarchy* main theme

Although Shakespeare has inspired hundreds of films during the past 113 years, he has had a far less conspicuous impact on the slightly younger medium of television, particularly in the United States.[1] However, the most popular show on the basic cable network FX (Fox eXtended), *Sons of Anarchy*, owes a significant debt to Shakespeare.[2] Since it first aired in 2008, the series has been dubbed "Hamlet on Harleys" by the popular press.[3] And although scholar and motorcycle enthusiast John M. Withers hears a variety of other Shakespearean echoes in *Sons of Anarchy*, ranging from *Titus Andronicus* to *Macbeth*, it is Shakespeare's greatest Elizabethan tragedy that not only reverberates throughout the first four seasons, but also promises to do so during upcoming years, as the series develops an approach to realizing *Hamlet* tailored for cable television.[4]

From the very beginning of *Sons of Anarchy*, its creative team has invoked Shakespeare as a muse, and it has subsequently found this inspiring but imposing figure impossible to exorcise from the show's mythology. As in the playwright's Hamlet, the series focuses on a promising young man who is confronted by a surrogate father with dubious intentions. Set in present-day California, in the seedy world of outlaw motorcycle clubs and organized crime, the central narrative revolves around Jackson (Jax) Teller, played by Charlie Hunnam, and his stepfather Clay Morrow, played by Ron Perlman.

The two reside in the small town of Charming, where Jax serves as vice president of the "Sons of Anarchy Motorcycle Club, Redwood Originals" (or SAMCRO). This group was founded by Jax's deceased father, John Thomas Teller, along with eight other men ("the original nine"), including Clay, who now serves as club president.[5] Because of Jax's lineage, he is commonly referred to as "the prince" and "MC royalty." But he grapples with the legacy of John, whose spirit speaks to him through a journal: *The Life and Death of Sam Crow: How the Sons of Anarchy Lost Their Way*. From this manuscript—which the audience hears John (Nicholas Guest) read in voiceover, thereby acting as another kind of "teller"—Jax learns how his father became disillusioned with the increasingly sordid qualities of SAMCRO. Although the group started out honoring independence and brotherhood, following the tenets of modern political activist Emma Goldman, it quickly swerved in another direction. As the club became involved in crime, primarily running guns, it was tainted by acts of violence, often self-interested ones. John complains that he "never made a conscious decision to have the club become one thing or another. It just happened before my eyes. Each savage event was a catalyst for the next. And by the time the violence reached epic proportion, I couldn't see it. Blood was every color."[6] While mulling over his father's revelations about "accidental judgments" and "casual slaughters," Jax hangs around in graveyards and scribbles in a commonplace book, much like Shakespeare's melancholy Dane (5.2.326).[7] Soon, Jax begins to think that there is indeed "something rotten" (1.5.67) about SAMCRO, and he starts to suspect, as early as season one, that what is wrong with the organization has to do with Clay.

Referred to not only throughout the series, but also on DVD commentary tracks as "the king" of SAMCRO, Clay shares far more in common with Shakespeare's Claudius than a title and the first three letters of his name. In the fourth season, after numerous hints and innuendoes, it is revealed that Clay murdered John. He partnered with John's widow (Jax's mother) Gemma, a Gertrude proxy played by Katy Segal, to make this crime appear a biking accident. And then he married Gemma. Together, the new couple repeatedly attempt, during the first three seasons, to prevent Jax (whom Clay addresses as his "son") from prying into what really happened to his father and from influencing the course

of the club. Only after Clay physically abuses Gemma and she abandons him do his former sins come out, leading to a dramatic confrontation between him and Jax. The fundamental structure of *Sons of Anarchy* thus resembles Shakespeare's best known tale of revenge, premised on the expectation that Jax will right past injustices, participate in an Oedipal *agon* in which he overcomes a failing patriarch, and set his people (or at least his motorcycle club) on a path toward redemption. Asked about the series back in 2008, Perlman confirmed that the many points of congruence were deliberate. Although the actor stated that he only read one script ahead during shooting, he was "sure they [the writers] are going to stick to the structure of *Hamlet* all the way to the end."[8]

Whatever the long-term commitment to the architecture of the play upheld by the creative team behind *Sons of Anarchy*, they did regularly layer allusions to *Hamlet* into the first four seasons, appropriating memorable language as well as images from the play. Early in season four, while colluding to keep Jax in the dark about their perfidious history, Clay and Gemma appear in a small greenhouse abutting their home, studying tulip bulbs that have died from, in Gemma's words, "too much sun."[9] The line recalls Hamlet's complaint that he is "too much i'th'sun" (1.2.67), laying the way for Jax to tend an "unweeded garden / That grows to seed" (1.2.135-36). The reference casts Charming (overseen by "a [c]lay man," or a man like Adam) as a fallen place, comparable both to Elsinore and to the postlapsarian Eden to which Hamlet likens Denmark following his father's death. In a similar vein, during season one, the writers intimate that John's "fall from grace" resulted from internecine murder by giving Jax's son the name "Abel." In *Hamlet*, Claudius discusses his fratricide in terms of this Biblical figure and "the primal eldest curse" (3.3.38). Hamlet again brings up Cain and Abel in the graveyard scene, when he marks the indifference of the First Clown toward human remains: "That skull had a tongue in it, and could sing once: how the knave jowls it to the ground, as if it were Cain's jaw-bone, that did the first murder!" (5.1.70-73). In the context of the play, the allusion recalls the murder of Hamlet Senior by his brother, which, in turn, prefigures what Clay did to his brother-in-arms, John.[10]

Once again in the development of the Abel storyline, *Sons of Anarchy* hearkens back to *Hamlet* with a recurring metaphor from

the play: the wounded heart. Shakespeare's prince obsesses about his cardiovascular health, complaining after his first soliloquy, "But break, my heart; for I must hold my tongue" (1.2.158-15). Later he reflects on the "heart-ache and the thousand natural shocks / That flesh is heir to" (3.1.64-65); and later still, he reveals that "in my heart there was a kind of fighting, / That would not let me sleep" (5.2.4-5). Finally, Hamlet's death rattle is followed by Horatio's pronouncement, "Now cracks a noble heart" (5.2.302). During the first season of *Sons of Anarchy*, Abel is diagnosed with a congenital heart defect of the sort that years before killed Jax's brother, Thomas "Tommy" Teller (who is never seen on the show). It was immediately following Tommy's death, with a heightened sense of obligation to his family and his own mortality, that John began to question the direction of the club—to have a change of heart of his own—and to pen his journal. Decades later, thanks to twenty-first-century medicine, Abel's heart can be surgically repaired, giving him a chance that Tommy never had and, more significantly, hinting that—if Jax acts at the right time, in the right way—he might be able to free his son (and maybe himself) from his potentially deadly Teller inheritance. His principal love interest, Tara Knowles, at one point tells Jax that despite his career as a criminal, "I think you're a good man with a big heart."[11] A visual sign affirms the point: Jax bears a tattoo of his son's name over his heart, on his left pectoral, foregrounding not only his vulnerability as a family man, but also the power of the borrowed Shakespearean figure.

These elements from *Hamlet* flavor *Sons of Anarchy* without defining it. Yet the connections between the play and the series extend beyond textual analogues, symbolic correspondences, and parallel revenge plots. Like Shakespeare's text—itself a remake of several sources including both the legend of Amleth and the now lost *Ur-Hamlet*—the show is a self-aware composite, partially but not entirely dependent upon earlier material that it simultaneously builds upon and interrogates.[12] At the same time, because of its medium, *Sons of Anarchy* is a fresh vehicle for bringing forth an interpretation of *Hamlet*, a circumstance not lost on Kurt Sutter, the creator and head writer of the series. But while Sutter acknowledges initially modeling Jax upon the prince of Denmark, he is quick to declare his protagonist unique. He

posits an idiosyncratic dynamic between *Sons of Anarchy* and its Shakespearean precursor that makes his lead difficult to evaluate using classical paradigms for understanding adaptation, which prioritize questions of fidelity:

> Yes, I definitely was informed by the Hamlet archetype in this show, but the trap in Hamlet is he's the most passive of Shakespeare's characters. He's not a Richard III, not out there taking a lot of action. It's a lot of asides and soliloquies where he's wrapped in angst, and that's not a very interesting character. The trick is keeping Jax a really proactive character in the midst of him making that decision. Week after week, I throw him into circumstances where he's forced to make a decision.[13]

Even as Sutter confirms Shakespeare's ability to bridge ages and continents, he dwells on the unique possibilities and challenges of bringing a seventeenth-century tragedy to life in a twenty-first-century cable television drama. This format runs not as "two hours traffic" on a single stage,[14] but "week after week," at forty-four minute intervals, on screens across the world, sprawling over more than a combined nine hours each season. And in the case of *Sons of Anarchy*, now entering its fifth season with over thirty-eight hours of history and momentum behind it, the medium leads to a *Hamlet* unlike not just the play, but also every earlier rendition of it.[15]

The final two episodes of season four pointedly comment on the process of reworking a Shakespeare script for cable television. The penultimate episode of the season, which ends with Jax finally facing off against Clay and throwing his crimes in his face, is titled, "To Be, Act I." It is followed by, not the expected Shakespearean antithesis, "not to be," but by "To Be, Act II" (3.1.5). Instead of negation, the emphasis of the last episode falls upon continuation and repetition (ironically given that it is a season finale), but with controlled variation. Even the notation of an "Act" suggests that another linked movement, not an opposing alternative, will follow. The major events of the episode make similar gestures. Rather than kill Clay for his misdeeds, Jax takes "the throne" of SAMCRO from him, assuming the role of club president. In this way, he becomes his father, John. And in the final frames, a still image followed by a dissolve offers a picture of Jax as SAMCRO

president with his wife standing behind him, which then bleeds into an old photograph of his father similarly posed with Gemma behind him. As the show readies itself for another iteration in season five, the revenge drama is thus primed to run again, to repeat a familiar sequence of events and presentation of themes, albeit in a new manner. Jax has been drawn into the cycle of violence about which his father warned, the same cycle that led to his eventual murder at the hands of Clay. Still at liberty, still a prominent member of SAMCRO, Clay may attempt to assassinate Jax, as he did John. But if this is the case, Jax will live through the tale of rivalry and revenge in his own fashion.

During its first four seasons, *Sons of Anarchy* operated in terms of "To Be," followed by more "To Be" on a large scale, repeatedly pulling close to *Hamlet* before swerving away from it, only to return to Shakespeare's text in order to draw fresh inspiration and to add new layers of meaning to the show. That is, it worked in a series of loops and recurrences, such as the aforementioned one in which Jax became John. Another notable redaction appears in the arc followed by supporting character Piermont "Piney" Winston. One of the first nine members of SAMCRO, Piney, like John, grew cynical about the organization after losing family to club-related violence. Throughout the first three seasons, Piney acted as another replacement parent for Jax, sharing memories of John and pointing out similarities between the dead man and his surviving son, even supplying a new copy of John's journal after Jax lost his, thereby providing a conduit to his Teller heritage. In season four, however, Clay kills Piney in an attempt to keep the past buried (to silence another senior "[t]eller"), reenacting the earlier murder of John, adding urgency to Jax's mission as an avenger, and amplifying the significance of the Hamlet intertext.

Then too are multiple evocations of Ophelia on *Sons of Anarchy*, female characters driven into crises by relationships with Jax. He takes on several lovers and inevitably leaves them traumatized and diminished. However, Ophelia appears most strikingly in two intertwined characters. From the beginning of the show, Tara has confessed that while she cares for Jax, "you live a life I don't think I'll ever really understand."[16] Eventually, the ongoing anxiety and very real dangers of being part of the outlaw biker scene wear on Tara, and after being physically assaulted

because of her association with SAMCRO, she suffers a nervous breakdown. While she is in the hospital recovering, a character from season one visits and heightens her mania to such a degree that she must be placed under psychiatric observation: Jax's first wife, Wendy, who was a drug abuser—and consequently out of her mind—when carrying Abel. Wendy brings Tara flowers, conjuring Ophelia's wild pansies, daisies, and columbines. After declaring that she wants again to become a part of her son's life, Wendy leaves Tara, who flies into a violent rage and breaks the vase holding the flowers, scattering them across the floor of her room much as Ophelia strews blossoms throughout the Danish court. Although it is never explicitly stated that Jax was responsible for Wendy's earlier, unhealthy condition, the fact that Tara begins to resemble her as she draws closer to Jax, coupled with the recovery Wendy makes once away from him, suggests that being romantically involved with the prince of SAMCRO—much like being romantically involved with the prince of Denmark—is dangerous for a woman's sanity.

Such recurring characters, motifs, and happenings must be understood not just as ways in which *Sons of Anarchy* relates to *Hamlet*, but also as necessities of working in cable television. To succeed in this arena, the show has had to manifest what Jason Mittell characterizes as "narrative complexity"—a kind of expansive and recursive storytelling that emerged on TV during the 1990s and that eventually came to define the style of most cable dramas.[17] "Narrative complexity" is at once loose and inconclusive, at the same time dense in its dependence on internal history and interconnected layers. As Mittell explains, "narrative complexity" functions differently from storytelling in earlier television by "rejecting the need for plot closure with every episode that typifies conventional episodic form."[18] Instead, it constructs "ongoing stories" of the sort viewers faithfully track over several seasons in popular shows like *The Sopranos*, *The Wire*, and the one on which Sutter began his career as a screenwriter, *The Shield*.[19] Such long-term narratives invariably unfold on several levels at once: that of an individual episode, that of a particular season, and that of a series as a whole. In an adaptation, however loose, this sort of multi-layered design provides opportunities for numerous passes at source material, through recurring characters,

themes, and events. Subsequent repetitions can add depth and volume to the realization of what is being appropriated, though they must necessarily resist playing out to decisive conclusions in order to maintain the fluidity of a project that can span a number of years. Ultimately, such an adaptation approaches an antecedent like *Hamlet* as a heuristic more than as a standard, or, in musical terms, as a collection of cues for newly improvised riffs rather than as a classical score to be performed.

In this spirit, Sutter has, not surprisingly, been reluctant to commit to resolving his *Hamlet*—to entertain a definitive "Not to Be" scenario. He has recently, in 2012, offered season seven as a possible termination point, yet he always preserves a measure of indeterminacy in such projections, talking in terms of "if" rather than "when." Similarly, even while maintaining his love of classical literature, he has insisted that he does not want *Sons of Anarchy* to be viewed through the lens of *Hamlet*, backpedaling from comparisons to Shakespeare even when he has initiated them.[20] As the fourth season of the series was still shooting, in summer 2011, Sutter urged that the two texts not be tracked alongside one another:

> It's [*Sons of Anarchy* is] not really a modern retelling of *Hamlet*, meaning that that arc does not inform the show as a whole. When I was coming up with the idea for the pilot, the dynamic of that trilogy—of mother, son, and stepfather—with the idea of some sort of betrayal that had happened to the father so that the ghost of Hamlet, or the ghost of Hamlet's father, in the pilot, would be that manuscript that Jackson found that informs him of, you know, his father's dreams and fears and visions. So that became a layer, you know, to the narrative, and it's not something that we necessarily write to. But, you know, there are definitely Shakespearean overtones throughout the piece, and I really try to infuse the show with those, whether it's the idea of a king and queen, whether it's the idea of the sort of epic battle of father and son, it definitely has those Shakespearean overtones and will continue. Season four has—you know, I don't want to give it away—but there is a classic Shakespearean arc, from *Hamlet*, that actually starts to develop throughout the season. You know, and then we veer off, and we sort veer away from it,

> without necessarily following it all the way through. And then as we get—you know, if I'm lucky enough to go six or seven seasons—as we get to the end of it, you know, I think we'll sort of come full circle and hopefully land in a similar place towards the end in terms of staying true to—or being informed by the archetype a little bit more.[21]

These contradictions expose an anxiety about being pinned down, a reluctance to have *Sons of Anarchy* construed only as a version of *Hamlet*. Sutter in this way effectively dodges criticisms of textual purists who might complain about radical changes to the play, not limited to the elimination of its poetic language. His remarks also attest to a commercial savviness: it is bad for ratings to forecast the outcomes of conflicts on a cable television show—even if Sutter and his team do in fact plan to make *Sons of Anarchy* conform to the shape of *Hamlet*.[22]

To some degree, Sutter's rhetoric represents the performance of a self-enabling artist locked in an *agon* with a potentially overpowering precursor. As William Logan observes, "Shakespeare was the last writer who didn't have to contend with Shakespeare."[23] Sutter's interest in keeping *Sons of Anarchy* his own—in not being overshadowed by Shakespeare—might be heightened by the personal investment he has in the show. He is married to Segal—his queen—and in this light might be likened to Claudius: a usurper aware, on some level, that he does not deserve his crown. Yet Sutter has projected another identity for himself within the world of *Sons of Anarchy*, one that supports his independence as a writer. He sometimes appears on screen as the character Otto Delaney, another of the founding club members, who from the outset of the series is serving a life sentence in prison. In DVD commentary tracks, Sutter conflates this character with the whole of SAMCRO, explaining that attacks Otto suffers in jail relate to beatings the club takes to its morale during various crises.[24] The writer thereby positions the group, and by implication *Sons of Anarchy*, as an extension of himself, as something he literally embodies—not as a reconstruction of someone else's ideas.

Sutter's attempts at self-invention reflect concern for his artistic autonomy and awareness of the exigencies of the cable television format, which calls for balancing multiple storylines across seasons and the entire run of a series. However, in refusing

to be defined by the past while tapping it to fuel and to sharpen his creative vision, Sutter shares more with Shakespeare than he may know, certainly more than he acknowledges. The playwright never worked in an episodic mode, but his output for the early modern stage consisted almost exclusively of scripts built upon the stories of others, some rather old, some relatively recent, none of them credited as sources.[25] Moreover, as John J. Joughin discerns, *Hamlet* includes a meditation on adaptation, marking the pitfalls and potentials of drawing upon work from the past while asserting originality in the present.[26] Featuring a favorite device of Shakespeare's, found in both *The Taming of the Shrew* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Hamlet* presents a play within a play, when the prince resolves to have a traveling troupe put on "something like the murder of my father / Before mine uncle [Claudius]," (2.2.571-3). The master-text, the Italian *The Murder of Gonzago*, has little aesthetic merit, arguably less intrinsic interest. It does not readily lend itself to the kind of organic theatre that Hamlet prizes when counseling the players to "hold as 'twere the mirror up to nature" (3.1.20). *The Murder of Gonzago* is rife with abstraction and grandiloquence, all contorted into patently artificial couplets. In the dumb show, it indulges in redundancy; it is further weakened by long stretches of exposition. But Hamlet enlivens the drama by giving it a new name (*The Mousetrap*) and additional material. More importantly, he selects it for performance in Elsinore knowing its relevance for the audience. His artistic choices make *The Murder of Gonzago* effective for exploring situations, ideas, and values that matter to the prince—and to the court—regardless of the intentions (and implied limitations) of the playwright from the past.

Shakespeare in this way unpacks a view of literary adaptation that licenses not just borrowing from earlier works, but also remaking them, distinguishing his own *Hamlet* from the one that appeared on the London stage just a few years before. He intimates that literary precedents need have relatively little power over the present. It is the sensibility of the artist in the now that is prime—a notion that Sutter would almost certainly embrace. There is little for the contemporary writer to worry about, though, since his own claim to originality, even in tangling with Shakespeare, is bolstered by his medium. If we dispense with artificial questions of high

and low related to the reception of television, it is undeniable that the design of a cable drama affords Sutter at least three levels of engagement with Shakespeare—and as such, three levels on which to relate to—or, as the case may be, not relate to—*Hamlet*. As a consequence, even when *Sons of Anarchy* appears to be turning away from the tragedy, it is often angling toward it.

In this context, as an adaptation, *Sons of Anarchy* might be seen as a kind of palimpsest, as episodes are written upon episodes, seasons upon seasons, all adding to the richness of the whole. This figure jibes with the model of adaptation outlined by Linda Hutcheon.[27] If pressed to adopt this critical construct, however, I would stress the importance of looking not at one overwritten sheet, but many, compiled in a volume with ink bleeding between layers, sometimes making pages stick together. Perhaps more fruitful might be an alternative metaphor for how Sutter's process works, one that envisions *Sons of Anarchy* as a multi-threaded braid in which *Hamlet* represents several strands—sometimes repeating movements, often entwined atop one another. These strands are woven in and out of others not dependent on Shakespeare, those focused on the iconography and culture of outlaw bikers. And this spiraling, complex form means that sometimes an individual thread might become occluded even as it presses against and gives shape to others.

For those in search of Shakespeare in *Sons of Anarchy*, watching the show—and unraveling segments of this multi-threaded braid—involves constant critical activity. Viewers cannot tune in to the latest episode with copies of Shakespeare's script in their laps. There is not, despite what the show's theme song suggests, "a perfect line" to follow—or a way to see this as a direct translation of *Hamlet*.[28] Instead, viewers must become detectives and pick up clues, looking both forwards and backwards, cobbling together meaning—much as Jax and Hamlet do in trying to unravel the mysteries their fathers have left behind. Indeed, Linda Charnes argues that *Hamlet* unfolds as a kind of *noir*, in which the prince serves as a prototype for the modern gumshoe, navigating the perilous plots of the Danish court, seeking the truth about crimes alleged by the Ghost.[29] And much as Hamlet's path toward closing his case is not linear, neither will be that of Jax or that of *Sons of Anarchy*.

Near the close of season four, Sutter again repeated that he is not prepared to conclude the SAMCRO story in the immediate future, while once more displaying an affinity for the Bard: "Season four, for me in my pretentious three-act Shakespearean structure, this is like the end of Act II."[30] Perhaps, then, audiences can look ahead to the introduction of pirates and gravediggers in the season being aired in fall 2012. But if this is the case, then it seems probable that the series will again turn backwards, enacting the formula of "narrative complexity" by recreating earlier figures, narrative movements, and symbolic patterns, all while extending and joining Shakespearean strands that run through its already dense fabric. Intergenerational power struggles about the direction of the club will once more lead to violence and betrayal. There will be additional perilous situations that drive Tara—or comparable women in Jax's life—toward self-destructive hysteria. The once prince, now king of SAMCRO will continue to struggle with the ways in which families shape their offspring, especially in cases of fathers and sons. A preview for season five finds Jax composing a journal for his two boys, on the same road as John Thomas Teller, ensuring that his (and Hamlet's) lines will carry forward, even as Jax, like Sutter, attempts to assert control over his own story.[31] It seems unlikely that he will be able simply to "Carve for himself" (1.3.20)—any more than Sutter will be able to leave Shakespeare entirely behind while steering *Sons of Anarchy* toward an eventual conclusion. But whatever happens in upcoming episodes, the expansive and generatively repetitive *Sons of Anarchy* will continue to produce a dynamic and distinctive kind of *Hamlet*.

Notes

1. The first Shakespearean film was a scene from *King John* (1899). Since it appeared, hundreds of other Shakespearean adaptations have been created for cinema. Even when television, decades later, became an alternative medium for those working in celluloid, it proved far less attractive for those aspiring to bring the plays to life. For the most part, such presence as Shakespeare has had on television has been on British programming. The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) brought all of Shakespeare's plays to television in the 1970s and 1980s, and there have been several BBC features of stage productions based upon the plays. As several scholars have argued, television is closer in some respects to the stage than film, as it depends upon words as much as images, whereas film tends to be predominantly visual. See, for example, H.R. Coursen, *Watching Shakespeare on Television* (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses,

1993), and Samuel Crowl, *Shakespeare on Film: A Norton Critical Guide* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2008). However, television has not actively brought serial formulae to bear on adaptation. Regardless of their country of origin, previous televised interpretations of Shakespeare have been linear, self-contained versions of the plays, usually spanning between one and three hours, aired for consumption in one or two sittings. One possible exception—and potential analogue for *Sons of Anarchy*—is the Canadian series, *Slings and Arrows* (2003-6). But the scope of this eighteen-episode, three-season series is much less ambitious than that of *Sons of Anarchy*. Conversely, each season centers on different plays by Shakespeare, whereas in *Sons of Anarchy* one play alone serves as a constant Shakespearean touchstone.

2. Lesley Goldberg, "*Sons of Anarchy* Sets Ratings Record for FX," *The Hollywood Reporter*, last modified September 26, 2011, http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/live-feed/sons-anarchy-sets-ratings-record-240244. According to Goldberg, "The first-run telecast of the Sept. 6 [*sic*] season premiere drew 6.5 million total viewers and 4.3 million in the advertiser-coveted adults 18-49 demographic, collecting 2.5 million in men 18-49. The numbers rank as basic cable's top drama series telecast across the two adult demos of the year."

3. See, for instance, Susan Carpenter, "Think *Hamlet* on Harleys," *Los Angeles Times*, last modified October 26, 2008, http://articles.latimes.com/2008/oct/26/entertainment /ca-sonsofanarchy26. See also Kevin McDonough, "Hamlet Rides a Harley in *Sons of Anarchy*," *South Coast TODAY*, last modified October 3, 2008, http://www. southcoasttoday.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080903/LIFE/809030301.

4. John M. Withers, "Lady Macbeth as Hamlet's Mother: *Sons of Anarchy*, Season One," *International Journal of Motorcycle Studies*, 6, no. 1 (2010) http://ijms.nova.edu/Fall2010/IJMS_Rvw.Withers.html.

5. *Sons of Anarchy: Season One* (2008, Beverly Hills, CA. 20th Century Fox Home Entertainment, 2009), DVD, Episode 1.

6. Ibid., Episode 9.

7. William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, in *The Norton Shakespeare*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt et al., 2nd ed. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2008). All future citations from the play are from this edition.

8. Ron Perlman, quoted in Ryan McKee, "*Sons Of Anarchy*: 5 Things You Didn't Know," Ask Men, n.d. http://www.askmen.com/entertainment/special_feature_400/406_sons-of-anarchy-5-things-you-didnt-know.html.

9. *Sons of Anarchy: Season Four* (2011, Beverly Hills, CA. 20th Century Fox Home Entertainment, 2012), DVD, Episode 4.

10. Furthermore, *memento mori* in both the television series and the play visually underscore the high stakes for protagonists confronting men capable of murdering family members: skulls figure prominently in the colors of the gang, which Jax has tattooed across his back. Hamlet, in a sense, deals with death at his back when contemplating the remains of Yorick.

11. *Sons of Anarchy: Season One*, Episode 13.

12. Stephen Greenblatt, *Will in the World* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2004), dates the appearance of the precursor British text to 1589 and identities its author as "probably Thomas Kyd," 294. On intersections between the Danish legend of Amleth and *Hamlet* see Ed Bergdal, "Hamlet's Name," *Scandinavian Studies and Notes* 1, no. 10 (1929): 159-175.

13. Kurt Sutter, interview by Alan Sepinwall, "*Sons of Anarchy*: Kurt Sutter Q&A,"NJ.COM, last modified November 26, 2008, http://www.nj.com/entertainment/tv/index.ssf/2008/11/sons_of_anarchy_kurt_sutter _qa.html.

14. William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, in *The Norton Shakespeare*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt et al., 2nd ed. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2008), 1.1.12.

15. The Internet Movie Database (IMDB) lists seventy-five films with the title *Hamlet*, along with more than ninety titles with "Partial Matches," n.d., http://www.imdb.com/find?q=hamlet&s=all.

16. *Sons of Anarchy: Season One*, Episode 13.

17. Jason Mittell, "Narrative Complexity in Contemporary American Television," *The Velvet Light Trap* 58 (Fall 2006): 32; http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/the_velvet_light_trap/v058/58. 1mittell.pdf, 32.

18. Ibid.

19. Ibid.

20. Sutter asserts a strong interest in the classics when defining his aesthetic priorities in an interview conducted by Mike Flaherty, "The Showrunner Transcript: S*ons of Anarchy*'s Kurt Sutter," *New York Magazine*, last modified May 20, 2011, http://www.vulture.com/2011/05/kurt_sutter_showrunner_transcr.html. When asked what he would change about network television, Sutter replied, "Stop making decisions based on research data, and hire development executives with degrees in art, literature, and theater instead of marketing, business, and law."

21. These comments were offered in response to a question from a Shakespeare-obsessed fan of *Sons of Anarchy*: "Dear Kurt, Love the shows. My question is at what point in the first episodes did you decide it would be a modern retelling of *Hamlet*?" From Kurt Sutter, "WTF Sutter #4," *Sutterink/SOA*, last modified May 27, 2011, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RCLZDv3Wtp8&feature=plcp.

22. In his interview with Sepinwall, Sutter claims that avoiding predictability is essential to his vision: "One of the things I lead my writers with is, 'What's the obvious and linear narrative choice in any circumstance?' And then, 'Let's never do that.'"

23. William Logan, *The Undiscovered Country: Poetry in the Age of Tin* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 343.

24. *Sons of Anarchy: Season Two*, (2009, Beverly Hills, CA. 20th Century Fox Home Entertainment, 2010), DVD, Episode 5.

25. The history cycles might be regarded as exceptions, reflecting a collection of works assembled much as interlinked television episodes are. But the fact that Shakespeare penned his Henriads while producing a variety of other kinds of plays, along with the fact that when composing them he did not follow a clear chronology, limits the claim that the playwright thought in serial terms comparable to those imposed upon cable television scribes.

26. John J. Joughin, "Shakespeare's Genius: *Hamlet*, Adaptation, and the Work of Following," in *The New Aestheticism*, ed. John J. Joughin and Simon Malpas (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 131-150.

27. Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation* (New York: Routledge, 2006).

28. The song by Curtis Stigers and The Forest Rangers, "This Life," can be

heard at the start and at the close of every episode of *Sons of Anarchy*.

29. Linda Charnes, "Dismember Me: Shakespeare, Paranoia, and the Logic of Mass Culture," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 48, no.1 (1997): 1-16.

30. With this tripartite formulation, Sutter invokes Aristotle's model of tragedy. It would be interesting to hear how he envisions his work in relation to a five part structure like the one employed by Shakespeare.

31. "S*ons of Anarchy*: Season 5 Promo #5-'Jax,'" *Television Promos*, last modified August 19, 2012, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9_TKt8tQMqk.

ACTING SHAKESPEARE: A Roundtable Discussion with Artists from the Utah Shakespeare Festival's 2012 Production of *Titus Andronicus*

Michael Flachmann
Utah Shakespeare Festival Company Dramaturg

Featuring: Dan Kremer (Titus Andronicus), Corey Jones (Aaron), Jacqueline Antaramian (Tamora), A. Bryan Humphrey (Marcus Andronicus), Melisa Pereyra (Lavinia), and Jeb Burris (Chiron)

Flachmann: Welcome to the actor roundtable discussion on *Titus Andronicus*, part of this year's Wooden O Symposium. After an initial wave of popularity during Shakespeare's time, this play has gotten some remarkably bad press, all the way from Edward Ravenscroft in 1687, who called it "a heap of rubbish," to T.S. Elliot's infamous comment that it was "one of the stupidest and most uninspired plays ever written." All I can say in response is that they obviously didn't see your brilliant production of the play. [applause] So my first question is, how did you guys solve this difficult script? What did you do to make this play, which has gotten so much bad publicity, such a wonderful production? Who wants to respond to that?

Humphrey: Brilliant casting. [laughter]

Flachmann: Absolutely right, Bryan. Anything else?

Burris: The cutting of the play by our director, Henry Woronicz, and you, Michael, focuses almost exclusively on the action of the play, as opposed to people commenting on what's going to happen and then telling you again why it happened or how they feel about what happened, which I think makes it move

very rapidly and keeps the audience engaged through the entire sequence of events. So it was extremely action-oriented.

Flachmann: One lovely example of that, Jeb, is that Titus doesn't explain what he is going to do to the two boys before he prepares dinner. It just happens. Does that work comfortably for you actors? Would you prefer we had the additional lines in there, or is it effective without them? Our idea was to streamline it and cut right to the chase.

Burris: I think it definitely works because it gives us an opportunity to tell our character's story without having to worry about instructing the audience how they should feel, and it gives the audience a chance to experience their natural emotions rather than the ones dictated by the script. When Dan comes out and tells our mother that we're in the pie she's eating, you get to see it right there as opposed to anticipating that it's about to happen, which affords a bigger and more theatrical surprise.

Kremer: I also think our production focuses on the humanity of the characters as opposed to the sensationalism so often associated with them. The gore and violence is, I think, secondary to the reality of the characters and the passionate heart that's inside all of them.

Flachmann: That's well said, Dan. Jacquie, anything to add?

Antaramian: I think the ultimate test of any good production is how well you tell the story. It has to be clean and honest and intelligent, because the audience is very intelligent. I do think this play has a universal quality to it. These characters are human beings taken to extremes. What do they do when their son is slaughtered, their daughter is raped and her tongue cut out? To what extent is the revenge in the play justified?

Flachmann: One possible way to look at the show is that you precipitate the revenge, Dan, beginning with your insistence on the honor of avenging your children's deaths. Jacquie certainly begs you not to do it. Is that the start? Do you see that as the beginning of the revenge plot, or am I misrepresenting your character's motives?

Kremer: The difference between revenge and justice is defined by the person who is exacting it. At the beginning of the play, Titus feels quite justified in his action of taking Alarbus as a sacrificial gift from the army he has conquered. That does

precipitate the violence that ensues. So it's up to each of us to define what "justice" and "revenge" are. In order to arrive at that definition, we have to look deeper into ourselves.

Flachmann: That's a great answer. We not only hire brilliant actors, but brilliant human beings. [laughter] Jacquie, I'm guessing that you're not buying Dan's description of the killing of your first-born son as "justice"? [laughter] Am I right on that?

Antaramian: Yes. His suggestion is entirely unreasonable to Tamora. They are already captives, and Titus is saying they are going to cut off Alarbus' limbs in a religious ceremony, which is an extremely emotional experience for her to endure. As a queen, she begged Titus on her knees not to kill him, so her rejected humility fuels her desire for revenge. What's interesting to me is that Titus kills his youngest son because he is helping Bassianus abduct Lavinia. Everybody kind of forgets about that. [laughter] Then Tamora goes crazy. Not only does she want all the Andronici dead, but she does a horrific thing by setting her sons on Lavinia. But after that, she doesn't kill anybody. She just lets people do the killing for her. When Titus helps Lavinia kill Tamora's sons, I would say that is a justifiable action, and everybody is thrilled that Lavinia gets to exact revenge on the boys. But instead of just stopping there, Titus cuts them up and puts them in a pie for the mother to eat. So the revenge has been exacted, but then he goes a step further, just like Tamora goes a step further with her sons by saying instead of just killing Lavinia, you can do whatever you want with her.

Flachmann: Actually, don't Chiron and Demetrius begin the myth? In other words, everybody in Shakespeare's audience would have known the story in which Philomela was raped and her tongue cut out so she couldn't betray her attackers. Titus simply completes this well-known allegory. We look at Titus's actions as such a macabre way of affecting revenge, but he's simply satisfying the requirements of the myth. Dan?

Kremer: I think the world of the play has different layers of violence. The violence that Titus exacts on Mutius, which is a sudden occurrence, carries a different weight because Mutius is a soldier. A different standard in this culture and certainly in this play is applied to those who are soldiers, those who are dedicated combatants, as opposed to those who are the innocents. When the

violence is turned on those innocent people, the level of revenge or hatred is amped up. Yes, Titus kills Mutius, but his son is there as a soldier. He comes armed and stands in the way, and Titus reacts. Titus's mind certainly justifies killing Alarbus, Tamora's son, who is sacrificed as a ritualistic response to the deaths of Titus's own sons. As Titus says, "Religiously they ask a sacrifice. / To this your son is marked, and die he must / T'appease their groaning shadows that are gone." A soldier is a tool used for warfare, and part of the covenant of being a soldier is that you have to accept the presence of death.

Flachmann: Thank you, Dan. While we are on the topic of revenge, I want to get Jeb, Melisa, and Corey involved in the debate. How do you three fit into this process?

Burris: What it boiled down to for me is the love between mother and son. She says the worse to her, the better love for me. That's really all that Chiron and Demetrius need: The worse we treat Lavinia, the more our mother will love us. And Aaron is also a father figure to us. Chiron and Demetrius don't come up with any plans on their own, but we are very good at following orders. Talking about the extreme circumstances, we are first brought on as prisoners, and then we're freed, and all of a sudden our mother is the empress, and they're calling us "lords" within a matter of five minutes. With mom as the empress, there's literally nothing we can't get away with, especially when she's telling us to do these things.

Flachmann: So you are basically blaming this on your mother? Is that what you are trying to do? [laughter]

Burris: We are certainly not innocent. As Dan said, we are soldiers, too. We have been fighting for "Gothlandia" [laughter], so we have no problem putting knives in people's backs and doing all these horrific deeds.

Jones: Especially when you're getting advice from the African mercenary in the room. [laughter] But seriously, I believe that revenge plays a significant role in the course of action that Aaron takes in the play. I feel his experience of being a POW and witnessing Tamora—his lover—lose her son despite her heartbreaking pleas, plus whatever injustice he has suffered in the past at the hands of the Roman empire, all motivate him to mastermind this scheme of gruesome retribution.

Flachmann: Thank you, Corey. Melisa, what would you like to add?

Pereyra: Lavinia doesn't seek revenge until the very end. We all learn from our elders in this culture. She can't even eat without thinking about what happened to her; her very existence is a reminder of the horror she endured. What finally snaps her out of this crazy, withdrawn state is when Titus gives her something to do. He says, "Bear thou my hand, sweet wench, between thy teeth." There's dad telling her to get up, be a soldier, and do this, which in itself gives her the power to respond to what has been done to her. But the action of killing the sons only satisfies for a moment, and then they have dinner. [laughter] After that satisfaction is gone, how can I possibly continue to live? Yes, I took vengeance against the people who did these atrocities to me, but it's not enough. She can't live like this, and I think that is why the decision is made between her and Titus that she has to die. It's time. She has done all she can to bring peace to herself, and it's still not sufficient, so only her death can provide complete relief.

Flachmann: Perhaps I'm reading too much into this moment, Melisa, but it seems to me that after you pick up the hand and exit the stage, you're standing straighter, and you have a little bit more dignity in your character. Am I right?

Pereyra: Absolutely. It's physical story telling. I don't have words. All I have is my body. Henry definitely made me think a lot about how I could tell her journey with my body. After she has been wounded, Marcus describes her as a deer "that hath received some unrecurring wound." So that image started to reverberate in my head. What does that look like? What does that feel like? That is why my body shook, my eyes were wide, and every movement made by those around me was perceived as a danger. After she is raped, Lavinia is left on the stage with nothing but her survival instincts, and I wanted to portray that as clearly as possible even though I had no words. My physicality changes throughout the play depending on the given circumstances. Since I don't speak anymore, the events that take place after the rape change my body, unlike the other characters in the play who have words to express their feelings. I felt that when Lavinia picks up the hand in her teeth, she gets some part of her spirit back because she is being told what to do. She is now in charge of helping to move the

action of the play forward. If her tongue hadn't been cut out, she would have a long speech here, one that would empower her, the other characters on stage, and the audience. This responsibility must still be fulfilled. So when I was instructed by Titus to pick up the hand, I relaxed my shoulders (which I had been deliberately trying to hide my face in), I straightened my spine (which up until this point had been curved, as if making my body smaller would help me disappear), and for the first time I looked Titus in the eye with no more tears to shed, but with a hunger for action. I picked up the hand with pride, with anger, with a beastly lust for revenge. The change you saw in my body was the physical representation of her new psychological and emotional state.

Flachmann: Thank you, Melisa. Bryan, it seems to me that you participate in the revenge plot, but you're also what we literary types would call a "choral figure."

Humphrey: The turning point of the play is when Marcus hits on the inspiration of using the staff to uncover who has done this to Lavinia. When she reveals who caused this misery and suffering, Titus immediately shifts to the revenge plot. At that point, everything has a focus that it didn't have before. Marcus becomes a part of the family's revenge at that moment, but I think we have to remember that this is a very old legend. Aristotle explained that "tragedy" should create in the audience a catharsis or a cleansing effect, and that's exactly what Shakespeare was doing with this play. At the end of the production, Henry reassigned the lines to Marcus in which he addresses Rome and asks, "Have we done aught amiss?" For all of us as actors who have to get inside our roles so we can justify our actions and make them work, the real issue is about revenge and justice. Marcus is left standing at the conclusion, but he is also there to raise these questions as the chorus.

Flachmann: Thank you, Bryan. Jacquie, is revenge more forgivable when conducted by a male than by a female?

Antaramian: When you create destruction on an innocent, everybody takes it differently. As Bryan was saying, as long as we have been alive we have been wrestling with these questions. In matters of war, in matters of peace, when do we exact revenge as justice, when do we find such actions justifiable—especially if your son or daughter is involved? How should we view a woman

who is not a part of war, not a part of that "honor" system, who wants to exact revenge? Should we view her differently? It's a question to think about.

Humphrey: We have neatly segued into another topic: To what extent does power change behavior? In the beginning of the play, as Jeb mentioned, these Goths were all prisoners, and with a word from the emperor, they are suddenly free. Immediately, Tamora becomes the empress, and her sons become lords of the realm. They're invested with the morality of power, and Tamora swiftly begins to use that power against the Andronici to exact her revenge. As soon as the power shifts, the Andronici endure horror upon horror, to the point that we're surrounded by severed hands and heads, and Titus finally asks, "When will this fearful slumber have an end?" When Titus tells Lavinia that she can still do something—pick up his hand in her teeth—he's inviting her to reclaim some power for herself. She is not totally helpless. And Marcus says you have the power to tell us who did this if you can write their names in the sand. Again, the helplessness is overcome by empowerment. And as soon as they regain their power, they begin to exact another level of justice. That's an important question: What do we do when we have the power to enact justice or revenge, and when do we find the courage to break that cycle of victimhood? That's a question we all struggle with.

Flachmann: That's brilliant, Bryan. On a slightly different topic, one of the great joys of seeing plays in repertory is that we encounter cross-pollination of themes, and one of the strongest this summer involves parents and children. What do you think Shakespeare is saying about the relationships between parents and children in *Titus Andronicus*, Melisa?

Pereyra: The chemistry between Dan and me has to be strong enough to convey the love between a father and his daughter. After I've been raped and dismembered in the play, my first thought is that I don't want my father to see me. How is she going to tell her dad what has happened to her? When he sees her, it breaks her heart, and I almost can't remain standing because it's so difficult not only to be in front of my father in that way, but for him to see me. It's that duality of beauty and horror at the same time that lives and exists in all of Shakespeare's plays: the dark and the light always happening at the same time.

Flachmann: Jacquie and Jeb, since you play mother and son in the play, what can you add to this topic?

Burris: It's really interesting that all Chiron and Demetrius have is their mother. Growing up with a mother and two older sisters, as I did, I'm very aware of that feminine relationship and its effect on me. And Titus has all these sons and only one daughter. I think it's wonderful for Shakespeare to play those opposites against each other.

Antaramian: This play starts with a mother pleading for her son. That relationship begins the revenge plot, after which the father and the daughter go through their journey together. So it all stems from those two relationships. It starts with one and morphs into another parent/child dynamic in the play.

Flachmann: There has been some controversy, Melisa, about whether you embrace your death at the end of the play, about whether there's an agreement between you and Titus. Is that something you would feel comfortable talking about?

Pereyra: Absolutely. This is definitely a topic I discussed with Henry, our director. Since the script doesn't dictate exactly what happens, we had to make our own decision about the conditions of her death. In our production, Lavinia needs to die. It all goes back to what Titus says when he asks Saturninus if it was well done of rash Virginius to "kill his daughter with his own right hand / Because she was enforced, stained, and deflowered?" And Saturninus says yes, "Because the girl should not survive her shame / And by her presence still renew his sorrows." Every day, both she and her father would have been reminded of the horrible events that had taken place.

Kremer: Yes, I completely agree with what Melisa said, and the only comment I would add is that in that final moment, I return to the idea of empowerment. They both agree they have the power to end this nightmare they've endured, though Lavinia needs some assistance with doing it. But I think that is included in their agreement: Part of the bond they make is to help each other out of this nightmare.

Antaramian: But why does she have to die? Why are there so many cultures in our modern world where a shamed girl cannot face her father? It's not Lavinia's fault that she was raped. It's not her fault that she was mutilated. If the father is shamed,

his daughter shouldn't live anymore? Why isn't the father saying, "It doesn't matter; we will get through this. Your life is more important than my honor." These are questions that should be raised in today's world.

Flachmann: I think that's a great response, Jacquie. Bryan?

Humphrey: We were in a talk-back a couple of weeks ago in your Camp Shakespeare program, Michael, and two of the ladies who had seen other productions of the play were struck by how much Lavinia was held and comforted and cared for in our show. She was not an object of abhorrence. So I think that's one of the aspects of our production that has to do with parents, children, and family.

Flachmann: I agree entirely, Bryan. How does everyone feel about the way this production stylizes its violence? We do it kabuki style, with red streamers and cloths for blood. That was a choice we made last November, which is what Henry wanted. How does a decision like that affect the actors?

Antaramian: I find it chilling and much more effective than if you had actual blood and gore. I think that's what theatre does so well: It's the suggestion of the horrific that is so compelling. And I think that was a brilliant choice by Henry. This production opens up a window into your imagination. We give you a hint of violence, and you provide the rest. What your mind can think up is so much worse than anything we could ever do! This is not the movies; this is the theatre, and this production takes you to a very poetic level. That's something that Henry discussed early in the rehearsal period: This world is a mixture of beauty and horror.

Flachmann: Thank you, Jacquie. Jeb?

Burris: Because the theatre is a shared experience, having fake blood would be a disservice to the audience by not allowing them to use their imagination. And in pragmatic terms as an actor, there's nothing worse than having to worry about where your blood pack is, whether it's going to open and spill all over everything, and whether the audience is going to see the blood pack when I get rid of it. It's just great to be able to stab and let the audience imagine blood spurting from Bassianus' neck. I don't have to worry about it. There's no blood on my costume. I don't have to wash my hands back stage. It's a win-win situation. [laughter]

Flachmann: Who are the true barbarians in this play?

Burris: The Romans. After Alarbus is sacrificed, I ask Tamora, "Was ever Scythia half so barbarous?" As allegedly cruel as the Goths are, I've never seen anyone chop someone's limbs off just to appease their gods. That to me is absolutely insane!

Flachmann: Corey, Aaron is the mastermind behind much of the mayhem and violence in the play. What was your approach to playing such a heinous character?

Jones: Well, my first goal was not to judge his actions but to justify them, to find some rationale about why he has chosen this path and why he makes the decisions he makes. As I mentioned earlier, Titus's killing of Alarbus and his immediate rejection of Tamora's plea for his life was one justification for me. Also, I used my experience as a prisoner under Titus, which we see at the beginning of the play, as another reason to exact revenge on the Andronici. I was interested in building a full, rich back-story, a history, for Aaron that helped me trace what may have happened in his past that led to his determination to not only justify his actions, but to relish them. That included imagining his experiences in Africa as a boy, becoming a skilled and bloodthirsty warrior, and ending up as an alien in a foreign land.

Flachmann: And this back-story helps you succeed in your plans, at least until the baby comes along. [laughter]

Jones: Yes, the fruit of his loins destroys the fruit of his labor. [laughter] The baby certainly throws a monkey wrench into the program, and Aaron is forced to "audible" and make new plans almost immediately. For the first time in his life, he has to put someone else's well being and needs before his own. And that's what makes Aaron such a fascinating character to play: Just when you're ready to hate this guy and condemn him, he does something utterly human and chooses to fight for his child despite the fact that it jeopardizes everything he's doing in Rome as the right-hand man/lover to the empress. It helps to add a third dimension to Aaron, which is something Henry and I thought was essential to make him work as a character, rather than as a caricature.

Flachmann: Dan, we've been talking a lot this week about the play at our Wooden O Symposium, and a question that has come up frequently is whether Titus is at any point in the play truly mad. Is that something you'd feel free to discuss, or would you rather leave that unspoken?

Kremer: Oh, that's a large and complicated question. The short answer is, yes, I think he does slip into madness. To return to what I was dwelling on earlier in the issue of powerlessness and empowerment, I think that the madness overwhelms Titus when he feels completely helpless. In the fly scene that opens our second part of the play, you see the family at their worst, I think. And that's the time when Titus's grip on reality is at its weakest. I think he's drifting in and out of his own reality. Interestingly, as soon as he has the opportunity to focus on something, to fixate on revenge, he begins to return to some kind of sanity and regain a grasp on reality. In terms of the previous question, I think all the characters in this play devolve into barbarism. I don't think there are clear- cut good and bad guys. When I was in college, I took a philosophy course in which this question was posed for the final exam: "Is it progress if a cannibal uses a knife and a fork?" [laughter]

Humphrey: Did you pass?

Kremer: I did. Lately, I've been collecting cannibal jokes and some good Chianti. [laughter]

Flachmann: The costumes have been interesting in this production, particularly yours, Melisa.

Pereyra: Yes, Kevin Coppenhaver created some of the most stunning and intricate costumes I have ever worn. I was overwhelmed when I saw the sketches, but I knew I would have to work one hundred times harder if I wanted to look as good as they did! [laughter] Our first dress rehearsal was challenging for me because these costumes carry a life of their own. They told me so much about Lavinia every time I put one of them on. I had to learn not only how to move and breathe in them, but also how to fill them with purpose, with emotion, with a soul. I feel that the more beautiful my costume is, the better I have to be as an actor. Then, of course, I had to get used to the practical side of wearing my costume. The first dress I wear has a higher waist, which rests exactly where my ribs expand to breathe. This means I focused my breath deep in my belly and expanded it more than my ribs. My second costume is bloody and torn, and I wear a cowl over my mouth, which meant I had to find a way to hold my neck and jaw in a position that would ensure it would stay on. My last costume was my favorite, the warrior costume! [laughter]

Putting it on fueled my desire to kill Chiron and Demetrius. I have a funny story about that costume. I have braces on my wrists under the costume that prevent me from moving them. I have to ask my dresser for water when we are offstage because I really am helpless. I can't do anything. A few days ago I was walking up the stairs while somebody was coming down, and I almost stabbed her with my knives. [laughter] I just forgot they were there. [laughter]

Flachmann: And Corey, your costume was quite interesting as well. Tell us a little bit about that.

Jones: Yes, Kevin gave me a fun, functional, and aesthetically beautiful costume to wear that I thought was a perfect representation of Aaron. The colors and materials were smartly chosen to help distinguish Aaron from the rest of the characters and to accentuate his foreign-ness, his other-ness in this world. Aaron is an African mercenary who is very comfortable in the natural world, so having a doublet made of goat fur; a corset, posture collar, and scabbard made of leather; and boots made of suede instantly connected me to that natural, animalistic world.

Flachmann: And that mohawk?

Jones: Yes, the mohawk was definitely a fun piece to wear that helped define the look and feel of this character. Kevin was very open to the idea, which I suggested when we first started rehearsal, because I wanted something a little different than my usual bald head, which I wear for every production. [laughter] I wanted something exotic and sexy that was an expression of Aaron's heritage and masculinity, and the mohawk certainly delivered on that.

Flachmann: The Goth costumes and make-up have also occasioned lots of discussion, particularly the black circles under the Goths' eyes.

Antaramian: They're traditionally from the Scandinavian areas and Germanic tribes, so they are barbarians in the Romans' eyes. They're probably more in touch with nature, however, since they are from primitive, tribal societies. When we came to the first read-through, we had these costumes shown to us, so we had to figure out who the Goths were because we didn't create the costumes. I said to myself, I'm going to have this headdress, and I'm going to wear this green alligator outfit. [laughter] I think the costumes help illustrate the difference between what is perceived as a barbaric world and the barbarity of a civilized world.

Humphrey: I believe the Greeks were the ones who came up with the idea that anybody who wasn't a Greek was a barbarian. [laughter]

Flachmann: To what extent is Saturninus responsible for what happens in this play?

Kremer: I think because Saturninus is threatening to take up arms to defend his right to be named emperor, Titus is just looking for a way to stop the bloodshed. If Titus had picked Bassianus, and Bassianus wanted to marry Lavinia, they would have gone off and lived happily ever after, but it would have been a very short play. [laughter] It's a caution to us all that we should choose wisely in an election year. [laughter]

Flachmann: Please send any letters and postcards directly to Mr. Kremer. [laughter]

Antaramian: Saturninus is very capricious. He's just not made to be a ruler. I think he chooses Lavinia first to egg on Titus to see how he will react. Saturninus wanted to get a rise out of Titus as opposed to making him happy, so when Lavinia leaves, Saturninus says I really didn't want her anyway. His downfall is his pride. Because of him, three of us die at the end: Titus, Tamora, and Saturninus. Saturninus dies because he's been foolish and ineffective as a leader; Tamora, because she has blood on her hands; and Titus, because he also has blood on his hands, even though his revenge may be justified.

Flachmann: I love the fact that Titus has been out of town long enough to be unaware that Lavinia and Bassianus have gotten together. They obviously haven't been Skyping. [laughter] Jacquie, since we're getting a little frivolous here at the end of our hour, inquiring minds want to know, dear, how long your character has been pregnant in the play? Will you talk about that a little bit?

Antaramian: It's tricky. The way we staged the first private scene between Tamora and Aaron [2.3], he refers to my pregnancy.

Flachmann: He kisses your tummy at one point, doesn't he?

Antaramian: He does. And when I say, "Sweet melodious birds / Be unto us as is a nurse's song / Of lullaby to bring her babe asleep," I believe I am again referring to my unborn child. We finally decided that we had to go for a suspension of disbelief. So in some ways, she hid the pregnancy very well. [laughter] The one thing I still have trouble with is Tamora allegedly saying through

the nurse that the baby must die. If I am fighting for my son's life in the beginning so ferociously that it takes me to such a horrific place of revenge, I don't know how I could want to destroy a child that I had with a man I love. I think that she would probably want to hide it because it would be evidence of an illicit affair as opposed to a baby with Saturninus, but she would not want to kill it.

Flachmann: The baby really helps us see the "human" sides of both Tamora and Aaron, doesn't it? Especially in Aaron's final speeches. How did that develop during rehearsal?

Jones: That section at the end with the Goths was a stroke of genius Henry and I discovered. During that last monologue where Aaron lists all the horrific things he's done, it would be easy to simply dwell in the horror of it all for the entire speech, but we wanted to find some different levels to deepen and texture the moment. Using the baby's cries to interrupt Aaron provided the perfect solution to break the speech up. The baby's sounds make Aaron introspective and help him realize what a monster he has become. He can never be the loving father to this child he had hoped to be; he has chosen his path, and it's not one of compassion and concern for others. He abandons any notion of fatherhood and remorse and fully embraces who he is and what he's done. This is his life's work, and he would have to reject his entire being if he allowed regret to set in. It's a beautiful and tragic moment all at once.

Flachmann: That's a wonderful response. One of the comments Mr. Woronicz made in rehearsal is that this may not be a great play, but it's great theater. It has a mythic quality about it that invites us to look beneath its barbarous surface to the many subtle themes and images we've discussed this morning. Thank you to all our wonderful actors who have taken time out of their busy schedules to visit with us today. [applause] I'd also like to thank our terrific Education Department at the Festival, Michael Bahr and Josh Stavros; the Wooden O Editorial Board, which includes Matt Nickerson, Curt Bostick, Jess Tvordi, and Don Weingust; and our journal editor, Diana Major Spencer; further thanks to all the participants in the Wooden O; and a very special thank you to our wonderful audiences, without whom none of this would have been possible. [applause].

UNDERGRADUATE PAPER

Mirrors: Shakespeare's Use of Mythology in *Hamlet*

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French New Wave filmmaker Claude Chabrol once said, "I love mirrors. They let one pass through the surface of things."[1] Mirrors, whether physical or metaphorical, allow people, situations, and ideas to be reflected and examined—they provide a view below the surface and beyond the initial scene. Shakespeare utilizes this idea in his tragedy *Hamlet* by providing mirrors for the characters in the form of myths. Through the myths, Shakespeare reflects, like fraternal twins, situations similar to those experienced by the characters in the play, thereby highlighting the flaws of the characters and often foreshadowing their doom. Though not exact, these copies provide a view of the characters that is deeper than the surface. By the use of mythology, Shakespeare reflects twins, similar to doppelgangers, of Gertrude, Prince Hamlet, and King Hamlet that provide depth and greater understanding in his story.

Shakespeare's first reflection is the twin of Gertrude. Through his use of the Niobe myth, Shakespeare provides a comparison to Gertrude, as well as a foreboding foreshadowing of what is to come. Gertrude finds a twin in Niobe by their good fortune, their response to it, and the result of their response. Niobe, queen of Thebes and mother of fourteen children, has great power and much of which to be proud. As a result, she becomes arrogant, feeling that she deserves as much, if not more, respect than the gods. When Niobe halts the worship ceremony of Leto, she angers the goddess, who punishes her severely. In her wrath, Leto sends Apollo and Athena, her two children, to slay each of Niobe's children. Further repercussions occur when Niobe's husband dies

as a result of the debilitating loss. Stripped of everything, Niobe cries ceaselessly until the gods turn her to stone; but even then she continues to cry, symbolizing "eternal mourning."[2]

Likewise, Gertrude is the wife of King Hamlet. She is blessed with a son, Hamlet, and "lives almost by his looks" (4.7.12).[3] After her husband's untimely death, Gertrude arrogantly marries her husband's brother, creating an "incestuous relationship between [herself] and Claudius."[4] Because this relationship defies nature as Niobe defies the gods, Gertrude, according to D. J. Snider, "[touches] the very core [of] the profound ethical nature of Hamlet."[5] Hamlet perceives his mother's fleeting grief as fake and sarcastically describes it as "like Niobe, all tears" (1.2.153). As a result, he stores up anger and hatred towards his mother. In the ensuing chaos, Gertrude's heart is "cleft . . . in twain" (3.4.177) as the "thorns [of her guilt] prick and sting her" (1.5.94-95). She loses her "children"—Ophelia, Laertes, and Hamlet—and her power as queen. Finally, she, like Niobe, becomes as stone in death. In arrogance, Niobe and Gertrude defied a higher power, resulting in insurmountable sorrow, death, and, ultimately, an eternity of mourning. Through the mirroring myth, Shakespeare creates a second, deeper dimension to Gertrude that symbolizes her sorrow in life and her eternal condemnation in death.

The second mirrored image in the tragedy is that of Hamlet. In the mirror, the hero Hercules is reflected. While Hamlet believes he is nothing like Hercules, Shakespeare uses the myth to create for Hamlet a kindred spirit in the hero. He also uses the myth to reinforce Hamlet's perceptions of himself and his life. Hamlet and Hercules are similar in that they are both faced with insurmountable tasks—Hamlet, his father's revenge; and Hercules, his place among the gods. These tasks cannot be completed without a tragic inciting incident. For Hercules, he cannot move towards his immortality until he completes his twelve labors, which may not be started without his rage-induced murder of his family.[6] Likewise, Hamlet is not able to truly begin his "almost blunted purpose" (3.4.127) until he unwittingly slays Polonius. Shakespeare further uses the Hercules myth to provide a telling description of Hamlet's task by describing it as "hardy as the Nemean lion's nerve" (1.4.93), thereby showing the task's true difficulty. To slay the Nemean lion, a vicious beast, is the first of

Hercules' twelve tasks, and Hercules is able to complete it only because of his superior strength.

Hamlet and Hercules are also similar in parentage. Hercules is the son of a god, Zeus, and a mortal. Similarly, Hamlet is the son of King Hamlet, who, in his son's eyes, surpasses the gods, and the queen, who is only "seeming-virtuous" (1.5.53). Also, both Hercules and Hamlet slay the woman they love: Hercules does so in a fit of rage, while Hamlet indirectly drives Ophelia to insanity, leading to her drowning. Ultimately, both men meet their deaths at the hands of a poison administered by someone close to them. Finally, their tasks are not completed until they are faced with death. Hercules is taken to be with the gods when on his funeral pyre, and Hamlet does not kill Claudius until he is himself pierced with the poisoned blade.

While Shakespeare uses Hercules to mirror Hamlet in many respects, he emphasizes one key flaw in the reflection—Hamlet is paralyzed. While Hercules acts, Hamlet is the "victim of an excess of the reflective faculty."[7] Hamlet is not "a conventional revenger because he has too many thoughts."[8] While Hercules will do what he must, Hamlet prolongs his agony by refusing to do his duty, highlighting his view of himself as "pigeon-livered and lack[ing] gall" (2.2.604). Through his use of Hercules, Shakespeare provides a mirror into Hamlet that shows how arduous his task is, as well as emphasizing Hamlet's insecure view of himself as a failure.

Shakespeare's final mirror image is a reflection of the King. However, this reflection differs from the other two because it is an image reflected from a broken mirror. Using several myths, Shakespeare creates a fractured view of King Hamlet—a view that provides insight into the king as well as into his son. To Hamlet, his father had the aspects of many gods, thereby resulting in Hamlet placing him on a pedestal higher than the gods. Using the myths, Shakespeare reflects Hamlet's view of his father as a god by saying he had hair like the "Titan god of light,"[9] a face like Jove, who was the king of the gods,[10] eyes like the god of war,[11] and a "way of standing that is like the winged messenger of the gods."[12] None can compare—especially his mother's new husband, Claudius. As a result of his hero worship, Hamlet's opinions of his mother as an adulteress and himself as a failure are only further solidified. Because of his god-like view of his

father, Hamlet is all the more willing to believe the ghost, though logic cannot confirm whether or not it is a "Catholic spirit from Purgatory or a demonic imposter."[13] Hamlet "melts all reality into his own subjective shapes."[14] He is often blind to the truth around him, including the truth about the character of his father.

While using a fractured mirror to reflect Hamlet's views of his father, Shakespeare also uses an unbroken mirror to provide a more complete reflection of the king. This reflection is very different from the shattered image in Hamlet's reality. Hamlet describes the king as having "Hyperion's curls" (3.4.66). While Hyperion is the god of light, mythology tells that he helped to castrate his own father and later Zeus threw him into the pit of Tartarus, along with the other defeated Titans.[15] King Hamlet is also described as having "the front of Jove himself" (3.4.66). Jove is described as a god who is constantly unfaithful to his wife, having children with many different women and parenting them from afar.[16] Shakespeare further describes the king as having "an eye like Mars, to threaten and command" (3.4.67). Mars was infamous for his unbridled rage and passion, which caused him to act hotheadedly in battle and flee when he was injured.[17] While Hamlet views his father as a god among men, Shakespeare uses mythology to paint a picture of a cold, unfaithful, evil man, thereby explaining why King Hamlet is tormented in Purgatory. Through the use of mythology, reflected from Hamlet's fractured mirror and the whole mirror, Shakespeare provides a complete view of the king that shows both the surface of the king's character as well as the darker side underneath.

By holding up the myths as mirrors to the characters in the play, Shakespeare reflects a deeper view of each character and a glimpse into their fate. Gertrude, because of her arrogance, lost all she cared about, including her life, which was ended before she could repent. Therefore she will spend eternity mourning, just as Niobe, who also lost everything, is forever a weeping stone. Gertrude defied nature and, in Hamlet's eyes, a god by betraying her husband. Likewise, Niobe defied the gods and paid dearly. Hamlet and Hercules are faced with unimaginable tasks. Both men were the seemingly weak sons of immortal fathers, who were able to complete their missions only after dire tragedies, including the deaths of their lovers. Both men died at the hands of friends,

using poison to perform the dastardly deed. The key difference that the mirror provides between Hamlet and Hercules is that Hercules will act while Hamlet remains paralyzed by his intellect. Finally, Shakespeare uses a fractured mirror as well as an unbroken one to reflect two views of King Hamlet—the shape of a god that influenced his son and the true image of a tyrant.

By the use of the mirroring myths, Shakespeare ingeniously creates images that provide depth and interest to his characters. The depth that the twins provide creates a bridge between the characters in the play and the audience. Most people, like Hamlet, have a fractured view of someone they love or, like Gertrude, cannot see beyond their own desires. Through his use of mirrors, Shakespeare provides a view that penetrates the surface and reflects not only the play's characters, but also the audience—therein lies Shakespeare's genius.

Notes

1. "Mirrors Quotes," http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/keywords/mirrors.html (accessed March 22, 2012).

2. *Encyclopedia Mythica*, s.v. "Niobe" (by Anna Baldwin, May 13,1997), http://www.pantheon.org/articles/n/niobe.html (accessed March 22, 2012).

3. William Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*, ed. Barbara A. Mowat and Paul Werstine (New York: Washington Square Press, 1992). In-text act, scene, and line numbers refer to this edition.

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