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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. Plays from Shakespeare's canon are performed each summer in the Englestadt Shakespeare Theatre, a unique performance space modeled after the Globe Theatre, Shakespeare's own "Wooden O."

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"I Weep What's Left Away": Adriana's Complaint and the Poetry of Loss in *The Comedy of Errors*

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The Comedy of Errors, like most Shakespeare plays, includes far more male characters than female ones. Only sixteen percent of Shakespeare's 981 characters are female, and only thirteen percent of major roles (with more than 500 lines) are given to female characters.[1] This percentage is slightly higher in *The Comedy of Errors*, but still only five of eighteen named characters are women. Thus, the interaction between the male characters seems to largely drive the main events of the play. Egeon argues for his life and the two Antipholuses and Dromios continually misidentify each other until the Duke resolves the whole situation at the end. Though the low proportion of female characters might suggest that they play a less important role than their male counterparts, these five women not only add much of the psychological depth of the play, but they also introduce important topics related to gender and equality that Shakespeare will return to again and again in his subsequent plays.

All the women in *The Comedy of Errors* are worth exploring, especially since they embody different versions of femininity, but the sisters at the heart of the play provide an especially interesting case study of women's roles in Shakespeare and in Elizabethan England. Like the two sets of male twins, the two sisters–Adriana and Luciana–act as doubles and foils for each other. Their names are similar, they inhabit the same domestic sphere, and they serve

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as support and confidantes to each other throughout the play. They even finish each other's couplets, as do lovers in other plays like *Romeo and Juliet* or *Richard III*. The two sisters seem very similar to each other in their outspokenness. They share their opinions boldly and aren't timid about standing up to others. But like their male counterparts, the sisters are also different from each other in temperament and perspective. While Luciana, free from marital responsibility, believes in female submission and male freedom, the married Adriana comes across as more committed to female empowerment and fair treatment.

This difference of perspectives is perhaps most apparent in the sisters' conversation at the start of Act 2, the first time we meet them in the play. When Adriana complains that her husband isn't home for dinner despite her having sent Dromio to fetch him, Luciana offers excuses for his absence and encourages her sister not to worry:

> Good sister, let us dine, and never fret:
> A man is master of his liberty:
> Time is their master; and when they see time, They'll go
> or come: if so, be patient, sister. (2.1.6-9)[2]

Luciana's words of comfort seem partly focused on her sister's state of mind, as she encourages her to move on with her own dinner and to be patient. The reasons for the patience she urges, however, do not seem to comfort Adriana, who focuses on the inequality inherent in her excuse. Utilizing the concept of liberty, which Marjorie Garber suggests is "essential to the play's other ongoing conversation about domestic authority, the relationship between masters and servants,"[3] Adriana pushes back against her sister's claim by asking "Why should their liberty than ours be more?" (2.1.10). She asserts that Luciana only espouses this opinion because she has not yet been "bruised with adversity" through the actions of an "unkind mate" (2.1.34-41).

As evidenced by this conversation, Adriana champions women's equal treatment. Readers and viewers of the play often interpret her character as unusually outspoken for a Shakespearean woman, or indeed for an early modern woman in general. Her demands for equal liberty have led contemporary scholars to label her as "proto-feminist" and "the voice of the modern woman."[4] It is true that in comparison to Luciana's, Adriana's speeches seem

progressive. If we accept the common assumption that Luciana is the voice of the typical Elizabethan woman, then Adriana seems decidedly before her time in her feminist views.

But the reality of the situation is more complicated than this simple interpretation suggests. As Thomas Hennings asserts, the fair and kind treatment Adriana demands would not be surprising to Shakespeare's audience, since it was very much in line with the Anglican doctrine of companionate marriage being preached in Elizabethan England during the same time period: "Dismissing Luciana's appeal to a double moral standard, Adriana upholds the Anglican standard of conjugal unity, intimacy, and affection."[5] According to Hennings, Adriana's perspective is a more accurate reflection of Christian Elizabethan views about how wives should be treated than the "superficial and secular" opinion articulated by Luciana.[6] Hennings goes on to assert that "[Adriana] does not and never did seek social or political equality with her husband. Rather, she is content to rely on him" as the superior partner. "Thou art an elm, my husband, I a vine," says Adriana, taking Antipholus's arm in hers, "Whose weakness, married to thy state, / Makes me with thy strength to communicate" (2.2.174-76).[7] Her tirades and laments are therefore not a rebellion against societal norms so much as a desire to adhere to them.

Moreover, the form and content of Adriana's speeches actually connect her to a much older tradition, one very much alive during Shakespeare's time: the female literary complaint, a genre devoted to articulating the loss of love and fidelity that women often experience in relationships. Shakespeare's use of this literary mode shows that Adriana is not a character ahead of her time, but is instead a representation of the many early modern English women–real and fictional–who used the genre of female-voiced complaint as a vehicle to protest the losses they suffered and to attain better treatment for themselves and others.

According to Lauren Berlant, literary complaint is a textual form that addresses "personal, social, or institutional struggles witnessed by a powerful voice that aims to reveal (to the reading audience, and often to the recalcitrant or disappointing object of the invective) an injustice perpetrated against the speaker or something the speaker represents."[8] The complaint form dates at least as far back as ancient Rome, where writers used these texts

to call attention to religious or political misbehavior and to seek redress. But along with those public concerns, private relationship issues–whether real or fictional–also became the subject matter for complaint texts. This "major sub-category of complaint" became known as "the lover's complaint," and focused on "mak[ing] injustice in a private relationship a matter both of public record and public concern, often on behalf of all 'lovers.'"[9] Early modern English literature made generous use of the lover's complaint, both in elite court literature and in popular culture.[10] The inspiration for the genre came partly from medieval love poetry and partly from biblical "plaint" (like the Old Testament Psalms), but was probably most strongly influenced by the "widespread dissemination of Ovid's *Heroides*, a series of epistolary laments by abandoned women of the historical and mythical past to their absent lovers."[11]

Ovid wrote these poetic letters in elegiac couplets using the voices of heroines like Dido, Penelope, Phaedra, Ariadne, and Medea to create, as he asserted, a new genre of poetry.[12] In the poems, the women urge their partners to come home, to return their affections, to rescue them from danger, or at the very least to recognize the harm they have done to those they have left behind. George Turberville's 1567 English translation of Ovid's *Heroides* went through at least four editions in the second half of the sixteenth century and was, moreover, heavily used as a textbook in English schools for teaching rhetorical skills.[13] Shakespeare would surely have been familiar with the text and its characteristic way of giving voice to the sentiments of loss and betrayal experienced by the female characters. His rhetorical education thus prepared him to make heavy use of prosopopoeia, "a figure of speech in which an imaginary or absent person is represented as speaking or acting."[14] He seems to have tried his own hand at the complaint genre in "The Lover's Complaint" in 1609 (though authorship is disputed), but elements of the form also appear in earlier poems like "The Rape of Lucrece," which include the voices of both male and female characters involved in a social and legal dispute.[15] And Shakespeare was just one of dozens of Elizabethan writers who turned to the lover's complaint as a vehicle for their poetic expression. Rosalind Smith, Michelle O'Callaghan, and Sarah C. E. Ross argue that "complaint offered a widely used, emotionally charged, nuanced vehicle for expressing powerlessness or protest in response to loss

and grievance in the rapidly changing cultures of early modern England. As such, it is a crucial mode for the formation of the early modern political subject in ways that privilege irresolution, dilation and vulnerability rather than containment, control and mastery."[16] A wide range of authors from Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey to Edmund Spenser to Isabella Whitney used the complaint genre to explore emotions of loss and betrayal and share those emotions with readers.

Shakespeare and his contemporaries in the theatrical world brought complaint out of poetry books in the schoolroom and into the theater. The form plays a major role in Elizabethan drama, appearing frequently in plays by writers like Marlowe, Kyd, and Beaumont and Fletcher.[17] Emily Shortslef asserts that far from being a rarity on the stage, "complaint was the voice of early modern tragedy," and argues that "speeches of complaint gave external form to what characters suggested was inward and ineffable grief, making that anguish palpable, an almost physical presence on the stage.[18] With equal force they directed that grief outward, hurling it at someone else as a plea or accusation."[19] These characters, both male and female, ranging from Queen Margaret in *Richard III* to King Lear to Isabella in *Measure for Measure,* use complaint not only to influence other characters, but also to demand empathy from theatrical audiences.[20]

Although Shortslef's argument confines the role of complaint to early modern tragedy, many of her arguments apply to Shakespearean comedy as well. Despite typically happy endings, comedy gives voice to serious concerns and laments. Most important for my argument, female-voiced complaint provides a familiar vehicle for drawing public attention to the concerns of Elizabethan women and arguing for their fair and kind treatment. Indeed, building on Lynn Enterline's claim that characters like Marlowe's Dido participate in "skeptical imitations of epic that undercut normative, end-driven representations of nationhood and masculinity,"[21] I argue that reading Adriana's speeches–especially her lament in Act 2 Scene 2–within the tradition of female-voiced complaint helps us understand how they undercut the farcical male-dominated world of Antipholuses and Dromios to communicate much more serious messages of loss and the necessity of redress.

By the time Adriana confronts her supposed husband Antipholus in Act 2 Scene 2, she has had plenty of time and reason for her anger to develop. His absence is at the heart of a much deeper concern, especially within a Christian context: "his eye doth homage otherwhere" (2.1.103). Antipholus's wandering and betrayal causes Adriana to doubt her own beauty and desirability, fearing that they have been "ruined" by his unkindness. She feels like her only recourse is to "weep what's left [of her beauty] away, and weeping die" (2.1.114).

With this emotional prelude, the meeting between Adriana and Antipholus of Syracuse in the next scene makes sense to us as viewers in a way that it does not to Antipholus. Adriana's speech to him is the longest in the play, apart from Egeon's backstory in the first scene and Antipholus of Ephesus's recap of his woes at the end. Unlike their externally-oriented speeches, hers is focused on feeling instead of on events.

Adriana begins her complaint by asserting that Antipholus's neglect and infidelity have stripped her of her identity and betrayed his past promises to her:

> Ay, ay, Antipholus, look strange and frown:
> Some other mistress hath thy sweet aspects;
> I am not Adriana nor thy wife.
> The time was once when thou unurged wouldst vow
> That never words were music to thine ear,
> That never object pleasing in thine eye, That
> never touch well welcome to thy hand, That
> never meat sweet-savor'd in thy taste,
> Unless I spake, or look'd, or touch'd, or carved to thee.
> (2.2.110-118)

The "ay, ay" that begins the speech is a sound of ironic assent, but it also communicates surprise, regret, and sorrow, like the cry of someone in pain. And Adriana is in pain; her role has been usurped by "some other mistress," who receives the "sweet aspects" due to Antipholus's wife. Indeed, it is these loving looks–in contrast to the frowns and strange expressions she currently is receiving–that create her identity as Adriana, Antipholus's wife. As Martine Van Elk explains,

> The speech formulates what it means to say "I am Adriana," which is synonymous with saying "I am Antipholus's

> wife." Female subjectivity is covered by marital status and represented as a continued process of exchange: the wife provides pleasure to all the husband's senses, for which he rewards her by praise. If this exchange is necessary to enable Adriana to call herself Adriana, then her name and the label of wife are not permanent.[22]

Adriana's use of anaphora in the repetition of "that never" drives home the absolute nature of his promised love to her, but also reinforces the distance from that "time [that] once." She catalogues the senses to highlight the completeness of her role in his life, as speech, sight, touch, and taste were all bound up in their relationship to each other.

Adriana next elaborates on the interconnectedness she feels with her husband, borrowing the language of Anglican teachings on affectionate marriage:[23]

> How comes it now, my husband, O, how comes it,
> That thou art thus estranged from thyself?
> Thyself I call it, being strange to me,
> That, undividable, incorporate,
> Am better than thy dear self's better part. Ah, do
> not tear away thyself from me!
> For know, my love, as easy mayest thou fall
> A drop of water in the breaking gulf,
> And take unmingled that same drop again,
> Without addition or diminishing,
> As take from me thyself and not me too. (2.2.119-129)

She uses the same metaphor her listener, Antipholus of Syracuse, uses earlier to describe his quest for his mother and brother–that of a drop of water in the ocean–to describe the unity she feels and desires in her marriage. In tearing himself away from her, both physically by pulling back from her in this moment and figuratively by spending his time away from home, her husband is trying to violently divide an "undividable, incorporate" body into pieces. Adriana suggests that such an attempt is ultimately impossible, since it necessarily pulls her along with him.

Finally, Adriana extends her criticism of her husband's mistreatment to the double standard he (and society) might apply if she were guilty of the same crimes:

> How dearly would it touch me to the quick,
> Shouldst thou but hear I were licentious And

> that this body, consecrate to thee,
> By ruffian lust should be contaminate? Wouldst
> thou not spit at me and spurn at me, And hurl the
> name of husband in my face, And tear the
> stain'd skin off my harlot-brow, And from my
> false hand cut the wedding-ring, And break it
> with a deep-divorcing vow?
> I know thou canst; and therefore see thou do it! I am
> possess'd with an adulterate blot;
> My blood is mingled with the crime of lust:
> For if we two be one and thou play false,
> I do digest the poison of thy flesh,
> Being strumpeted by thy contagion.
> Keep then far league and truce with thy true bed;
> I live unstain'd, thou undishonoured. (2.2.130-146)

Again, the use of anaphora with the word "and" drives home the extent and extremeness of her husband's imagined response to even the rumor or her infidelity, a prediction that seems accurate based on his threats later in the play (4.4.96-99 and 5.1.183-84) to "pluck out [her] false eyes" (4.4.98) and "scorch [her] face and disfigure [her]." Using the language of plague and venereal disease, Adriana begs her husband to act on his passionate emotions to avoid spreading "contagion" to her by returning home to his "true bed" where the two of them can live in unity and purity together.

Adriana's reasons for being upset in this speech differ greatly from those of her counterpart in Shakespeare's source text, Plautus's *Menaechmi*.[24] Matrona, the wife in Plautus's comedy, who doesn't even get a proper name of her own, spends much of the Roman play complaining, but her list of grievances looks quite different from Adriana's. Matrona's concerns seem to be largely economic: she complains about her husband taking her clothes and jewelry from the house to give to his mistress. Her rants have none of the emotional depth of Adriana's, but instead focus on the material losses she has suffered. The redress she seeks seems to be a return of her property, not of her husband, and she repeatedly states her preference for divorce or widowhood over the current state of her marriage.

Shakespeare's Adriana, on the contrary, uses language and sentiments much closer to Ovid's *Heroides* and early modern lover's complaint literature. Her concerns are emotional rather

than material, and although her greatest wish is for a happier marriage, she freely admits her powerlessness to amend the situation through her own efforts. Her speech exemplifies the "compassionate emotion, irresolution and lack of control" that Smith, O'Callaghan, and Ross describe as typical of Elizabethan female-voiced complaint.[25] Like Ovid's Penelope or Dido, Adriana documents her suffering before an audience, including those within the play: Dromio, Luciana, and the other Antipholus, as well as those people watching in the theater. As Berlant explains,

> The female complaint is thus an aesthetic "witnessing" of injury. Situated precisely in the space between a sexual politics that threatens structures of patriarchal authority and a sentimentality that confirms the inevitability of the speaker's powerlessness, the female complaint registers the speaker's frustration, rage, abjection, and heroic self-sacrifice.[26]

Adriana's speech, therefore, gives public airtime to her private concerns, calling on her listeners' empathy for her suffering, but also drawing attention to the plight of other women like herself. Her plea to Antipholus is not an assertion of dominance or desire for control; on the contrary, it is a recognition of how limited her options are. Like Beatrice in *Much Ado About Nothing*, who laments "I cannot be a man / with wishing; therefore I will die a woman with / grieving" (4.1.336-338), Adriana accepts that language is her only recourse.[27] Like other women of Shakespeare's time (both real and fictional), she sees complaint as an effective tool for speaking out in response to her mistreatment–an allowed form of protest against her powerless state.

So what happens when we read Adriana's speeches as complaint? First, this reading lends weight and seriousness to her character. By aligning Adriana with the epic heroines of the *Heroides* and the protagonists of lover's complaint poems, we better understand the pathos of her situation and its broad relevance. She is not just an individual angry wife railing against her wayward husband; instead, she is part of a larger community of wronged women whose laments call attention to societal patterns of mistreatment.

Second, seeing complaint in Adriana's lines complicates the genre of the play. *The Comedy of Errors* is generally recognized as one of Shakespeare's earliest plays and therefore is sometimes characterized as lacking depth. The play is often categorized as

farce or as an uneasy mixture between farce and romance, with Adriana trying to play the role of a romance heroine in a farcical world.[28] Van Elk argues that Adriana's tendency toward romance is ultimately ineffective and that she ends up succumbing to the power of farce: "Adriana's self-presentation is undermined because her words are misdirected, spoken in the wrong setting, or misinterpreted. Due to her role within farce, her subjectivity lacks the deeper relevance she herself perceives, and her marital problems are never truly resolved."[29] But reading Adriana's speeches as complaint suggests that this lack of resolution is to be expected and the deeper relevance remains, regardless of the outcome. The protagonist in a complaint does not have to convince her beloved to change or even have his attention in order for her words to have value. They have value because they bear witness to her suffering and make it public. In Shortslef's words, theatrical complaints like Adriana's "helped to articulate the theater's social value as a site of affective community where very different people, positioned very differently in the social structure, were invited to grieve together for the same things–for figures who complain."[30] In this sense, Adriana's choice of the "wrong" listener or setting actually increases the emotional effect of her complaint on the audience, since we know that the Antipholus she speaks to cannot give her any satisfaction for her grievances. By adding the genre of complaint to the farce and romance already at work in the comedy, we can see that there is more complexity to the play than might initially be apparent.

Third, recognizing the function of complaint within *The Comedy of Errors* helps to firmly situate Adriana's opinions and speeches within Elizabethan culture. It shows that a woman arguing against mistreatment and speaking out in favor of affectionate marriage was not an anomaly, but a common occurrence. By normalizing Adriana's behavior instead of characterizing it as "proto-feminist" or "ahead of its time," we not only get a better understanding of the rich and varied culture of Elizabethan England, but also of the way in which Shakespeare wrote for and from that culture. Recognizing Adriana's speeches as part of a larger genre of early-modern complaint literature helps readers and viewers see that she is not an exception, but one of many voices arguing for the

importance of hearing about women's experiences and valuing their perspectives.

Finally, reading Adriana's speeches as complaints seeking redress helps to explain why the ending of *The Comedy of Errors* differs so markedly from that of Plautus's *Menaechmi*. In the Roman play, the two brothers leave town together, abandoning Matrona and all the other unwanted responsibilities of life there. The resolution of the play comes from embracing the fraternal relationship but rejecting all the other relationships, especially marriage. In fact, Menaechmus of Epidamnus includes his wife in the possessions he plans to auction off. In contrast, the ending of *The Comedy of Errors* shows a reconciliation, not only between Adriana and her Antipholus, but also between Egeon and Emeilia, Luciana and the other Antipholus, and the two Dromios. Emilia's final speech celebrates the long-awaited reunion of the family, a larger-scale fulfillment of the wish both Antipholus of Syracuse and Adriana articulated in their comments about drops of water in the ocean. Instead of clinging only to each other, as Plautus's twins do, Shakespeare's Antipholuses are re-integrated into a larger family structure built on bonds between siblings, but also between spouses. Adriana gains additional reinforcement in her argument for the importance of family and marriage, since now her husband is connected not only to her, but also to father, mother, brother, and (presumably) sister-in-law. She may have gained allies in her cause who can reinforce her claims on her husband, while also helping her to see her own responsibilities as a wife. The play suggests that the bonds of family are lasting and resilient, so Adriana's complaints may have done their work, since they have ultimately led her from loss to gain, regaining not only her husband, but his whole family.

Notes

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8. Lauren Berlant, *The Female Complaint: The Unfinished Business of Sentimentality in American Culture* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 242-243.

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10. Rosalind Smith, Michelle O'Callaghan, and Sarah C. E. Ross, "Complaint," in *A Companion to Renaissance Poetry*, ed. Catherine Bates (Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2018), 339.

11. Smith, O'Callaghan, and Ross, "Complaint," 340.

12. Perhaps Shakespeare's inspiration for the couplets in this play?

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17. Shortslef, Emily. *Weeping, Wailing, Sighing, Railing: Shakespeare and the Drama of Complaint*. Ph.D. Diss. (Columbia University, 2015), 3.

18. Shortslef, *Weeping, Wailing, Sighing, Railing,* 3.

19. Shortslef, *Weeping, Wailing, Sighing, Railing,* 2.

20. Shortslef, *Wailing, Sighing, Railing,* 3.

21. Enterline, "Drama, Pedagogy, and the Female Complaint," 207.

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25. Smith, O'Callaghan, and Ross, "Complaint," 345.

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28. Van Elk, "Genre, Representation, and Subjectivity," 63-64.

29. Van Elk, "Genre, Representation, and Subjectivity," 63.

30. Shortslef, *Wailing, Sighing, Railing,* 181

"I Like This Place": Race, Conduct, and Ownership in *As You Like It*

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The early modern era was a time of significant transformation in England. The population was booming, enclosure was altering people's relationship with land, and an increase in colonial projects marked a new level of globalization. These transformations expanded trade and shifted early modern understandings of the world, ultimately leading to more complex interactions with people from other places. As Jean Howard notes, the shift in population meant that "between foreigners and aliens, London must at times have felt like a city where… the mixing of different kinds of people was inevitable."[1] While there had always been some instability, this shift in wealth and population challenged previously restrictive sociocultural boundaries in the early modern era. Patricia Akhimie explains that this shift was not just about land and money, but identity as well, since "the potential for mobility—a shift in social status, or national or cultural identity—[was] revolutionary in the early modern period… an awesome opportunity as well as an anxiety-provoking prospect."[2] As space between different lands became more easily traversed, so did the space between class and the identity associated with it. Thus, the early modern population grappled not only with new ideas and cultures, but with how contact with these previously unknown entities would alter their own sense of identity.

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Shakespeare not only bore witness to this, but also responded to globalization by employing an "exotic other" in several plays, from Othello in *Othello* to the Indian "changeling" in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. *As You Like It*, though, explores the "exotic other" of unknown territories, considering how characters interact when encountering new places. This exploration underwrites both a colonial and an aristocratic relationship with land. When Celia and Rosalind craft their escape plan in the first act of *As You Like It,* their initial hope is to find refuge in the forests of Arden. Yet, once in Arden, they not only purchase a small cottage but also hire the people who manage the land, with Celia saying, "I like this place / and willingly could waste my time in it" (2.4.93-94).[3] Celia and Rosalind do not view new territory as a place to explore and learn from—these pursuits could tarnish their noble status—but see foreign lands as something to be claimed for power and pleasure; Celia could "waste" her time there to gain control and uphold her status. Shakespeare portrays how early modern Europeans responded to an exotic "other," whether a person or a place, by seizing control to enable leisure. In my reading, Celia and Rosalind engage in an early form of gentrification, as they enter an "untamed" land and wield their power as gentry. *As You Like It* sustains a class-based racism rooted in the gentry's pursuit of power and control. The play reinforces the racialization of working-class bodies as dark and distasteful, rewards aristocratic conduct, and ultimately legitimizes the colonization of foreign lands, with Celia's desire to "waste" time in Arden becoming an ironic emblem of dominance secured at the laborers' expense.

As You Like It's plot revolves around the desire to regain stability and control. Duke Frederick has usurped the throne of his older brother, the aptly named Duke Senior, banishing him and, eventually, his daughter, Rosalind. Refusing to live without Rosalind, Duke Frederick's daughter, Celia, decides that they will run off to the Forest of Arden with their jester, Touchstone. Because Rosalind is concerned about the dangers of traveling as two young, beautiful noblewomen, since "beauty provoketh thieves sooner than gold" (1.3.107), Celia says she will dress in "poor and mean attire /…with a kind of umber smirch" on her face (1.3.108-109) so they may "never stir assailants" (1.3.110). Shakespeare draws clear distinctions between the gentry and the

working class; Celia's "umber" or darkened skin is meant to blend in with those of lower status, illustrating how racial distinctions overlap with those of class. Even Shakespeare's use of the word "smirch" denotes a "soiling" or "dirtying." Rather than simply denoting the application of color, it establishes darkened skin as separate from and beneath Celia's status. Celia further distances this darkened identity from her true self with her chosen name, "Aliena." The word "alien" derives from Anglo-Norman and Middle French, meaning someone from a foreign place. It also has origins in classical Latin, meaning "unnatural."[4] Celia's choice of name reveals beliefs about both the lower class and the inhabitants of Arden she is attempting to emulate. They are "alien" compared to her "former" self, and she must "alienate" herself to inhabit this new space. This leap to brownface perpetuates the early modern belief that Akhimie discusses; race and class are "imbricated," since "working bodies are marked bodies— bruised and beaten, wasted, hardened by toil, and darkened by exposure to the sun."[5] Akhimie notes that these "marked bodies… signify social rank or… differences in access to the means of production (working bodies as opposed to landed and leisured bodies)."[6] It is not enough to don poor-quality clothing; Celia's disguise must have brown skin to conceal a body meant for "leisure." Celia's whiteness is a key symbol of gentle status, and "Aliena" is a foil for an othered, darkened self.

Rosalind and Celia's arrival in Arden reveals not just the difference between aristocratic and laboring bodies but also aristocratic attitudes towards land. The two noblewomen never appear concerned or even curious about the customs of the new territory they enter, nor do they wonder if or how they will fit in. Instead, they assume darkened skin will do that work for them. When the group exhaustedly stumbles onto a cottage where two Arden shepherds, Silvius and Corin, work, Rosalind does not stay inconspicuous and instead offers to buy the place outright (2.4.90-92). Celia, roused from her weary state, says that they will also "mend [their] wages" and pay the shepherds to continue keeping the cottage, declaring: "I like this place / and willingly could waste my time in it" (2.4.93-94). With this declaration, Celia reveals a common and essential aristocratic view of the land; there is no interest in how to care for or even live on the land. Instead, there

is only a desire to "waste time" on it, using local labor for upkeep and pleasure. This concept is further underscored by Corin's description of an absent, mismanaging owner (2.4.84-85), who clearly does not understand the responsibility to "properly" use the place. Rosalind and Celia have an aristocratic understanding of what must be done next. They must gain control of the land and use it for their own leisure. With enclosures still occurring in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, the connection between land and the accumulation of wealth became even more apparent, as the gentry were significant supporters and drivers of land privatization. Rosalind and Celia enact the same processes that were becoming increasingly essential in the early modern era. They establish wealth by purchasing land and labor in a foreign place. This accumulation of land and capital provides them with power and protection while also sharpening the disparity between their status and that of those whose labor they have just purchased.

This move also aligns with Rosalind and Celia's current financial situation. Although they belong to the noble class, they are exiled women who lack continued access to funds and power. As Robert Brenner observes, this "middling" or powerless gentry, which included younger brothers or lesser gentry, were more likely to become involved in colonizing projects, since higher-ranking gentry were often unwilling to take the risk.[7] Thus, Rosalind and Celia's purchase of the land in a new space, not a part of inherited family land, mirrors how a particular faction of the nobility participated in colonizing projects. This naturalizes colonial acquisition as something other than aggression. It becomes, instead, a reasonable response to dispossession. By casting Rosalind and Celia as sympathetic exiles rather than straightforward aggressors, Shakespeare makes the purchase of Arden's land and labor feel like resourcefulness rather than appropriation. The audience is supposed to root for their success, and in doing so, endorse the logic that undergirds it; those of gentle birth have both the right and the responsibility to take control of unfamiliar territory when circumstance demands it. These two characters engage in impersonation on several levels; they both feign the darker skin tone of the "natives" to gain trust; Rosalind impersonates a man who can own land; and then they use that land to engage in leisure activities they were previously unable to pursue. Despite being

separated from the source of their leisure, Rosalind and Celia understand how they should behave given their "natural" status and are rewarded for using any means necessary to realize it. With this purchase, Shakespeare reinforces the connection between race, class, and land ownership. As Akhimie discusses, class shapes not just how land was viewed, but also how those actions maintain power, since "leisure is more than just the privilege of those who can claim both the free time and the green space to enjoy it: leisure is a performance of power in which ruling elites demonstrate that they possess the mental agility and acuity that justifies their dominance."[8] Celia and Rosalind would never work the land themselves, but they are able to use the land as noblewomen; they see it as not only their right but also a demonstration of conduct befitting their status.

The gap between the gentry and the working class appears wider with Phoebe's introduction to the play. Phoebe, a native to Arden, arrives in the third act when she cruelly belittles Silvius and his declarations of love. Rather than accept him or politely turn him down, Phoebe debases Silvius in several long speeches until she is interrupted by Rosalind, disguised as Ganymede. Rosalind immediately chastises her, insisting she "has no beauty," since Phoebe's "inky brows [or] black silk hair" could not "entame [Rosalind's] spirits to [her] worship" (3.5.38-49). The condemnation is striking. Rosalind does not simply call Phoebe cruel or immodest; she grounds her judgment in Phoebe's appearance, and the appearance she attacks is dark. This conflation of darkness with unworthiness intensifies later when Rosalind, as Ganymede, describes Phoebe's "leathered hand… / a freestone-coloured hand. I verily did think / that her old gloves were on, but 'twas her hands. / She has a housewife's hand" (4.3.24-27). The phrase "housewife's hand" has dual meaning here. It marks Phoebe as a laboring body—roughened, discolored, shaped by toil rather than leisure—and uses that physical evidence to disqualify her from Rosalind's social world. Phoebe's darkness is not a neutral phenotypic observation but a verdict. *As You Like It* reinforces the racialization of working-class bodies as dark and distasteful, as Rosalind's disgust is animated by a mix of class and racial animus. To have a "housewife's hand" is to have a body that has been used, marked, and diminished by labor, and that body cannot be an

object of desire or legitimate social exchange. Akhimie's analysis of "working bodies" as "roughened, hardened, yellowed, browned and blackened, pinched and misshapen"[9] confirms that this racialization was not incidental but structural to early modern class ideology. Kim F. Hall further clarifies the stakes of Rosalind's contempt. As she says, "discourses of fairness were by and large shaped by this aristocratic class,"[10] and those discourses policed marriage and property by coding dark women as "the ultimate in undesirability," and unsuitable "objects of social exchange."[11] Rosalind's disgust, then, is not merely personal; it is the voice of a class asserting its boundaries through the body of a woman who has no right to cross them.

Rosalind's harsh judgment of Phoebe also highlights the nuanced distinctions that operated within the imbrication of race and class. In their Arden identities, "Ganymede's" supposed sister, "Aliena," appears dark like Phoebe. Yet Rosalind-as-Ganymede viciously debases Phoebe's complexion while making no mention of Aliena's appearance or questioning her worth because of it. The asymmetrical treatment is not accidental; it reveals that darkness alone is not what disqualifies Phoebe. What exempts Aliena from the same contempt is not skin color but conduct. Aliena, the audience knows, is Celia: a noblewoman who behaves like one regardless of her dark-skin-disguise. Phoebe, by contrast, is condemned not only for her darkness but for the behavior that accompanies it. Our introduction to Phoebe is her cruel treatment of Silvius and her subsequent dressing-down by Rosalind. Later, when Phoebe sends a letter declaring her love for Ganymede, Rosalind calls it writing so crude she cannot believe "women's gentle brain could not drop forth such giant-rude invention" (4.1.33-34), and dismisses Phoebe's words as "Ethiop words… blacker in their effect than their countenance" (4.1.24, 35). That comparison is precise and deliberately doubled. Phoebe's language is dark in the same way her body is dark, and both forms of darkness signal a deficit of moral and social worth. Shakespeare is not simply using darkness as a metaphor for evil; he is mapping a class-based moral hierarchy onto the body and the voice simultaneously so that Phoebe's appearance and her conduct become mutually confirming evidence of her lower status. This logic makes "Aliena" legible as a disguise rather than a true identity. Underneath the umber is a

body that knows how to behave, which the audience understands and which Rosalind's own conduct confirms at every turn. As Hall observes, "'black' in Renaissance discourses is opposed not to 'white' but to 'beauty' or 'fairness,' and these terms most often refer to the appearance or moral states of women," with whiteness "attached to values—purity, virginity, and innocence."[12] Akhimie's work on conduct clarifies the mechanism: "symbolic behaviors are 'taken to typify' aristocratic or base 'being,'"[13] and the discourse of conduct was "about the potential for transformation as it was about defining social categories as natural and immovable."[14] The point is not that dark skin is inherently inferior; it is that dark skin, combined with ungoverned behavior, confirms what the gentle class already believes: that the "right" people instinctively know how to act, and those who do not are marked literally and figuratively by that failure. "Aliena" may wear brownface, but she will never be like Phoebe, because innate conduct is the thing that cannot be faked.

Phoebe's juxtaposition with Aliena also serves to portray Arden's inhabitants as people who, even when educated by their noble visitors, fail to understand how they are supposed to conduct themselves. Silvius refuses to relinquish his affections for Phoebe, leaving Rosalind to conclude that he deserves no pity since he has been "made a tame snake" (4.3.69). Improper conduct signifies lower status, since nobility means understanding that one's behavior matters. Instead, the working class is "marked by a devastating lack: an inability to be better and even to know better— that is, to know that they *should* be better."[15] Shakespeare creates a juxtaposition between those who know how to manage both land and people—Rosalind and Celia—and those who are haplessly unaware, like the people of Arden. This lack of understanding is then imbricated with darkened skin, further entwining race, class, and conduct. This attempted "education" of conduct also aligns with how the English saw their role when among "darkened others." As Arthur Little observes, the English were acutely aware that "[they] were once an atavistic people before being chastised, cut off from their barbaric past," and needed to similarly "cut out" the barbaric from the civil in other cultures.[16] This cutting off often involved sacrifice, but, instead of sacrificing bodies, *As You Like It* insists that its less-civil characters sacrifice land to those who can model its proper

usage. This cession of land is presented as a fortuitous event early in the play, when Corin negotiates the cottage sale on behalf of an absent, negligent owner; the land passes not through physical force, but through the quiet logic of "better" management. Rosalind and Celia do not engage in common violence, but in the "civilized" act of purchasing land from people who, the play suggests, were never equipped to steward it. The transaction is framed as mutually beneficial, one example of how colonial acquisition justified itself on a larger scale. Thus, *As You Like It* reinforces a class racism that subsists on the gentry's need for power and control.

The play not only reinforces a gap between the leisured and working classes, but also incorporates colonial mindsets; the cousins are not only experiencing the ignorance of the working class but are doing so in a place to which they journey, rather than from their own land. While Celia may exhibit gentle behavior, she is still in brownface for much of the play. This disguise creates what Derrick Higginbotham calls an "enmeshing of classism and racism in… impersonations… that are linked disturbingly to an effort to blend in with the local inhabitants."[17] Celia and Rosalind never doubt that their appearance or assumptions could be seen as problematic in this new land; they confidently assume darkened skin and poor attire will allow them to fit in. Thus, Celia's brownface disguise "simultaneously destabilises and reinforces distinctions between ruling class and working class, racialised whiteness and brownness, alien and native, thereby encouraging audiences to attend to these distinctions and their conflation."[18] While "Aliena" conducts herself as a gentlewoman, she looks more like Phoebe than a member of the gentry. This impersonation reminds us that power and control are not simply about skin color, but about conduct connoting a level of worth that is insurmountable, even when the "inferior" group is native to the land. Rosalind and Celia's brownface does not represent a desire for dark skin, but is employed as a tactic to gain control and thereby maintain power. *As You Like It* imbricates notions of race and class, and weaves in beliefs about who lives in "exotic" spaces. To inhabit one of these untamed forests is to be dark and alien; it means possessing a body marked as different from the gentle class. Shakespeare applies early modern racialized concepts of class and overlays them onto a story that mirrors the colonial projects in which England was engaged, thus furthering

beliefs about class and worth in populations newly engulfed by colonial projects.

While *As You Like It's* plot explores the ramifications of entering new territory, it draws a clear distinction between acceptable and unacceptable exposure to "foreign" land. This contrast is embodied in Jaques, a melancholic lord who follows Duke Senior into the forests of Arden. Jaques is frequently taunted for his melancholy (2.1.26, 2.5.10, 3.2.285, 4.1.3), particularly when he weeps over native deer killed so everyone, including Jaques, can eat (2.1.26-66). He admits that he can "suck the melancholy out of a song as a weasel sucks eggs" (2.5.11), and that his sadness stems from "the sundry computation of my travels, in which my rumination wraps me in the most humorous sadness" (4.1.17-18). Rosalind's response is not sympathetic; it is diagnostic:

> [Travellers] have a great reason to be sad
> I fear you have sold your lands to see other men's.
> Then to have seen much and to have nothing is to have rich
> eyes and poor hands …
> And your experience makes you sad …
> Look, you lisp and
> wear strange suits; disable all the benefits of your own country;
> be out of love with your nativity and almost chide God for
> making you that countenance you are (4.1.19-22, 24, 29-32).

The speech is more than a rebuke of melancholy; it is an articulation of the purpose of travel. The failure Rosalind diagnoses in Jaques is not that he traveled, but that he traveled without acquisition; he has "sold his lands to see other men's" and come back with nothing to show for it. "Rich eyes and poor hands" is the play's verdict on unproductive engagement with foreign territory. Jaques has looked without taking, observed without owning, and in doing so has forfeited both capital and identity. He has gone "out of love with his nativity," abandoning the "countenance," meaning both face and status, to which he was born. The implicit standard against which Jaques is measured is precisely the model Rosalind and Celia enact. Enter new territory, purchase what can be purchased, employ the local labor, use the land for leisure, and leave with more than you had when you arrived. Duke Senior, too, understands this. While he mourns the slaughtered deer, he grasps that game must be consumed to sustain the exiles' encampment, and never loses sight of his role as a displaced nobleman rather

than a convert to forest life. Jaques, by contrast, becomes what Hall describes as a traveler who fails at "exercising the requisite control over the culture without becoming seduced by or implicated in it."[19] He has been absorbed into the melancholy of Arden rather than mastering it. As Leah Marcus notes, "'License of free foot' suggests freedom to travel but also that such freedom is inherently licentious, subject to contagion," and Jaques embodies precisely this danger—the nobleman who loses himself in the exotic rather than colonizing it.[20] His invective against the courtly exiles as "usurpers [and] tyrants" who "fright the animals and kill them up / in their assigned and native dwelling place" (2.1.61-63) is the final irony; he condemns the very colonial logic he is himself participating in, unable to acknowledge, as Marcus notes, "his participation in the culture of exile."[21] Shakespeare uses Jaques not to critique colonialism but to police it, to distinguish between the kind of engagement with foreign lands that produce power and the kind that produce only sentiment. The play again warns, "Rich eyes and poor hands," and provides Rosalind and Celia as its counterexample.

As You Like It resolves with a "happy" ending: the god Hymen reveals true identities and blesses weddings that fall along respectable class lines, all while resolving family differences. Eventually, Duke Frederick returns the land to Duke Senior after becoming a "religious man" in a startling turnabout (5.4.165). Thus, the instability featured at the beginning of the play returns the characters to stable ground, as is typical of comic conventions. While the play indeed meditates on the dangers of colonization—Duke Frederick, as an unworthy and cruel usurper certainly calls into question the ethics of colonial projects—*As You Like It* ultimately rewards aristocratic conduct and the colonization of foreign lands. Rosalind and Celia return to their noble lives with the status they mean to inherit; they marry, which provides the societal power needed to maintain authority.[22] They bring their acquired land into new conjugal bonds,[23] and in so doing, expand the boundaries of land under noble control. Celia's desire to "waste" time is ironic for it exposes the logic of gentle-class dominance. Their leisure, secured at the expense of the laborer, is not wasteful at all; it is the performance and extension of privilege itself.

Notes

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The Poetics of Affective Resistance: Bhardwaj's Refiguring of *Haider* as a Site of Protest

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Vishal Bhardwaj's *Haider* transposes Shakespeare's tragedy *Hamlet* into the fractured, fragile and unstable political landscape of 1990's Kashmir—a region in India that continues to scar with brutalities, of militancy, disappearances, and the dominating presence of Indian military under the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA). The plot focuses on the personal struggles of a young student from Aligarh Muslim University after he returns to Srinagar to find his father missing and his mother entangled in a love affair with his uncle. The fabric of Shakespeare's narration is woven through the intricate realities drawn from Basharat Peer's *Curfewed Nights*. Together, these sketch Kashmir's figurative character and reimagine its core. Kashmir turns into a haunting metaphor for Bjardwaj, whose lineage wanders within the intersections of hushed resistance, stifled justice and faint rebellion. As Bhardwaj affirmed in an interview, Kashmir is the Hamlet of his film. Bhardwaj stays true to the emotional challenges, everyday experiences, and nuanced representation of Kashmir's social reality as experienced by locals. *Haider*'s cinematic frames, directorial vision and poetic anguish are uniquely inspired by shades of suffering that do not collapse into mourning. Instead, they transcend tangled desires, connecting longings and emotions to a plane of reason, as inspired by the liminalities of Shakespeare's stage. Bhardwaj dwells within a vulnerable, numbing uneasiness

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that becomes palpable through frosty silences and desaturated acoustic textures. Silence operates not as absence but as affective pressure. Extended pauses, muted interiors, and snow-laden long shots suspend dialogue, allowing ambient sounds, the crunch of footsteps, distant military hums, and unanswered telephones to assume narrative force.

Scenes of disappearance are structured around sonic withdrawal, where abrupt audio cuts mirror psychic rupture. Even the *azaan*, drifting across the valley, oscillates between diegetic realism and interior echo, converting everyday sound into existential unrest. This restrained soundscape is punctured by moments of acoustic intensity, most notably in "Bismil," staged against the ruins of the Martand Temple, where rhythmic percussion and erratic choreography fracture the film's prevailing stillness. Yet the sequence offers no catharsis. Instead, it exposes betrayal and moral decay, amplifying unease rather than resolving it. Through this oscillation between silence and sonic excess, Bhardwaj crafts cinematic poetics in which emotional paralysis and affective resistance coexist. Uneasiness becomes both atmosphere and method. It is symbolic of an acoustic strategy that renders Kashmir's suspended temporality audible, compelling the viewer to inhabit grief as a lingering, unresolved vibration rather than a complete tragedy. In capturing this stillness, he edges closer to the sinking of Kashmir and seeks comfort in the cultural richness of the past, evoking emotional cadence and poetic interventions that are long lost yet deeply remembered. Sorrows and grief form the lingua franca of Kashmir's tragic potential, prompting today's pivotal query: "whether tragedy dies or simply mutates."[1] These tragic echoes, born of social renewal and a "sense of enhanced human possibility,"[2] mutate anew in our present.

Adaptations, especially within global Shakespeare studies, are viewed as translations and transcultural revisions, forming a central pillar of modern critical interpretations. Critics increasingly reject fidelity as a productive framework for reading *Haider's* relationship to *Hamlet*, arguing instead that the film operates as an autonomous political and aesthetic text shaped by the historical trauma of Kashmir. A major strand of criticism, particularly in the work of Taarini Mookherjee and Julia Hoydis, challenges fidelity-based approaches that measure the film's "accuracy" to Shakespeare.

Hoydis conceptualizes *Haider* as a "contact zone," where Shakespeare's global circulation intersects with the local realities of militarized Kashmir and the testimonial memory embedded in Basharat Peer's *Curfewed Night*. Rather than being a simple act of indigenization, the adaptation becomes a site of crossmapping, where Haider reveals communal conflicts and maps a "revisionist agenda that captures both hidden political realities and a haunting refiguration of Shakespeare."[3] Similarly, Mookherjee reads the film through the lenses of absence and repetition, identifying a poetics of disappearance that resonates with enforced disappearances and the figure of the "half-widow." Here, spectrality becomes not merely thematic but structural, shaping narrative temporality and visual framing.

A second critical pillar concerns spatial politics and haunted landscapes. Scholars describe *Haider*'s Kashmir as a terrain structured by "absent presences," where domestic and civic architectures, homes, cinemas, and schools are converted into interrogation centers and militarized zones. This spectral cartography reframes the Shakespearean ghost motif within a politics of occupation, transforming the question of filial revenge into a meditation on sovereignty, memory, and erasure. The film's bleak mise-en-scène and suspended temporality thus become central to its tragic reconfiguration. From a structural and cognitive perspective, critics such as Kowsar and Mukherjee approach the film through conceptual blending and bricolage. They argue that Bhardwaj refashions Kashmiri folk idioms, Bollywood performance conventions, and Elizabethan tragic structure into a hybrid aesthetic form. This blending produces what might be termed projective empathy; the Danish prince's existential dilemma is re-situated within a contemporary ethical impasse shaped by militarization and insurgency. Comparative analyses, including that of Fatimah Javed, further emphasize the film's radical departure in its ending, where revenge yields to renunciation. Haider's refusal to perpetuate violence reframes tragedy within the frame of ethical withdrawal, positioning survival and non-retaliation as gestures of political resistance.

Despite this rich body of work, critical attention has largely privileged thematic, comparative, and sociopolitical readings over the film's formal and affective strategies. While scholars

have compellingly mapped *Haider*'s spectral geographies and political revisions, less sustained attention has been given to how the film's acoustic design, musical architecture, and performative traditions operate as sites of dissent. This paper addresses that gap by foregrounding sound, music, and embodied folk performance, particularly the Kashmiri tradition of Bhand Pather, as modes of affective and passive resistance. Rather than treating sequences such as "Bismil" as ornamental spectacles, this study reads them as ritualized interventions that transform cinema into a sensory site of protest. The choreography of bodies in snow-laden ruins, the interweaving of folk satire with narrative revelation, and the layering of voice, echo, and silence collectively produce an acoustic politics that exceeds dialogue-driven rhetoric. In this framework, dissent is not articulated primarily through speeches or overt ideological declarations, but through rhythm, repetition, and spatialized sound. The use of Bhand Pather, historically a satirical folk theater tradition, reclaims suppressed cultural memory and reactivates collective spectatorship within the diegesis itself. Performance becomes testimony; song becomes indictment.

By centering sound and spatial choreography, my analysis repositions *Haider* within adaptation discourse as a film that enacts resistance through affect. If earlier scholarship has demonstrated how Bhardwaj revised Shakespeare at the level of plot, character, and political allegory, this study extends that argument to cinematic form. The film's affective textures, its mournful refrains, ruptured silences, and ritualized performances, transform adaptation into an embodied practice of reclaiming silenced spaces. In doing so, *Haider* emerges not only as a transcultural Shakespearean revision, but as an acoustic and performative reimagining of dissent, where Kashmiri subjectivity is articulated through cultural performance rather than overt political rhetoric.

Alternating silence against ghazals and soundtracks

Vishal Bhardwaj's reimagining of Shakespeare does not merely relocate philosophical conflict into a postcolonial landscape; it dislocates Hamlet's inward, rational hesitation and redistributes it across a collective, affective field shaped by enforced disappearances, militarization, and suspended justice. Tragedy, in this register, no

longer unfolds through soliloquy or deliberation alone but emerges through atmosphere, silence, and sensory pressure. This shift resonates with Linda Hutcheon's understanding of adaptation as an intentional act of creative reinterpretation rather than faithful reproduction. It retains a recognizable narrative framework while re-contextualizing and politically re-signifying the text within a new cultural and aesthetic horizon. Bhardwaj's narration, thus, moves beyond abstract doubt and ethical paralysis into an affective domain where sound, silence, and spatial emptiness become the primary vehicles of tragic consciousness.

This affective reorientation is materially inscribed through the film's visual and acoustic grammar. A desaturated palette, expansive snow-laden long shots, and sparsely populated frames diminish individual agency, visually subordinating personal revenge to collective history. Continuity editing is largely maintained, yet strategically ruptured at moments of performative exposure, most notably in the "Bismil" sequence, through cross-cutting between Haider's theatrical indictment and Khurram's reaction shots, recalling Shakespeare's play-within-the-play and unsettling narrative stability. Within this suspended visual field, music assumes a structuring rather than an ornamental role. Bhardwaj repeatedly blurs diegetic and non-diegetic registers. The azaan drifts through the valley as ambient sound yet reverberates as interior unrest; silences are punctured by unanswered telephones, distant gunfire, intrusive footsteps, and the gravedigger's abrasive sonic interruptions. Songs such as "Aaj ke Naam" and "Bismil," alongside the performative grammar of Bhand Pather, translate political anxiety into collective expression, converting personal grief into communal memory. Through this oscillation between muteness and acoustic intensity, Bhardwaj does not resolve tragedy but sustains it as a living condition, preparing the ground for a cinematic language in which silence and song alternate as registers of affective resistance.

These musical interventions recount the seasons of life through the cultural idioms deeply embedded yet increasingly neglected in a terror-stricken Kashmir. Khurram and Ghazala's wedding celebration unfolds to the rhythms of a Kashmiri folk song sung by ladies and accompanied by the *tumbaknari*[4] and *riq* drum.[5] The song, "रोष' वाला म्याने दलिबरों, पॉश'न बहरा आव योर वल्लो"

(Come, my beloved. Finally, the spring has arrived.) serves as a celebration of love within the contextual settings but also revives the cultural idioms that continue to lose their melodies against the cacophony of violence. The song functions as a comic interlude in the Shakespearean sense, recalling festive pauses that heighten tragic tension rather than alleviate it. However, within this reconfigured temporality, naivety and innocence overlap with betrayal and the web of lies, as cultural celebration coexists uneasily with moral decay. The traditional ceramic *tumbaknari* reappears later when Khurram performs a musical assertion of dominance over Ghazala, appropriating folk sound into a hypermasculine register. Once collective and participatory, the music of the *tumbaknari* becomes passive, reduced to an aesthetic echo stripped of its original context. The fragile, rustic presence of these instruments symbolically revives the muted voices of the masses, restoring cultural memory even as it exposes how such traditions are rendered ornamental within structures of power.

Ghazala's voice occupies a more volatile sonic register. It is haunting, eroticized, and intimate, preserving familiar archetypes while gradually fracturing them through agency. Her songs and silences are not merely maternal or seductive; they are politically fraught. Domestic tenderness is repeatedly infiltrated by the acoustics of militarization, boots, gunshots, and official announcements bleeding into private space and destabilizing emotional refuge. Bhardwaj often frames Ghazala within thresholds, doorways, windows, and mirrors, visually splitting between mother, lover and accomplice. Her pauses, lowered gaze and eventual withdrawal function as counter-sonic gestures, resisting both the militarized state and Hamlet's inherited masculine rage. Ghazala's final act, choosing death on her own terms, is rendered through cinematic minimalism. There is no lingering song, only silence. This absence becomes louder than music, transforming the soundscape into ethical rupture. In this moment, silence ceases to be passive; it becomes tragic surplus—an awareness that agency persists precisely because it is doomed.

A similar doom is palpable in the Kashmiri song, "चैसमे लूसमि म्ये प्यारन, काटे चुख त्से पान पैरन यावुन चू केल सोरन, पोषण बहारा आव योर वालू" (I lost my sight in your longing. You still adore yourself? Beauty fades by morrow. Come my beloved,

spring has finally arrived). Highlighting the loss of true sight and transience of beauty, the loss of innocence evokes Shakespeare's Ophelia, and the tragic consequences she faces. The song is a lyrical ode to the "violet in the youth of primy nature, / Forward, not permanent, sweet, not lasting, / The perfume and suppliance of a minute; / no more" (1.3.7-10).[6] The affective textures, tonal modulations, and Arshiya's body language make her a significant aural presence, reverberating with modesty, humility, and innocence. Arshiya's death is a lament—the loss of innocence and naivety as a consequence of human affliction. It meets the audience as a lingering sadness intertwined with lost hope. She is not a quintessence of dust alone, but an innocence that springs violet in this sterile promontory.

Arshiya's loss sweeps the greenness of human experience and devoids *Haider* of all hope. After her death, *Haider* becomes a tragic catastrophe that surrenders to universal decay; all hopes for a comic resolution are lost. She voices grief, loss, and suffering that permeates human relationships. And yet, Arshiya refuses to act in self-preservation. Her lament is as tragic as it is beautiful; it reminds us of an innocence related with a heavy heart. The abstraction of this grief, lament, and suffering is localized through Kashmiri song: "बट्टिी नाइ दूरी, चूम ज़राई बामराइयो क्या कर होउ थाम" (This separation from you, I can no longer bear it. I will wither away young. What am I to do?). When Arshiya sits on a bench amidst the white snow, she unties the red muffler she had woven for her father. The image is an intimate glimpse into her emotional turmoil. Her youth wilts away into awareness of the violence that surrounds her, reminding us of her insignificance in this complex nexus. Questioning the arrival of spring, Arshiya longs for the "new breeze of spring that grants blossom their hues," just as Kashmir longs for liberty from the vicious wheel of systemic violence.[7] The poetic intervention of Faiz's *ghazal* is a stark reminder of the hearts that suffer at the awareness of life. As Faiz writes, "और भी दुःख हैं ज़माने में, मोहब्बत के सिवा, राहतें और भी हैं, वस्ल की राहत के सिवा" (There are sorrows in this world beyond the pleasures of love. There is more to happiness than the relief of reunion). Arshiya's grief, inflicted by personal relationships, transcends the limits of the personal to recount the suffering of the collective.

Arshiya's narrative arc is shaped by emotional, spatial, and visual coldness. Kashmiri song associated with her foregrounds the transience of beauty and the erosion of innocence, recalling Shakespeare's Ophelia while relocating her fragility within a militarized modernity. Arshiya's body language, tonal restraint, and diminishing vocal presence render grief as withdrawal rather than outcry. Bhardwaj increasingly isolates her within desaturated frames, alone in snow-covered landscapes or enclosed within sparse interiors, allowing stillness to register as affective inertia. Her suicide is staged not as spectacle but as disappearance, completing the gradual freezing out of her desires and voice. Unlike Ghazala, whose silences confront and destabilize power, Arshiya's silence marks the violence of being unseen. She shows how modern femininity collapses under intersecting regimes of patriarchy, surveillance, and loss. Together, these women expand the grammar of resistance in *Haider*. Sound, dance, and silence articulate a politics of becoming in which agency does not always sing or perform, but sometimes survives as refusal, withdrawal, or a devastating quiet that continues to inhabit the viewer's moral imagination long after the screen fades.

Layering resistance with a radical politics

Folk traditions, grounded in oral cultures and collective responses to lived experience, articulate shared communal identities that run parallel to, and often against those archived by dominant historical discourse. Their humor, melody, satire, and allegory function as cultural weapons, foregrounding aural and spatial presence as passive yet persistent intervention into existing power dynamics. Across South Asia, traditions such as *Tamasha* in Maharashtra, *Nautanki* in Uttar Pradesh, and *Jatra* in Bengal deploy similar vocabularies of exaggeration, parody, and affect to challenge cultural and political hierarchies without relinquishing ritualistic tenderness. In a highly politicized space such as Kashmir, folk traditions embody a dual character. They are celebratory and performative, yet simultaneously critical, encoding dissent through improvisation and allegory while remaining anchored in communal memory. In *Haider,* this alternate cultural logic reshapes cinematic language itself.

Everyday rhythms, sounds, hues, and gestures are transformed into metonymic vehicles of social and political renewal, recalling suppressed memories and heterogeneous identities without threatening the musicality or emotional cadence of lived experience. They rework ordinary events rather than interrupting them; waiting and endurance become habitual. When these rhythms surface in weddings, lullabies, or street performances, they resound with communal memory without declaring protest. Their power lies in familiarity. They evoke the persistence of everyday life rather than the overt declaration of resistance. Similarly, hues and gestures operate metonymically through restraint. Muted whites and greys register emotional numbness, while sudden intrusions of color, for instance, blood, a red scarf, or bridal fabrics condense private loss into shared affect. Gestures such as silence, hesitation, or partial participation in rituals layer dissent through withdrawal rather than confrontation. Embedded within routine sensory life, these elements allow political meaning to accumulate quietly, preserving emotional cadence while displacing dominant narratives from within.

This layered resistance finds visual articulation in Bhardwaj's winter-bound mise-en-scène, where Kashmir's coldness is announced even before it is spoken.[8] Snow drifting over abandoned houses, fog swallowing entire stretches of the valley, or skeletal trees standing as witnesses construct an ecology of absence in which warmth has been drained not only from the landscape but from history itself. The persistent whiteness of the valley is punctuated by stark contrasts that function like sonic interruptions—black and grey pherans, red bloodstains, charred ruins, and the earthy browns of crumbling architecture. Phenomenologically, winter emerges as a season of suspension, where life retreats beneath surfaces and time stalls under cold gusts of air. Bhardwaj's fog-laden frames are not merely atmospheric, but dialogic, visually screaming emotional distance and psychic numbness. Moments of warmth, such as earthy clothing or domestic interiors appear hollow when set against darker ruins as *Haider* confronts betrayal and exhaustion, making devastation sensorially and ethically palpable. Often built on a "highly developed process of thinking in images"[9] and sounds, the essence of this alternate culture consists of "forbidden emotions, raw vernacular vocabulary, riddles, secret codes, and non-rational images."[10]

Sound and poetry further intensify this radical politics by animating what might otherwise remain unspeakable. As we peruse *Haider*'s Kashmiri songs, the marital celebrations and their contrast against Arshiya's lament, the raw emotions substantially add to the philosophical, grey depths of the counterculture that Bhardwaj intends to establish. The sadness lingers as the audience leaves the cinematic frames with rippling melodies of "*Aaj ke naam,*" "आज का ग़म कि है ज़िंदगी के भरे गुलस्ितां से ख़फ़ा ज़र्द पत्तों का बन" (There are sorrows in this world beyond the pleasures of love. There is more to happiness than the relief of reunion.). Faiz's invocation, creatively blends with the political, linguistic subversion, subtly highlighting, "राहतें और भी हैं वस्ल की राहत के सिवा अन-गनित सदियों के तारीक बहीमाना तिलिस्िम, रेशम ओ अतलस ओ कमख़ाब में बुनवाए हुए जा-ब-जा बिकते हुए कूचा-ओ-बाज़ार में जिस्म, ख़ाक में लुथड़े हुए ख़ून में नहलाए हुए" (There is more to life than union of lovers. The blight of dark magic of years beyond counting, while draped in silk, satin, and brocade; everywhere, in alleys and marketplaces, young flesh is up for sale). Faiz's verses, speaking of suffering beyond love, of bodies traded in marketplaces, of blood-soaked histories, transform individual grief into collective awareness, recalling Shakespearean negation where suffering deepens empathy without collapsing into mourning. Like *King Lear*'s vision of life's cheapness, Bhardwaj's use of "Aaj ke Naam" insists on an ecstatic negation that breaks and remakes social order, creating a larger self from destruction and fostering attunement with collective pain.

Faiz's poetic resurrection within Kashmir's volatile landscape lends political and ideological subjectivity to Bhardwaj's poetics. It creates an eerie resonance with personal struggles trailing off into public terrains, blurring memory with incessant longing and expressing elegiac resistance against brutalities. Faiz's *ghazal*, "*Gulon mein rang bhare*," hopes for the arrival of spring in the dusk of autumn, echoing an infectious resilience layered with affective textures and awareness of the tragic necessities of being. His invocation calls for poetic justice to withered flowers or the young buds, and longs to fill them with vivid hues. It brims with emotional urgency to stop their withering and allow the garden to flourish with its daily business. "*Gulshan ka karobar*" (daily business) finds newer depth when seen in line with Kashmir, as its

political background denies its people even the basic mundanity of lived human experience. The realization of a monotonous routine is a privilege, yet to be earned. Thus, Faiz's outcry for a revolution, cloaked under the guise of a romantic longing, highlights a political awakening in Bhardwaj's poetics. His political intervention is self-reflective and critical of promised homelands. Faiz's progressive reflection becomes a spatial underpinning that mediates tragic potential in Kashmir's landscapes. It runs in strange directions, vividly capturing the web of lies, corruption and anguish that timelessly connect human conditions in the past with the present. Faiz's vision edges to the brink of longing for a musical abstraction that breaks the cyclic mundanity of the cultural, political, and social fabric governed by law. He so longs for a political upheaval that it refuses to converge with the celebration of human existence.

Converging sounds with space

These personal outcries, tears, dirges, and muted screams, coalesce into the mournful refrain of "Jhelum hua khaara," where grief renders the river saline and unresolved. Bhardwaj's cinematic restraint in capturing Jhelum is crucial. The dead bodies float directionless across the slow stream in static, contemplative frames that resist urgency or spectacle. The camera lingers, refusing to cut away, allowing the weight of absence to settle into the image. Sparse, low-register instrumentation underlines a dull heaviness, while the near-absence of dramatic orchestration opens an affective vacuum in which ambient sounds, like the hush of flowing water or the silence between notes, dominate the acoustic field. This sonic minimalism does not heighten emotion; it numbs it, mirroring how Kashmir itself drifts within frustrated cries of collective suffering, leaving its people suspended in emotional, physical, and political trauma. The imagery drains individuality from the dead, rendering them unnamed and unspoken, as the river tends to these bodies with indifference. Sadness clings to the coldness of the water; a coldness emblematic of the perpetual struggle over the warmth of human relationships, which quietly succumb to an abyss of mourning that offers no respite.

The Jhelum River thus becomes more than a backdrop. It embodies memory and burial, a living witness that listens to

distressed shrieks and holds suffering within the depths of its flow. Bhardwaj turns to the river's fluidity to impose a fragile order upon destructive chaos, evoking a longing for the prosperity and cultural intimacy that once adorned its banks. Through wide, desaturated frames and measured pacing, Jhelum emerges as a spatio-temporal metaphor, a border that separates yet blurs the spaces between the living and the dead, presence, and oblivion. The true spirit of Kashmir, once rejoicing in cultural footprints etched into the whiteness of snow, is now drenched in the sanguinity of violence, yet refuses erasure. By displacing Shakespearean archetypes into this flowing archive of grief, Bhardwaj creates a dialogue with the masses, using the river as a metaphor to preserve what stands veiled in neglect and on the verge of being lost. Jhelum offers no comfort. Instead, it leaves its people wandering within the uncomfortable silences of the dead, insisting that what is buried is far from forgotten. This convergence of sound and space extends into Bhardwaj's use of folk instruments, the *tumbaknari* and *riq* drums, whose fragile timbres voice a democratic yearning without declamation. Their rhythmic cadence captures popular affect as a dynamic tension between hopelessness and will, belief and exhaustion.

These instruments, crafted out of mud and clay, recall organic ways of living and affirm a passively resistant space grounded in cultural memory. The same grammar underwrites "Bismil," staged amid the ruins of the Martand Sun Temple. Long-shot frames mask folk performers against eroded stone pillars, as circular choreographies and diegetic percussion refunction ritualized folk performance into an aesthetic mode of accusation. The sequence refracts Shakespeare's "Mousetrap" through Kashmiri folk theatre, turning dance into testimony. The Martand Temple holds "something of the rigidity and strength of the Egyptian temple and something of the grace of Greece."[11] Yashee, in the article titled "Martand Temple in Kashmir: Its grandeur survives, and so do its controversies,"[12] argues that the temple "is known distinctively as Kashmirian and owes much to the influence of Gandhara,"[13] which emerged in Northern India following the establishment of the Delhi Sultanate, subtly gesturing toward the influence of Byzantine architectural modes. The muted, fog-laden frames are thus set against evocative cultural images, generating a sense of nostalgia for a once inclusive and heterogeneous social fabric.

"The Mousetrap" in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* is portrayed in the song *Bismil* where Haider performs at the center of the stage, wearing ghungroos on his arm and an eagle-shaped mask covered with colorful threads. The use of colorful masks to challenge the authority of the king supplants Shakespeare's clown/jester with the 500-year-old folk tradition of Bhand Pather, a popular form of folk theater. Satiric in its nature, the dramatic art form is a localized, Kashmiri variant. Other forms include *Dard Pather* in Afghan, *Gosaine Pather* that focuses primarily on religion, and *Bakarwal Pather* that exposes exploitation, among many others. By using the local Kashmiri form, the protagonist highlights the tale of personal betrayal, murder, and loss through a unique combination of dance, music and dialogue. Haider's body becomes the site of narrative revelation as the audience places him adjacent to the cinematic framing of the song. His dance is erratic, self-lacerating, and confrontational. The choreography fractures classical masculinity. It is neither heroic nor romantic. It is, in fact, hysterical, excessive and vulnerable. Sounds and movements expose the rot of patriarchy rather than soften it. Haider's personal struggles also offer a glimpse into the sad state of affairs in Kashmir when seen in unison with his performance at Lal Chowk Tower.

Haider's seemingly lunatic behavior at the Ghanta Ghar (Clock Tower) acquires a sharper political inflection, extending satire into civic confrontation. His madness is not merely performative, but figurative. It is a desperate attempt to make sense of the confusion, neglect, and institutional oblivion that define Kashmiri lived reality. Personal grief exceeds private boundaries; his outcries no longer mourn individual loss alone, but dissolve into a chorus of collective anguish, collapsing the divide between the personal and the public. Grief acquires a shared grammar, aptly invoked as "*dard ka rishta*" (The empathetic bond of suffering) by Faiz, where loss is simultaneously civic confrontation against cultural anchorage. While "Bismil" stages Haider's intimate turmoil, his disbelief at maternal betrayal and his uncle's unpunished crime, the Chowk performance articulates the defiance of a citizen, blending the particular with a universal language of grief, sadness, and suffering. Bhardwaj's use of handheld camera movement and medium-long shots to capture the restless crowd encircling Haider mirrors Haider's psychological disorientation even as it energizes

the space as a performative arena. The repeated visual anchoring of the clock tower situates the scene firmly within Srinagar's political geography, transforming individual lament into public address and exposing the entrenched violence, trauma, and psychic fractures that continue to structure everyday life under oppression.

Contrasting these political dimensions to the performative and creative cohesion at the Martand Temple, the sequence unravels and revives Kashmiri identity, offering an alternate cultural image and a poetic anchor against mainstream oppression. A long shot of the masked performance vividly captures Noets of Kashmir, similar to the Ghatam of South India or the Matki of Rajasthan, accompanied by rubab players, indicating cultural journeys and reminiscences of the past. Rubabs, the national instruments of Afghanistan, accentuate the mulberry tree's wooden textures; "they are tuned to the notes of the *raag* ('melodic mode') being deployed and reinforce the sound of each note as it is played."[14] *Haider* explores the art of storytelling and dwells within the experiential realities, accompanied by these cultural reminiscences—the bits and pieces from all parts of the world. The organic nature and inclusivity of this background music thus establish affective textures and cultural depth for the narrative. As the folk artist in the documentary *Indus Blues* insisted, "In playing a *tambura,* we are immersed when playing it. . . .You can only imagine how it affects the listeners."[15] The *tambura*, in Hindustani classical music, is used to create the base note, *adharaswara*: "The performer (singer or musician) then builds the rest of the vocals and music using this base note as a reference."[16] This background music does not subdue the vocals, or the lyrics, but instead accompanies and enhances the melody. Bhardwaj's choice of instruments, the use of the *ghazals* and the invocation of the richness of hybridized Indian culture is a loud image that offers an anchor to the thoughts of the contemporary tragic heroes in *Haider*. It positions them within a transcendental imagination that highlights lack and abundance, being and becoming. The materialization of grief, betrayal, anguish, and helplessness conspicuously contributes to an acoustic crescendo that aims to evoke a communal harmony where an audience actively and viscerally participates. Through music, the film asserts a subjectivity that lures its listeners into existential leaps.

The soundtracks establish "an alternative society governed by love, not law…actively construct[ing] a counterculture, a community of visionaries who will live by the questions" they pose.[17] This counterculture requires an intellectual, linguistic, emotional, political, and social reversal and a "great deal of honest probing to get close to."[18] As is often acknowledged through studies, the ideas of this counterculture have largely been derived from the excluded orders of India's political or social upheavals, causing subversive beliefs in societies. They are driven by a hunger "for human freedom, a sense of the world's inexplicable mystery and the conviction that each of us forms some personal relationship to that mystery."[19] The movement's passionate intensity was designed to break all beliefs limiting the spontaneity of human experience. Faiz's *ghazal*, "*Hum dekhenge*," then becomes a lyrical manifestation of a political upheaval that linguistically subverts the conventional confines of the law and seeks to augment the counterculture when he says: "all God's creatures will rule, those like me and those like you."[20] His political vision declares the political supremacy of the masses, "Every crown will be flung. Each throne brought down."[21] Bhardwaj's intervention thus highlights prolonged demands for social and economic equality. The *ghazal* is an equal collaborator in the quest "to find the dimensions of the human heart and mind, and to readjust the world we live in—to wrench or crack it open—so we might drop old prejudice."[22] Sound here does not decorate space but revives it. Rivers remember; ruins speak; squares listen. By binding acoustic restraint to charged locations, Bhardwaj forges a cinema where resistance emerges through the alignment of sound with space until silence itself becomes an address.

Conclusion

Vishal Bhardwaj does not simply transpose Hamlet into a contemporary political crisis. In fact, he reworks the very ontology of tragedy to speak from a world where justice is deferred, and memory stands under siege. Kashmir, conceived as the emotional and ethical analogue of Shakespeare's Denmark, becomes a space where time does not progress linearly, but circulates through repetition, haunting, and suspended anticipation. In this fractured temporality, cinema ceases to function as a medium of resolution

and emerges as a durational experience that compels the viewer to remain with grief, uncertainty, and moral unease. Bhardwaj's most radical intervention lies in his commitment to affective form. Sound, silence, and folk performance are not subordinate to narrative meaning. In fact, they constitute the ethical core of narration. Extended silences, ambient withdrawals, and restrained musical textures render absence palpable, allowing the violence of disappearance, betrayal and erasure to register without spectacle. Tragedy thus migrates from soliloquy to atmosphere, from individual cognition to a shared sensory field where emotion circulates collectively. The oscillation between sonic excess and acoustic restraint, between lament and muteness, sustains tragedy as a lived condition rather than a completed arc. Within this framework, folk traditions and poetic invocations assume critical force.

The integration of Bhand Pather, Kashmiri songs, and ghazals animates a countercultural grammar grounded in repetition, ritual, and communal memory. These forms do not declare resistance overtly. Instead, they practice it through familiarity, endurance, and affective continuity. The recurring presence of Faiz Ahmed Faiz intensifies this politics of quiet insistence. His verses, woven into the film's sonic and emotional fabric, translate private sorrow into collective awareness, foregrounding suffering that exceeds romantic loss and gestures toward historical and structural violence. Faiz's poetics does not promise redemption, but hold open a space for ethical reckoning, where pain becomes the ground for solidarity rather than closure. *Haider*, as a cinematic adaptation, conceptually extends agency by articulating resistance, whether through action, speech, or revolution, which survives as refusal, withdrawal, or a silence that refuses assimilation. Figures such as Ghazala and Arshiya expand the grammar of dissent by embodying forms of agency that are fragile, constrained, and tragic, yet no less politically resonant. Their silences confront power differently—one through ethical negation, the other through devastating erasure. Together, they reveal how modern tragedy fractures along gendered lines, exposing the uneven costs of survival within militarized and patriarchal structures.

In reclaiming cinema as a sensory and performative archive, Bhardwaj aligns film with embodied memory rather than

institutional history. Rivers remember what official records erase; ruins speak where language fails; music and silence transmit what cannot be safely articulated. *Haider*, thus, becomes a cinematic site of passive resistance, where cultural idioms long relegated to the margins are figuratively refined and revived as vehicles of political and ethical thought. Tragedy neither resolves nor redeems; it lingers, mutates, and insists. *Haider* compels us to reconsider the fate of tragedy in the contemporary world. It suggests that tragedy does not die under modern conditions of surveillance, violence, and bureaucratic law; rather, it adapts, dispersing itself across soundscapes, bodies, and spaces. By foregrounding affect over catharsis and endurance over resolution, Bhardwaj reclaims tragedy as a mode of listening—a sustained attentiveness to suffering that resists erasure. It transforms Kashmir's silenced grief into an enduring ethical vibration, one that continues to resonate long after the screen fades to black.

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Hauntings in High Places: How *Hamlet* Haunts *Vertigo*

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In *Reading Shakespeare in the Movies: Non-Adaptations and their Meaning*, Eric Mallin outlines a critical method for exploring Shakespearean analogues and meanings in films that are not adaptations of Shakespeare's plays. Mallin defines a non-adaptation as "like a traditional form of cinematic production in that it summons a relationship between (in this case) a Shakespeare play and a movie that can be read through or in that play. But such a film lacks the discursive or extra-textual features of the adaptation: a known, implied, or readily deduced derivation from a prior text."[1] This approach views non-adaptations as films in dialogue with Shakespeare's work: the non-adaptational lens aims to highlight how two works with little to no direct relation "might have rewarding samenesses, and in those we might find something true and new about each text."[2] The non-adaptation framework allows for creative critical exercise through which the similarities and differences between a Shakespeare play and a given film open new insights about both works while bypassing the oft-debated constraints associated with adaptation theory.[3] To explore the Shakespearean non-adaptation is not to capture, in relation to the Shakespearean text, what the film is, but to re-contextualize and reexamine what it might mean.

Alfred Hitchcock had posited the notion of a modernized film of *Hamlet* in the 1940s, but the project never came to fruition.[4]

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Echoes of Shakespeare—and, more narrowly, of *Hamlet*—are prominent throughout his filmography (*North by Northwest* (1959) should speak for itself). James Vest argues that "In *Vertigo* (Paramount, 1958), Hitchcock came closest to realizing his ambition of filming a modern *Hamlet*."[5] Of primary concern in Vest's analysis is the manner in which Madeline Elster/Judy Barton (Kim Novak)[6] and John "Scottie" Ferguson (James Stewart) reflect Ophelia and Hamlet, respectively. Madeline/Judy is the delicate woman associated with flowers, madness, and water, molded and manipulated by men, while Scottie is an impassioned "man under severe mental stress who appears to see ghosts and to have difficulty acting in time."[7] The two engage in a romantic relationship that ends in death and tragedy.

Amid his analysis of these character parallels, Vest acknowledges that "The role of Hamlet, like other roles in *Vertigo*, is diffused, fragmented, and set spinning."[8] Scottie's role in the narrative is not limited to that of Hamlet, nor is he the only Hamletesque figure in the film. Vest's essay does not analyze these diffusions and distortions of character archetypes in depth; they remain a side note in his analysis of *Vertigo* as a modern *Hamlet*. As *Vertigo* is not a direct adaptation of *Hamlet*, these diffusions and fragmentations are crucial to any intertextual analysis of the play and the film. To meaningfully analyze *Vertigo* as a text in dialogue with *Hamlet*, we must examine not only the respects in which the film resembles Shakespeare's play, but those in which *Hamlet* is distorted, echoed, and reconfigured. Much like Scottie's vertigo, the reflections and distortions of *Hamlet* in *Vertigo* are unsettling and disorienting, revealing new layers to the film's unsettling character.[9]

The concept of haunting provides a helpful throughline for this analysis.[10] Haunting, here (as in Derrida), references that which "is neither living nor dead, present nor absent." Derrida continues, "It does not belong to ontology, to the discourse of Being of beings, or to the essence of life or death."[11] Haunting is not quite presence, not quite absence, but a lingering of something past but not yet gone. Both *Hamlet* and *Vertigo* are saturated with hauntings figurative and literal: deceased ancestors, traumatic events, painful remembrances, and lost loves. These hauntings incite the plots of both works, and characters' actions are direct responses to the ghosts that haunt them. Characters' responses to hauntings

in *Hamlet* and *Vertigo* ultimately reveal uncanny and disturbing dynamics of power and control—particularly regarding gender. I argue that *Vertigo* echoes *Hamlet* through ghostly feminine figures that create a powerful sense of distortion, confusion, and unease, ultimately painting a tragic picture of masculine control over women. In exploring how *Hamlet* haunts *Vertigo*, then, it is fitting to begin with ghosts.

Vertigo opens with a death and a haunting. Scottie and a fellow policeman are chasing a criminal across a series of San Francisco rooftops. Scottie fails to land a leap onto a steep roof and slips, leaving him clinging to a gutter pipe five stories above the ground. The other officer extends a hand to Scottie, who, paralyzed by a sudden spell of vertigo, cannot accept it, and the officer plummets to his death. Scottie's defining trait in this opening scene is helplessness: he is unable to save himself or the other officer. Some weeks later, Scottie sits in the apartment of friend and former fiancée Midge Wood (Barbara Bel Geddes), having quit the police force due to his acrophobia. The traumatic incident has turned what appeared to be a mild fear of heights into a crippling phobia. Throughout the film, we are presented with a visual indicator of Scottie's vertigo in the form of the film's groundbreaking dolly zoom shot (the "vertigo effect"), when Scottie's acrophobia is triggered (Figures 1 and 2).[12] The dolly zoom is first seen as Scottie dangles from the gutter, before the officer reaches for him (we will see it four more times throughout the film, twice in each ascension up the San Juan Bautista bell tower). The lingering trauma of the rooftop chase manifests in more than Scottie's acrophobia. "I wake up at night seeing that man fall from the roof, and I try to reach out to him" he says, staring at an unsteady hand. Scottie specifies that he sees the officer while waking, not dreaming; these visions are not confined to his subconscious. The ghost of his fellow officer, dead due to Scottie's inability to act, haunts him.

Figure 1-2. The famous dolly zoom shot of the San Juan Bautista stairs. Images from *Vertigo* (1958) copyright Universal Pictures. Accessed via https://the.hitchcock.zone/wiki/1000_Frames_of_Vertigo_(1958). Images used for research purposes under Fair Use as specified in Section 107 of the U.S. Copyright Act, 1976.

Hamlet likewise begins with haunting and great height. The play opens atop the guards' platform on the Elsinore castle battlements. Instead of a person falling to his death from the battlements, death rises to meet the living in the form of the ghost of the dead king. In the original Elizabethan staging of the play, the ghost likely would have initially entered the scene by rising

from a trap door beneath the stage. Such an entrance conveyed the dramatic and narrative importance of the ghost's appearance while calling to mind demons and hell (or, in this particular spirit's case, purgatory).[13] Act one ends with Prince Hamlet speaking with the ghost of his father, who tasks his son, "If ever thou didst thy dear father love … revenge his foul and most unnatural murder" (1.5.25).[14] The spirit departs, urging the prince to "remember me" (1.5.91). Hamlet's response is resolute:

> Remember thee?
> Ay, thou poor ghost, while memory holds a seat
> In this distracted globe. Remember thee?
> Yea, from the table of my memory
> I'll wipe away all trivial fond records,
> All saws of books, all forms, all pressures past,
> That youth and observation copied there,
> And thy commandment all alone shall live
> Within the book and volume of my brain,
> Unmix'd with baser matter. (1.5.95-104)

This impassioned vow indicates two objects: to "remember thee" is to remember both the task and the task-giver. In other words, "The test of love is vengeance; but love must be kept alive by memory."[15] Of course, Hamlet's vow does not come to fruition; he cannot "wipe away all trivial fond records," nor can he dispel thoughts extending "beyond the deed to its possible consequences."[16] Indeed, the ghost returns in Act three, scene four (in its only appearance not atop the high platform) to chastise Hamlet for neglecting his vow. Though he spends much of the play failing to remember the ghost by means of action, the memory of the ghost is never far from Hamlet; in his musings on vengeance, where and when to act, life and death, and the nature of action itself, he continually returns to the person of the ghost and its task. Though the ghost is not seen (with the sole exception of 3.4), he continues to haunt Hamlet through memory—just as Scottie is haunted by the memory of his dead coworker.[17]

The officer on the rooftop is not the only ghost haunting Scottie. Height and death are intimately entangled in *Vertigo*: "Madeline" attempts suicide by leaping (albeit from a small height) into the San Francisco Bay and later falls to her death from the San Juan Bautista mission bell tower. In the latter case, the association

of death and height is deliberately evoked; Gavin Elster's (Tom Helmore) plan to disguise his wife's murder as a suicide hinges on Scottie's acrophobia keeping him from reaching the top of the bell tower. Judy, in a disturbing reflection of her alter ego's demise, likewise meets her end by falling from the bell tower. The film ends as it began, with Scottie staring, transfixed, at a corpse from above.

The figure of Madeline is an Ophelia analogue—given Hitchcock's appreciation for *Hamlet*, a certain level of reference to Ophelia was likely intentional. Madeline is, in the world of the film, deliberately evoking a preexisting image: that of Carlotta Valdes, the ghost whom Madeline believes is possessing her. Carlotta is herself an Ophelia figure. Like Ophelia, Carlotta's legacy is one of male rejection and eventual madness, and her bouquet of flowers recalls both Ophelia's floral distributions in act four, scene two and her flower-tinged death in act four, scene four.[18] Finally, and most critically for the film's plot, Carlotta commits suicide. The means by which she does so are not revealed, but both "suicide attempts" into which she drives Madeline (the bay scene and the first scene at San Juan Bautista mission) are associated with falling. Later, of course, we find that the evocation of height and death in these attempts, much like Madeline's appropriation of Carlotta's Ophelia imagery, are deliberate. Through her association (via fictitious possession) with the ghostly Carlotta Valdes, Madeline is intentionally constructed as an Ophelia figure at the direction of Elster, a masculine authority; ironically, she mirrors Ophelia's own manipulation at the hands of Polonius and Claudius. Scottie, then, is Madeline/Judy's Hamlet—the man she is meant to manipulate as an agent of patriarchal power.[19]

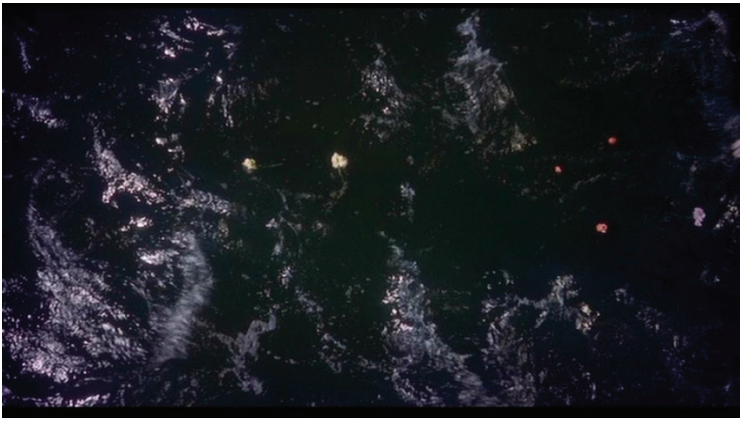

Figure 3. Madeline's flowers floating in the bay. Copyright Universal Pictures. Accessed via https://the.hitchcock.zone/wiki/1000_Frames_of_Vertigo_(1958).

Figure 4. Scottie rescuing Madeline from the bay. Copyright Universal Pictures. Accessed via https://the.hitchcock.zone/wiki/1000_Frames_of_Vertigo_(1958).

We find the most blatant Madeline-Ophelia parallels in the San Francisco bay scene. Madeline pulls apart her (read: Carlotta Valdes's) bouquet, dropping flowers into the bay (Figure 3), and abruptly jumps into the water. As Scottie dives into the bay to rescue her, the viewer's eye is drawn not to him, but to the figure of

the seemingly unconscious Madeline floating among the discarded petals—the respectively dark and light fabrics of her dress and scarf billowing around her (Figure 4). The sequence evokes Gertrude's report of Ophelia's death (Figure 5):

> There is a willow grows aslant a brook,
> That shows his hoar leaves in the glassy stream;
> There with fantastic garlands did she come
> Of crow-flowers, nettles, daisies, and long purples
> That liberal shepherds give a grosser name,
> But our cold maids do dead men's fingers call them.
> There, on the pendent boughs her coronet weeds
> Clambering to hang, an envious sliver broke,
> When down her weedy trophies and herself
> Fell in the weeping brook. Her clothes spread wide;
> And, mermaid-like, awhile they bore her up,
> Which time she chanted snatches of old tunes;
> As one incapable of her own distress,
> Or like a creature native and indued
> Unto that element. (4.4.165-179)

Both Ophelia's death and Madeline's plunge into the bay incorporate an act of falling—Ophelia falls into the stream when the branch she perches on snaps beneath her weight, and Madeline jumps from a height of approximately 5-6 feet into the bay—an extension of the height/death associations in both works.[20] Vest points out an important distinction from Shakespeare in the Ophelia imagery of this scene: Madeline does not drown but is "rescued" by Scottie, the "Gertrude-like witness" to her plunge.[21]

Figure 5. John Everett Millais, Ophelia (1851-2). Public domain.

Viewing the characters as non-adaptational analogues, it is worth noting here an important distinction between the Madeline/Scottie and Ophelia/Hamlet relationships; Hamlet never witnesses Ophelia's madness. Ophelia's mad scene and her death both occur while Hamlet is away from court, and he is devastated to witness her funeral upon his return. What Hamlet's reaction would have been to Ophelia's madness is unknown. Seen instead are the reactions of the Danish court, where "The subversive power of madness is made clear by Ophelia's conjectures."[22] She hands each character flowers symbolically appropriate for the sins they keep beneath their pristine personas. While, as Duncan Salkeld suggests, "Her sanity keeps her … moderately useful to Polonius and the King,"[23] Ophelia's madness turns her meek, obedient self on its head; she can no longer be controlled and is simultaneously a victim to and symbol of liberty from the patriarchal systems that use and abuse her.[24] Her madness is uncanny. The familiar feminine (heimlich) is rendered unfamiliar (unheimlich) in a manner that upsets the status quo of Elsinore; the court can no longer hide from the consequences of their lack of care for Ophelia nor their personal hypocrisy. The chilling figure of the mad Ophelia marks

the final time she is seen onstage (her offstage death is recounted by Gertrude). Ophelia never appears as a ghost, but the final images of her, mad and, later, drowned, are haunting.

Madeline's morbid speeches in her "trances" are reminiscent of Ophelia's act four speeches and songs. Madeline describes her "possession" as an inescapable journey through Carlotta's memories: sad, mad, and Ophelia-like, ending only in death:

> It's as though I were walking down a long corridor that once was mirrored, and fragments of that mirror still hang there. And when I come to the end of the corridor, there's nothing but darkness. And I know that when I walk into the darkness…that I'll die…an open grave. I stand by the gravestone looking down into it. And it's my grave.

Madeline is, it seems, being forced to remember Carlotta's life and death. In addition to Carlotta's presence as a ghost—one that possesses, haunts, and demands to be remembered—the imagery associated with her can also be connected back to the height/death association pervading the film long before the Spanish mission comes into the narrative.[25] The spiral hairstyle Carlotta wears in her portrait, which Madeline mimics, evokes the spirals seen in the opening credits. The shot comparing the two hairstyles—a pair of zooms onto distinctly feminine features—likewise recall the close-ups of the unidentified woman's face (Figures 6 and 7). The spiral shape suggests dizziness and disorientation, aided by their visual association with the film's title (Figure 8). Recalling the vertigo imagery of the opening credits, Carlotta/Madeline's hairstyle evokes not only the ghost of Carlotta, but the film's theme of height and death. Scottie's obsession with Madeline, then, parallels the dizziness and disorientation that accompanies his vertigo. Thus, Madeline/Carlotta's ghostly Ophelia-like presence is intimately entangled with the trauma that haunts Scottie—an association that anticipates Madeline's "death" at San Juan Bautista mission.[26]

Figure 6. Madeline's spiral hairstyle. Copyright Universal Pictures. Accessed via https://the.hitchcock.zone/wiki/1000_Frames_of_Vertigo_(1958).

Figure 7-8. Stills from the film's opening sequence. Copyright Universal Pictures. Accessed via https://the.hitchcock.zone/wiki/1000_Frames_of_Vertigo_(1958).

Through the intimate tracking shots in the portrait gallery, Tania Modleski, drawing from Freudian conceptions of woman as uncanny, highlights the twisted appeal of Madeline's madness for Scottie. His desire for Madeline "paradoxically, is a desire to merge with a woman who in some sense doesn't exist—a desire, then, that points to self-annihilation. As a result of this threat posed by the figure of the woman before the portrait, Scottie is driven to break

the spell she exerts by competing with Carlotta for possession of Madeline."[27] Of course, the fact that "Madeline" does not really exist has not yet been revealed. Yet the nature of Scottie's self-destructive desire for Madeline is made visible in the spiral hairstyle on which he fixates, associated both with the ghost of Carlotta Valdes and with death via vertigo. The uncanniness of Madeline's apparent madness does not, unlike that of Ophelia, disturb the patriarchal figure into repulsion, but instead deliberately plays on his desire to control her.

Scottie does not believe that Carlotta's ghost is actually haunting Madeline. When it becomes clear that the location she describes is San Juan Bautista mission, Scottie "is convinced in some way he does not explain that if he can show her that the site of her dream is a real place, she will believe that she has been there before, that that is how she knows all the details, and she will then be cured, will not be able to continue to believe she is haunted, possessed, by a dead Carlotta."[28] His attempts to conform Madeline to his perceived version of reality—a world where she is not possessed and can be cured—are well-intentioned. All the same, his talk of freeing Madeline from Carlotta's "possession" is underscored by a desire to possess her himself. "There is nothing you must do. No one possesses you. You're safe with me," Scottie whispers to Madeline as he holds her in a tight embrace, kissing her while she looks past him to the mission tower. No one possesses Madeline; "No one—the implication is," offers Modleski, "but himself."[29]

At the mission, Madeline is apparently unable to break free from Carlotta's influence and, after professing her love for Scottie, races up the mission bell tower. Scottie's acrophobia is triggered, and unable to follow her further, he sees her plummet to her "death." He is once again left helpless to save someone, reliving the trauma that incited his vertigo.

The coroner's inquest, wherein the cause of Madeline's death is investigated and declared suicide, recalls Ophelia's funeral; authorities determine whether or not the seeming madwoman took her own life. During the inquest, the presiding official callously emphasizes Scottie's failure to save Madeline, despite acknowledging that Scottie's behavior has no impact on the inquest's ruling. The implication is clear; Scottie should have been able to control the situation, but he did not. Scottie, Elster, and the

audience are aware that Scottie's vertigo left him powerless, but the presiding officer conveys the idea that Scottie's powerlessness is, if not unbelievable, unacceptable.

The scene following the inquest is perhaps the most disorienting one in the film—the nightmare sequence. This surreal scene marks the turning point of the film and, likewise, it is where the *Hamlet* analogues (their reflections and distortions of Shakespearean precedents heretofore fairly straightforward) become far more "diffused, fragmented, and set spinning."[30] With its unsettling close-ups, vivid colors, and use of animation, Scottie's nightmare visually echoes the opening credits. The dream unfolds as follows: Scottie's bed and pillow vanish behind him as he seemingly awakens. A quick animated sequence shows Carlotta's bouquet scattering in a colorful burst of petals (reminiscent of the bay scene). Scottie is shown speaking to Elster at the coroner's inquest, while Carlotta stands, ghostlike, between them, clinging to Elster but shifting her gaze to look at Scottie, her expression inscrutable (Figure 9). Cut to a close-up of Carlotta's necklace, the portrait here uncannily recreated as a photograph. Scottie then approaches Carlotta's open grave and falls in, his descent represented by a close-up of his disembodied head plummeting down a tunnel until the rooftop of San Juan Bautista comes into view. We see a silhouette of Scottie's body falling onto the roof, which fades to a white void just before he makes contact.

Despite the dream ostensibly being the product of grief and trauma brought on by Madeline's "suicide," Madeline does not appear in the dream, but Carlotta does, pointedly "linked with Elster and not with Madeline.[31] Much of the imagery in the nightmare sequence is that of the Ophelia-like Carlotta: her bouquet, her grave, and continued height/death juxtaposition (in this case, falling into a grave onto the scene of the "suicide"). Though she is not seen in the dream sequence, Madeline is not absent. As Modleski notes,

> What is most extraordinary about this dream is that Scottie actually lives out Madeline's hallucination [Figure 10], that very hallucination of which he had tried so desperately to cure her, and he dies Madeline's death [Figure 11]. His attempts at a cure having failed, he himself is plunged into the "feminine" world of psychic disintegration, madness, and death.[32]

The emphasis on Carlotta in the nightmare sequence, then, does not necessarily indicate that Scottie now believes the possession story; as he now identifies with the haunted Madeline, Carlotta's ghost haunts him in turn.

The "'feminine world' of psychic disintegration, madness, and death" that Modleski identifies is made manifest in a series of hauntings. The uncanny feminine figures in *Vertigo* are ghostly women who destabilize the masculine figures who desire them. Following the nightmare sequence, Scottie enters a state of intense depression, spending the next year wandering—haunting—San Francisco, revisiting the places associated with Madeline/Carlotta, occasionally mistaking other women for her. "Scottie," remarks Modleski, "not only identifies with Madeline in his dream, but becomes caught up in the very madness he had feared in her. In his quest for his lost Madeline, he becomes like 'the mad Carlotta,' who had accosted strangers in the street as she desperately sought the child that had been taken from her."[33] Carlotta has taken over Madeline; now she takes over Scottie. Scottie does not lose his association with Hamlet, but from the nightmare sequence onward, Scottie takes up the role of Ophelia: the mad, the victim, the haunted.

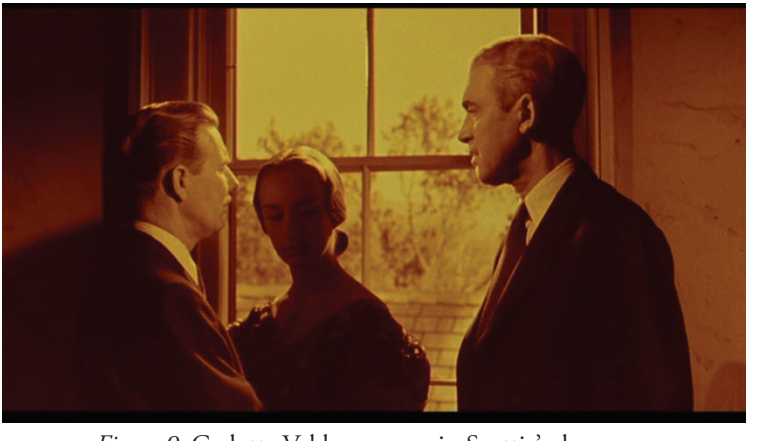

Figure 9. Carlotta Valdes appears in Scottie's dream. Copyright Universal Pictures. Accessed via https://the.hitchcock.zone/wiki/1000_Frames_of_Vertigo_(1958).

Figure 10. Carlotta's open grave. Copyright Universal Pictures. Accessed via https://the.hitchcock.zone/wiki/1000_Frames_of_Vertigo_(1958).

Figure 11. Scottie falls into Carlotta's grave. Copyright Universal Pictures. Accessed via https://the.hitchcock.zone/wiki/1000_Frames_of_Vertigo_(1958).

Enter Judy Barton. With the reveal of her role in the plot—playing the part of "Madeline" in order to create Scottie as witness to an apparent suicide—Judy is, albeit in a different respect than her Madeline persona, an Ophelia-like figure.[34] Like Ophelia, Judy is manipulated and molded by men—first Elster, then Scottie—for their own selfish purposes. The two single out Judy for the same

reason: "Because I look like her." Judy is not respected, loved, or valued for herself, but rather for her use, just as Ophelia is tolerated by the men of the Danish court so long as she is useful to their ends. Ophelia loves Hamlet, who claims to have never reciprocated her feelings, and cries to heaven for his "restoration"—to regain the love they'd had before. Scottie has never loved Judy—only Madeline—but Judy submits to his manipulations in the hopes that he will love her for herself, that their romance will, in some form, live again.

In examining the diffusions and fragmentations of *Hamlet* characters in *Vertigo*, it is tempting to view Judy as a Hamlet figure as well as an Ophelia one. "Judy," remarks Vest, "who plays so many roles in this story, also resembles Hamlet in one important way. Her origins are presented in terms of the traditional Hamlet-Orestes paradigm: 'That's me with my mother and that's my father. He's dead. My mother married again, but I didn't like the guy.'"[35] Vest fails to note other critical respects in which Judy echoes Hamlet. Her role as a person feigning madness for the sake of committing a murder (though she is not the one doing the killing), leaving a heartbroken and deeply unsettled lover in her wake, is strikingly Hamletesque. Moreover, the way in which she plays the role of Madeline, powerfully yet subtly embodying the character in "not just the hair and the clothes," but "the look, the manner, the words," evokes Hamlet's own advice to the players in act three. She "speak[s] the speech…trippingly on the tongue" (3.2.1) and holds "as 'twere, / the mirror up to nature" (3.2.20)—a "very apt pupil," indeed.

The ways in which Judy echoes Ophelia are more pronounced than those in which she echoes Hamlet. Yet it is important to note her similarities to Hamlet because the comparison emphasizes a key element of her character that Ophelia lacks: internality. There is only one moment in *Hamlet* where Ophelia is alone onstage—her short soliloquy in 3.1, where she laments Hamlet's apparent madness following his cruel rejection. Even then she is not truly alone; she knows that Polonius and Claudius are watching. Her thoughts regarding her manipulation at the hands of the Danish court are never revealed. Even her death is related through Gertrude's perspective, as opposed to being shown directly. The audience is never granted internality into Ophelia's thoughts; at

every moment, she is presented as a character to be evaluated, judged, and handled by the predominantly male members of the Danish court.

The audience is confronted with extensive scenes of Judy's internality. When Scottie leaves Judy's room following their first conversation, "the camera for the first time [except for two very brief scenes with Midge earlier in the film] deserts Scottie and remains with the woman."[36] Her letter to Scottie explaining her role in the plot is a soliloquy. The soliloquy presents a form of internality that the audience never receives from Scottie—private thoughts with no audience within the fourth wall. This level of internality evokes sympathy for Judy by way of identification, a pattern that will continue as "the revelation [of her role in the plot and love for Scottie, through her letter-soliloquy] functions to produce a spectator position painfully split between Scotty [sic] and Judy for the rest of the film."[37] Thus, unlike Ophelia, Judy's perspective on her manipulation at the hands of Scottie is explicitly and consistently shown through her perspective. Focus is taken away from Scottie and granted to the subject of his control, making his actions less sympathetic and significantly more disturbing. Moreover, the film's emphasis on Judy as a clever woman with demonstrable capacity and capability for manipulation further emphasizes the tragedy of her doomed love for Scottie, and his own unnatural actions.

The duality of Ophelia's character—demure, obedient lady of the court and uncontrollable madwoman—is sharply split into the Madeline and Judy personas. Madeline is Ophelia from act four onward—mad, associated with flowers, and unable to be controlled by the male influences that seek to "cure" her. Judy, who is manipulated and molded by patriarchal figures, echoes Ophelia from acts one through three. Through the doubling of Madeline and Judy, Ophelia is herself doubled, split into two characters. As Vest notes, "The order of events in Shakespeare's play is reversed in Hitchcock's film."[38] The two Ophelias are shown in reverse order; the mad Ophelia precedes the manipulated/molded Ophelia. Subsequently, *Vertigo*'s Ophelia figure undergoes a change in power dynamics that is the reverse of her *Hamlet* counterpart. Where Ophelia begins *Hamlet* with little power in the face of patriarchal dominance, she gains her freedom in madness. Judy,

pretending at madness, begins the film under Elster's power, but she is in control of Scottie, the male focal character, whom she manipulates with ease. After the murder plot is over, Judy becomes fully independent; she is comfortably departing with a set of female companions when Scottie first sees her—no male tether in sight.[39] In the final third of the film, however, she completely (albeit unhappily) submits to Scottie's manipulations and control. Though he points out that she could leave at any time, Judy's love for Scottie keeps her helpless under his manipulations; she cannot leave any more than he can erase the memory of Madeline.

The mad Ophelia's ghostly nature increases the effect of the uncanny in *Vertigo*, and the effect is redoubled when Scottie begins to remake Judy into the Ophelia-like Madeline. By the time Judy is introduced, Madeline is, like Carlotta before her, a ghost. The character is dead, but she haunts Scottie's mind, drawing him into her "world of psychic disintegration, madness, and death."[40]

Figure 12. Judy dressed as Madeline. Copyright Universal Pictures. Accessed via https://the.hitchcock.zone/wiki/1000_Frames_of_Vertigo_(1958).

In Judy's post-makeover reveal, the image of Madeline is distinctly ghostlike, obscured by fog and cast in a sickly green light, the shot a recollection of her appearance in the doorway of Scottie's bedroom (Figure 12).[41] The flowers on the hotel bedspread and the picture above it, later arranged in a bouquet, recall the Ophelia-like imagery so intimately linked to Madeline. Pippin credits Kim Novak's beautifully subtle acting in this shot; despite now looking exactly like Madeline, her posture and facial expressions convey that this is indeed Judy playing the part.[42] The ghostly presence of Madeline made manifest in Judy is almost like a possession. When Scottie kisses Judy-Madeline, he is struck by what for the audience is dramatic irony and for him a deeply disturbing uncanniness; the background changes to the San Juan Bautista stables where he last kissed Madeline. Here, for Scottie, the lines between reality and fantasy are at their most confused and blurred; he is kissing Judy, not Madeline, but everything about the kiss is just like when he kissed Madeline.[43] This is a moment of profound uncanniness for Scottie and of tragic, distressing irony for the audience. Despite the recreation of Judy-as-Madeline, the fact remains that Judy is not Madeline because Madeline, the "Madeline" Scottie fell in love with, never existed. Judy's role in the plot and the nature of Scottie's deception necessitate that the Madeline character can never live again. Madeline truly is, for all intents and purposes, dead, her ghostly, fantastic presence the only real existence she has. And because Scottie loves Madeline, not Judy—despite his claims to the contrary—Judy can never be free of her ghostly double. To borrow from Derrida, Madeline's "specter" is "as powerful as it is unreal, a hallucination or simulacrum that is virtually more actual than what is so blithely called a living presence."[44] Scottie's love for Judy is contingent on her being a vessel for Madeline—an ironic parallel to Madeline as Carlotta's vessel.

When Scottie discovers the truth behind the ruse, he is outraged at being tricked. Here another parallel is drawn between Scottie and the film's female Ophelia figures: "Scottie must now confront the fact that, like a woman, he was manipulated and used by Gavin Elster, that his plot too had been scripted for him."[45] Like Judy, Scottie is a victim of masculine manipulation, which perhaps further bruises his already shattered ego. Scottie is justifiably filled with rage at the revelation.

In the film's final scene, we return to the mission tower—the home of Carlotta, of death, of height, of hauntings. "I have to go back into the past once more, just once more," Scottie tells a distressed Judy, "for the last time." At this point, Scottie has pieced together the truth behind Madeline's death and Judy's identity; he has regained, to a certain extent, a sense of what was real. As they ascend the bell tower, Scottie presses on despite his vertigo—signaled once more by two dolly zooms—determined to get full clarity, to finally put to rest the uncertainty that has plagued him since losing Madeline.

His actions at the mission tower are also an assertion of control, the control he realizes he never possessed—control over his fear and control over Judy/Madeline. "I tried but I couldn't get to the top. One doesn't often get a second chance," he says, preparing to guide her up the tower. "I want to stop being haunted. You're my second chance, Judy. You're my second chance." As he says this, he holds her, eventually forcing her up the stairs, a physical assertion of power and control. To make it to the top of the tower, to discern reality from fiction, and to regain power over his own life is to assert control over the ghosts that haunt him. Only in firmly and finally establishing control can Scottie "stop being haunted" by Madeline, by his trauma, and by the ultimate lack of control both symbolize.[46] "In the end, like Hamlet," Vest notes, "John Ferguson finally makes up his mind and asserts his own needs, with tragic results."[47]

When he reaches the height at which he originally broke down, Scottie tells Judy that he knows the truth, and he drags her up the tower despite his fear. The moment he has gotten her full confession regarding her part in the murder, he remarks that he has "made it" to the tower's highest point, only for the confrontation to resume on the bell tower platform. Scottie's confrontation with Judy—his violent language, his rough physical treatment of her—echoes Hamlet at his cruelest, in the act three, scene one, "get thee to a nunnery" scene. Scottie's anguished "I loved you so, Madeline" is, in effect, telling Judy, "I loved you not" (3.1.116-17). Judy pleads with him to love her, but he knows that the fantasy has ended, and he has finally accepted that "there's no bringing her back."

"Love me," Judy whispers once more, and the two kiss—the first time Scottie has kissed Judy and only Judy, not Madeline. She

will no longer be molded, no longer manipulated. Judy is, it seems, finally free from Madeline's ghost. And at this precise moment, Judy sees a final shadowy, ghostly figure (actually a nun) ascending the stairs. *Vertigo* ends as *Hamlet* begins, with a Catholic "ghost" on a platform and the striking of a bell (Figure 13). Judy is startled and breaks out of Scottie's grasp, darts out of frame, and screams. Much like Ophelia's death, it is unclear whether Judy's fall from the bell tower is an accident or an act of suicide. Furthermore Judy, like Ophelia, is the only character to die in *Vertigo* whose body is not shown.[48] The film ends with the image of Scottie standing on the tower ledge, staring at the scene below (Figure 14). The implication is that he is cured of his acrophobia ("Only another emotional shock could do it"); the shock that seemingly cures him comes only after he has put away his fantasy and is again able to properly perceive reality.

Figure 13. The nun's silhouette appears atop the bell tower. Copyright Universal Pictures. Accessed via https://the.hitchcock.zone/wiki/1000_Frames_of_Vertigo_(1958).

Figure 14. The final shot of the film. Copyright Universal Pictures. Accessed via https://the.hitchcock.zone/wiki/1000_Frames_of_Vertigo_(1958).

Scottie's ultimate assertion of control is his control over his vertigo: the source of his helplessness throughout the film. Conquering his vertigo, however, comes at the expense of Judy's life. Masculine assertion of control comes at the expense of the woman. The same happens in *Hamlet*. Ophelia, constantly used as a pawn in the political machinations of the patriarchal Danish court, loses her sanity—almost entirely due to Hamlet's own actions—and her life. The men who manipulate Ophelia and Judy do so with little to no regard for their emotional or mental well-being. Ophelia is a tool to be used in Hamlet's manipulation, later thrown back at his enemies with callous cruelty. Judy is a conduit for Scottie to recreate the woman he loved and, ultimately, to gain control after over a year of helplessness in the face of his trauma.

Though he does not bear witness to her madness, Hamlet is haunted by Ophelia. Returning from the sea to her funeral, Hamlet has to confront the sudden death of his lover and his role in her demise. He is, appropriately enough, horrified, and he loudly makes his grief known. Because the film ends at the moment of Judy's death, it is unclear how Scottie would respond to her demise. Judging by the ghostly imagery that ends the scene—above all the ominous ringing of the bell—it is implied that this death will continue to haunt Scottie.

The non-adaptive critical lens is imperfect; as Mallin notes, its use hinges on specific, presupposed interpretations of two distinct texts.[49] An interpretation of *Vertigo* as a non-adaptation of *Hamlet* is, like any interpretation, highly subjective to the critical inclinations of the reader. In this particular case, both texts are infamously ambiguous on a psychological level. The non-adaptive interpretation, however, does invite a new sense of appreciation—both critical and artistic—for the works it examines. In viewing *Vertigo* through the lens of *Hamlet*, we find that the film's Shakespearean echoes highlight and evoke further uncanniness—madness, doubling, haunting presences, and the confusion of reality and fantasy. Like the vertigo that plagues Scottie, the deviations from the film's Shakespearean echoes—the reconfiguring of Ophelia-like imagery into ghostly presences; the doubling, division, and reversal of Ophelia; and the conflation and diffraction of Hamlet character analogues—are disorienting and confusing, drawing the audience into the characters' mental and emotional disorientation and tension. The characters' reactions to these hauntings amplify the unsettling and tragic nature of the gendered power dynamics in both works, where the man who seizes control over his trauma-onset, struggles at the woman's expense.

Notes

1. Eric S. Mallin, *Reading Shakespeare in the Movies: Non-Adaptations and Their Meaning* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 12.

2. Mallin, *Reading Shakespeare,* 43.

3. See Margaret Kidnie, *Shakespeare and the Problem of Adaptation* (London: Routledge, 2009).

4. Dan Aulier, *Hitchcock's Notebooks: an Authorized and Illustrated Look Inside the Creative Mind of Alfred Hitchcock* (New York: Spike, 1999), 1.

5. James M. Vest, "Reflections of Ophelia (and of *Hamlet*) in Alfred Hitchcock's *Vertigo*" *The Journal of the Midwest Modern Language Association* 22.1 (1989): 1.

6. References to "Madeline" herein refer to the constructed identity that Kim Novak's character, Judy Barton, wears throughout the film, not Gavin Eslter's wife. This "Madeline" is not a real person, but rather a character created specifically for the purpose of the murder plot. Given that the "real" Madeline Elster has little presence in the film, all references to "Madeline" refer to the constructed persona with whom Scottie falls in love (unless otherwise noted).

7. Vest, "Reflections of Ophelia," 5.

8. Vest, "Reflections of Ophelia," 5.

9. Hitchcock's film is an adaptation of the 1954 novel *D'entre les morts* (generally referenced as *The Living and the Dead*) by Pierre Boileau and Thomas Narcejac (known together as Boileau-Narcejac). While some of the parallels to *Hamlet* are present in the plot of the novel (for instance, Madeline still attempts suicide in a body of water—the Siene), my analysis focuses on Hitchcock's film instead of the novel itself. The haunting motifs in *Vertigo* are inherently cinematic (imagery, visual framing, cinematography, etc.), and these elements are central to my analysis. I acknowledge the origin of some of these parallels to *Hamlet* in *D'entre les morts*, but my argument is built on Hitchcock's use of the filmic medium to echo Shakespeare's play.

10. See definition 5 in "haunt, v," OED Online.

11. Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (London: Routledge, 2011), 63.

12. There is one instance in the film where one of Scottie's vertigo episodes is not accompanied by a dolly zoom shot—the stepladder scene in Midge's apartment. This is also the only point in the film in which Scottie's acrophobia is triggered in a scene that does not end in death.

13. Diana Macintyre DeLuca, "The Movements of the Ghost in *Hamlet*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 24.2 (1973): 148.

14. Quotations of *Hamlet* reference the Norton Shakespeare, third edition.

15. Michael Cameron Andrews, "'Remember Me:' Memory and Action in *Hamlet*," *The Journal of General Education* 32. 4 (1981): 261.

16. Andrews, "Memory and Action," 261.

17. It would be remiss to neglect Lawrence Olivier's *Hamlet* (1948), specifically, the height/death juxtaposition present in the staggering cliffside setting of the "To be or not to be" scene as a potential influence on *Vertigo* and intermediary between Hitchcock's film and Shakespeare's play.

18. Ophelia was a popular subject in 19th-century artwork. Carlotta's floral portrait, presumably painted during her life (and before her husband's rejection), would have been painted in the same timeframe.

19. Madeline is a character, and Judy is playing the part; each enacts different aspects of the Ophelia character.

20. Scottie's acrophobia is not triggered in this scene, despite him diving into the bay from above. There are multiple explanations to account for this apparent inconsistency. First, the distance may not be high enough to trigger Scottie's acrophobia. In the earlier scene in Midge's apartment, Scottie's vertigo is triggered not by climbing on the stepladder but by staring out the window into the alley several stories below. Thus, we may conclude that Scottie's acrophobia is not triggered at smaller heights. Second, the presence of water below him may alleviate the fear; Scottie is obviously a strong swimmer, and every bout of vertigo depicted in the film is associated with a fall onto a solid surface. Third and finally, Vest interprets this scene as Scottie's "first positive step toward overcoming his acrophobia: he survives a drop from a height and thinks he has saved her life in the bargain," though the film does little to indicate that such progress has taken place; indeed, for Scottie' acrophobia to be somewhat healed by rescuing Madeline from her dive would be antithetical to Elster and Judy's plot.

21. Vest, "Reflections of Ophelia (and of *Hamlet*)," 5.

22. Duncan Salkeld, *Madness and Drama in the Age of Shakespeare* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), 94.

23. Salkeld, *Madness and Drama,* 94.

24. Salkeld, *Madness and Drama,* 95.

25. Another notable moment of ghost imagery is Madeline's inexplicable appearance and disappearance at the McKittrick Hotel, where she is seen in a high window only to vanish before Scottie goes up to her room, the hotel clerk unable to recall her presence that day. This moment is never explained in the film, nor has Hitchcock provided one in interviews. In any case, the scene further emphasizes Carlotta/Madeline's uncanny, ghostlike presence.

26. Of course, Elster's plan hinges on Scottie's acrophobia and subsequent vertigo, so the connection between the ghostly Carlotta/Madeline and Scottie's trauma is, in the world of the film, deliberate. The full extent of the effect Madeline was meant to have on Scottie in the context of the plan remains ambiguous. Though the character of Madeline was engineered to allure Scottie, the enduring impact of their relationship and her apparent demise was likely more than Elster had accounted for or cared enough to consider.

27. Tania Modleski, *The Women Who Knew Too Much: Hitchcock and Feminist Theory* (New York: Methuen, 1988), 93-94.

28. Robert B. Pippin, *The Philosophical Hitchcock:* Vertigo *and the Anxieties of Unknowingness* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2017), 77. Pippin proceeds to mention that Scottie's conception of "curing" Madeline is "rather like telling a depressed person that she has no good reason to be depressed, and insisting that when she realizes that, she will stop being depressed," in addition to several other reasons his plan is an ill-conceived one. This can be read as a foreshadowing of his relationship with Judy, where the woman is forced to conform to Scottie's ideal of what is right.

29. Modleski, *The Women Who Knew Too Much*, 94.

30. Vest, "Reflections of Ophelia (and of *Hamlet*)," 5.

31. Pippin, *The Philosophical Hitchcock*, 91. It is worth highlighting that Carlotta, despite serving as a double of Madeline, is not played by Kim Novak when she appears in the nightmare sequence, but by an uncredited Joanne Genthon.

32. Modleski, *The Women Who Knew Too Much*, 95. Emphasis Modleski's.

33. Modeleski, *The Women Who Knew Too Much*, 96.

34. The twist of the murder plot is not revealed until near the conclusion of *D'entre les morts*. Hitchcock's decision to place the revelation of Judy/Madeline's true identity earlier in the story places emphasis on Scottie's madness as well as Judy's personal tragedy. The hauntings here, laced with dramatic irony, take on a much more sinister air.

35. Vest, "Reflections of Ophelia (and of *Hamlet*)," 5.

36. Modleski, *The Women Who Knew Too Much*, 89.

37. Richard Abel, "*Stage Fright*: The Knowing Performance," *Film Criticism* 9. 2 (1984-85): 50n.

38. Vest, "Reflections of Ophelia (and of *Hamlet*)," 3.

39. In their final confrontation, Scottie suggests that Judy was Elster's mistress and that he rejected her once the plot was through. In the original screenplay,

Madeline confirms this. In the film, the answer is more ambiguous; throughout the exchange, Kim Novak seems to emphasize Judy's fear more than her answer to Scottie's question. At any rate, considering she was in love with Scottie at the time and seemed fairly content a year after the crime, Judy appears pointedly independent by the time Scottie finds her.

40. Modleski, *The Women Who Knew Too Much*, 95.
41. Pippin, *The Philosophical Hitchcock*, 58-59.
42. Pippin, *The Philosophical Hitchcock*, 112.
43. Pippin, *The Philosophical Hitchcock*, 114-115.
44. Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, 13.
45. Modleski, *The Women Who Knew Too Much*, 98.
46. "Nothing could be worse, for the work of mourning, than confusion or doubt: one *has to know* who is buried where—and *it is necessary* (to know—to make certain) that, in what remains of him, *he remain there*." Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, 9.
47. Vest, "Reflections of Ophelia (and of *Hamlet*)," 3.
48. Vest, "Reflections of Ophelia (and of *Hamlet*)," 7.
49. Mallin, *Reading Shakespeare in the Movies*, 37-38.

Shakespeare's Rhetorical Training and His Early Plays

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The importance of the art of rhetoric for Renaissance letters in general and William Shakespeare in particular has long been recognized. T. W. Baldwin's *William Shakspere's Small Latine & Lesse Greeke* (1944) provides a survey of the wide range of literary texts and treatises available to Shakespeare, and Sr. Miriam Joseph's *Shakespeare's Use of the Arts of Language* (1947) closely examines the manifold use made by Shakespeare of traditional techniques of invention and argumentation, pathos and ethos. Since then, however, there have been few specific studies on Shakespeare's rhetorical training and practice. While interest in Shakespeare's schooling has risen, few direct links between his Stratford lessons and the text of his plays have been established.

I argue that the impact of the rhetorical training Shakespeare received at the Stratford grammar school can best be seen in his early works, before he moved on to transcend the modes of speechmaking taught by the ancient Latin textbooks, "outrunning precept even while conforming to it," as Sister Miriam Joseph puts it.[1] Among these textbooks, the pseudo-Ciceronian *Rhetorica ad Herennium* certainly takes pride of place. As Baldwin has conclusively shown, Shakespeare "like most other 'learned grammarians' of his day … had mastered *Ad Herennium* as his basic textbook for rhetoric in grammar school."[2] Extant sixteenth-century grammar school statutes often specify *Ad Herennium* as a

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text to be studied,[3] and verbal parallels demonstrate Shakespeare's familiarity with this treatise.[4]

While Baldwin focuses on the structure of criminal investigation and pleading as outlined in the second book of *Ad Herennium*, providing the examples of the last scene of *Romeo and Juliet* and the Shylock trial in *A Merchant of Venice*,[5] I propose to examine speeches made in Shakespeare's early plays: that of Katherina at the end of *The Taming of the Shrew* (5.2.136-179)[6] and those of Richmond and Richard when addressing their soldiers in *Richard III* (5.3.237-270 and 314-351).[7] My contention is that Shakespeare in these speeches closely follows the rules proffered by *Ad Herennium* both in the area of *dispositio* or structuring, and in the area of *elocutio*, or sentence formation, including the use of imagery and other rhetorical figures.

In *The Taming of the Shrew*, Petruchio charges Katherine to tell the other two ladies "what duty they do owe their lords and husbands" (5.2.131). Within the tripartite scheme of epideictic, deliberative and judicial speeches, the present one belongs to the epideictic, or demonstrative category, often used to praise individuals or to show some general truth. In this case the praise is given to husbands in general, followed by a demonstration of the duties of wives.

Let's first examine the *dispositio*, or structure, of Katherine's speech. Before she embarks upon the main body of her argument with the pronunciation, "Thy husband is thy lord, thy life, thy keeper" (5.2.146), she addresses the other two ladies personally in a disparaging way (136-145). This part of her speech corresponds to what *Rhetorica ad Herennium* calls "exordium" and "principium," a Latin rendition of Greek *prooimion* (I, iv, 6).[8] From the various options of *principium*, she chooses to discuss her adversaries, to bring to light "hatred, unpopularity and contempt" (I, v, 8). Katherine addresses the widow, who has married Hortensio, but of course her speech is mainly designed to impress the gentlemen present.

The next part of the speech is the *narratio*, or statement of facts (I, viii, 11-12), which should have three qualities: "brevity, clarity and plausibility." Katherine's statement could not be clearer:

> Thy husband is thy lord, thy life, thy keeper,
> Thy head, thy sovereign; one that cares for thee,
> And for thy maintenance (5.2.146-148)

The subject-matter of epideictic speeches can be qualities of character (*laus animi* [III, vi, 10]). The qualities of the good husband enumerated by Katherine correspond to two of the cardinal virtues mentioned in *Ad Herennium*—justness and courage:

> [thy husband] commits his body
> To painful labor, both by sea and land;
> To watch the night in storms, the day in cold,
> While thou li'st warm at home, secure and safe. (5.2.148-151)

The argument is embellished by divisions: sea and land, day and night, cold versus warm. The lines about husbands' bodily exertions serve as *confirmatio* (III, ix, 16), or proof of the initial statement, as do these next lines: "And craves no other tribute at thy hands / But love, fair looks, and true obedience— / Too little payment for so great a debt" (5.2.152-154).

The next two lines can be described as *exornatio*, or embellishment (III, ix, 16), even though they already introduce the image used for the following part: "Such duty as the subject owes the prince, / Even such a woman oweth to her husband" (5.2.155-156).

The proof or *confirmatio* is followed by a *refutatio*, a refutation of the contrary argument:

> And when she is froward, peevish, sullen, sour,
> And not obedient to his honest will,
> What is she but a foul contending rebel,
> And graceless traitor to her loving lord? (5.2.157-160)

This is followed by the *conclusio*, or résumé:

> I am asham'd that women are so simple
> To offer war where they should kneel for peace,
> Or seek for rule, supremacy and sway,
> When they are bound to serve, love, and obey. (5.2.161-164)

Katherine then adds further arguments or *confirmationes*, one from natural disposition: "Why are our bodies soft, and weak, and smooth" (5.2.165), and one from her own personal experience: "My mind has been as big as one of yours" (5.2.170). This is followed by a personal *conclusio*: "In token of which duty, if he please, / My hand is ready, may it do him ease" (5.2.177-178).

Incidentally, we may notice that *Ad Herennium* also contains several paragraphs on the issue of delivery of speeches, which would certainly have been of great interest to Shakespeare as actor

and director (III, vi-viii, 11-15; and III, xi-xv, 19-27).[9] As we do not have recordings of Shakespearean performances, we will never know to what extent the rules and suggestions of the Latin treatise were followed. What we can examine, however, is the issue of *elocutio*, or style, to which the author devoted the fourth and last book of his treatise. The author first defines three different styles, the grand, the middle, and the simple. Of these three, Katherine's speech fits the middle style, as it is certainly more elevated than ordinary prose (IV, viii, 11 and ix, 13), but does not consist of a display of the most ornate words available (viii, 11). *Ad Herennium* also outlines basic rules of variation and euphony, which are certainly kept in Katherine's speech (xii, 18).

Ad Herennium further defines *exclamatio* (or apostrophe) and *interrogatio* (or rhetorical question) (xv, 22), both of which are found in her speech. In 5.2.169, Katherine addresses Bianca and the widow directly: "Come, come, you froward and unable worms!", and twice, in 5.2.159-160 and 5.2.165-168, she couches her argument in the form of a rhetorical question: "What is she but a foul contending rebel, / And graceless traitor to her loving lord?"; "Why are our bodies soft, and weak, and smooth" (5.2.165). The enumeration of qualities in a husband, "thy lord, thy life, thy keeper, / thy head, thy sovereign" (146-147), or of bad qualities in a woman, "froward, peevish, sullen, sour" (5.2.157), are examples of what *Ad Herennium* calls *articulus*, or comma (xix, 26), "when single word are set apart by pauses in staccato speech."

The greatest debt which Shakespeare owes *Ad Herennium*, however, is the technique of cola, or corresponding parts of a sentence: "Such duty as the subject owes the prince, / Even such a woman oweth to her husband" (5.2.155-156). These sentences sometimes take the form of isocolon, i.e., corresponding parts of the same length and structure, as in "the night in storms, the day in cold" (5.2.150). This isocolon, taken together, forms a new colon which is completed by the next line: "Whilst thou li'st warm at home, secure and safe" (5.2.151). Quite often, the figure of colon goes along with antithesis: "Too little payment for so great a debt" (5.2.154); "graceless traitor to her loving lord" (5.2.160); "to offer war where they should kneel for peace" (5.2.162); "Or seek for rule, supremacy and sway / When they are bound to serve, love, and obey" (5.2.163-164), and "That seeming to be most which we

indeed least are" (5.2.175).

The figure *Ad Herennium* calls *dissolutum*, or asyndeton (30. 41) is found twice towards the end of the speech, and the two instances form antithetical cola:

> My mind has been as big as one of yours,
> My heart as great, my reason haply more …
> But now I see our lances are but straws,
> Our strength as weak, our weakness past compare.
> (5.2.170-171, 173-174)

Both parts of this antithesis also feature the figure of *gradatio*, or climax (xxv, 34)—the three members of each of the two arguments follow one another in ascending order.

Finally, we can take a look at the imagery used by Katherine and compare it with the suggestions of *Ad Herennium*. The "exordium" contains a series of *translationes* or metaphors (xxxiv, 45): "*unknit* that threat'ning unkind brow"; "*dart* not scornful glances from those eyes," and "to *wound* thy lord, thy king, thy governor" (5.2.136-138), followed by two *imagines*, or similes (xlix, 62), taken from nature: "as frosts do bite the meads" (5.2.139) and "as whirlwinds shake fair buds" (5.2.140).

The most characteristic form of imagery which Shakespeare may have drawn from rhetorical training, however, is *permutatio*, or allegory (xxxiv, 46), which according to *Ad Herennium*, "operates through a comparison when a number of metaphors originating in a similarity in the mode of expression are set together" (xxxiv, 46). Such an allegory concludes the *exordium*: "A woman moved is like a fountain troubled, / Muddy, ill-seeming, thick, bereft of beauty …" (5.2.141-145). All the unattractive qualities of an outspoken woman can be visualized. The second instance is in 5.2.154: "Too little payment for so great a debt." 5.2.172-173 provide the next example: "To bandy word for word and frown for frown; / But now I see our lances are but straws." The image of playful fighting is kept up through three connected metaphors. Finally, the conclusion takes the shape of an allegory, as body parts stand for wifely attitudes: "Then vail your stomachs, for it is no boot, / And place your hands below your husband's foot" (5.2.176-177). Katherine ends on a particularly striking note in that she acts out her metaphor by literally placing a hand in front of Petruchio's foot.

Rhetoric shapes how Shakespeare organizes the arguments in favor of wifely submission. The techniques outlined in *Ad Herennium* are integrated into iambic, even rhymed verse, and that the verse structure may help to create parallelisms, as in isocolon. It also provides an opportunity to Katherine to get the better of her sister and the other women, and for the boy actor playing her to shine in front of company. The perfection of this speech, of course, ironically undercuts the discourse of female inferiority it embodies.[10]

Like his later plays, *The Taming of the Shrew* ends with a certain sense of ambiguity. We may also note that the techniques of imagery allow Shakespeare to introduce some of his pet motifs, notably the concept of natural order, by deriving his notions from the idea that the bodies of men are naturally strong, while those of women are soft. Disturbances of the natural hierarchy between husbands and wives are illustrated by disturbances in nature, and both will finally be rectified.

My next examples are the two orations found in *Richard III*, by the Earl of Richmond (5.3.238-271) and by King Richard (5.3.315-342). Orations by army leaders were not usually discussed in classical rhetoric, but they can certainly be subsumed under the deliberative genus, as they intend to persuade the soldiers to fight bravely. The speeches are marked similarly, as "*His oration to his Soldiers*" (5.3.237) or "*His oration to his Army*" (5.3.313), in scene directions. Moreover, the two speeches share the same structure and thus lend themselves to a comparison.

Richmond starts off with an *exordium* stating his humility, the love of his hearers and the importance of the occasion, i.e., briefly encompassing three of the four methods of a *principium*, a direct opening (*Ad Herennium*, I, iv, 8), references to the speaker, the hearers and the cause. The fourth method, a reference to the adversary, is omitted: "More than I have said, loving countrymen, / The leisure and enforcement of the time / Forbids to dwell upon" (5.3.237-239). The "statement of facts" consists of an assertion of the divine justice of their cause: "God, and our good cause, fight upon our side; / The prayers of holy saints and wronged souls, / Like high-rear'd bulwarks, stand before our faces" (5.3.240-242).

In the system of arguments in deliberative speeches, the *utilitas* or advantage proposed is *honesta* rather than *tuta*; it is honor rather

than security. The issue is *honesta* because it is *rectum*, right, rather than just *laudabile*, praiseworthy (*Ad Herennium,* III, ii, 3). The statement is followed by a series of arguments, beginning with a distinction: "Richard except, those whom we fight against / Had rather have us win than him they follow" (5.3.243-244).

Richard's followers are distinguished from Richard himself, who now comes in for abuse, emphasized by anaphora and repetition of words: "One rais'd in blood, and one in blood established / One that made means to come by what he hath" (5.3.247-248). The next part of the argumentation lists various motivations for fighting Richard, which will all result in some benefit, comprising, as *Ad Herennium* advises (III, iv, 8), both honor and safety. The argument that "if you fight against God's enemy, / God will in justice ward you as his soldiers" (5.3.253-254) belongs to the category of honor; the next one: "If you do sweat to put a tyrant down, / You sleep in peace, the tyrant being slain" (5.3.255-256) to that of safety. To honor and safety Richmond adds material benefits: "If you do fight against your country's foes, / Your country's fat shall pay your pains the hire" (5.3.257-258), and sexual ones: "If you do fight in safeguard of your wives, / Your wives shall welcome home the conquerors" (5.3.259-260). The final benefit is a long-term one: "If you do free your children from the sword, / Your children's children quits it in your age" (5.3.261-262). The conclusion, initiated by "then," again refers to God, as well as to Richmond himself, who will reward his followers.

With regard to elocution, we may first note *ratiocinatio*, or Reasoning by Question and Answer (IV, xvi, 23): "For what is he they follow? Truly, gentlemen, / A bloody tyrant and a homicide" (5.3.245-246). The next figure is *traductio*, or transplacement, i.e., the reintroduction of the same word (IV, xiv, 20): "One rais'd in blood, and one in blood established; / One that made means to come by what he hath, / And slaughtered those that were the means to help him" (5.3.248-249), with the repetition of the word *means* drawing attention to the paradox. The list of benefits, which constitutes a *distributio* (xxxv, 47), is characterized by anaphora (IV, xii, 19) and isocolon (IV, xx, 27). The two line-structure: "If you do sweat to put the tyrant down, / You sleep in peace, the tyrant being slain" (5.3.255-256) is repeated four times. In each of

the pairs of lines we also notice the *traductio*, or transplacement of a noun, as with "tyrant" in the example quoted.

With regard to *exornationes verborum*, or Figures of Diction (IV, xxix-xxxi, 41-42), we note allegory, referring to Richard as: "A base foul stone, made precious by the foil / Of England's chair, where he is falsely set" (5.3.250- 251). This image indicates that Richard does not belong to the throne of England. In blaming Richard, Richmond at the same time upholds "the essence of kingship, which is the root of its dignity and intrinsic honor, namely, that it is a principle of order, a delegation of divine authority made sacred by anointing."[11] The protection of God and holy saints is invoked by means of a simile (IV, xlix, 62): "Like high-rear'd bulwarks, stand before our faces" (5.3.242). We may also discover instances of synecdoche (IV, xxxiii, 44): "sweat" (5.3.255); "your country's fat" (5.3.258); "from the sword" (5.3.261); metonymy (IV, xxxii, 43): "one raised in blood" (5.3.247), "this cold corpse" (5.3.266), and personification (IV, liii, 66): "pay your pains the hire" (5.3.258) and "your willing swords" (5.3.264).

Richard's *exordium*, consisting of just one line, is similar to Richmond's, but appears more colloquial and dismissive: "What shall I say more than I have inferr'd?" (5.3.314). Indeed, this line can be considered an example of the figure of *dubitatio*, or Indecision (I, vi, 10), recommended for a Subtle, rather than Direct approach, or *exordium*, which needs to be used "if the cause has a discreditable character" (I, vi, 9). Unlike Richmond's speech, Richard's statement of facts amounts to an abuse, first of the enemy soldiers (5.3.315-322), then of Richmond himself (5.3.323-326), introduced, like Richard in Richmond's speech, by *ratiocinatio*: "And who does lead them but a paltry fellow?" (5.3.323). Richard's speech also operates by means of anaphora and isocolon: "You sleeping safe, they bring to you unrest; / You having lands and blessed with beauteous wives, / The would restrain the one, distain the other" (5.3.320-322).

Ad Herennium establishes the dichotomy of honor and security as advantageous courses of action. While Richmond emphasizes honor, Richard confines himself to security, and while Richmond promises rewards, Richard raises fears. "Sleeping safe" and the love of wives were also motifs in Richmond's speech but Richard warns against losing these benefits rather than arguing in favor of

winning them. A figure he uses in 5.3.322 is *paronomasia*, or a play on similar sounds (IV, xxi, 28)—restrain, distain. The abuse he pours upon the enemy soldiers as "rags of France" does not keep him from voicing his fears in interrogation, or rhetorical questions: "Shall these enjoy our lands? Lie with our wives? / Ravish our daughters?" (5.3.336-337).

The *exornationes*, or figures of diction of Richard's speech, are characterized by vulgarity: we may notice personification, metaphor and allegory in the line: "Whom their o'ercloyed country vomits forth" (5.3.318). There is the metonymy of the "overweening rags," and there are further metaphors: "Let's whip" (5.3.327) and "poor rats" (5.3.331). The latter image appears unfortunate, as it is difficult to imagine the rats hanging themselves. At the end, Richard refers to amazing "the welkin" rather than appealing to God (5.3.341). Even in his final evocation of England's patron saint, where Richard does call on religion, he omits the direct reference to God that Richmond offers, instead replacing God by an invocation of hellish animals: "Our ancient word of courage, fair Saint George, / Inspire us with the spleen of fiery dragons!" (5.3.350). The structural similarities of the two speeches invite us to pay particular attention to the differences in their rhetorical strategies. Even though the number of rhetorical figures is about the same in the two speeches, it is obvious that Richmond's dignified speech can be considered an example of the middle style, while Richard's belongs to the simple style or *oratio extenuata* (IV, viii, 11 and ix, 14).

Through these varying rhetorical strategies, Richmond is characterized as calm, confident, God-fearing and legitimate, while Richard is nasty, lacking in empathy, vulgar, fearful, and abandoned by God. The Latin manual of rhetoric offered Shakespeare an elaborate and flexible frame to organize the language of character delineation. Shakespeare's rhetorical training thus emerges as the foundation on which Shakespeare developed his use of language to shape individual character and the complexities of social interaction.

In later plays, Shakespeare continues using rhetorical techniques but transcends the scope provided by the Latin manual with regard both to their form and their purpose. Baldwin quotes John of Gaunt's speech of consolation to his banished son as an

example of the rhetorical structure of argumentation.[12] While convincing, Baldwin misses out on a detail which distinguishes Gaunt's speech from classical rhetoric. Gaunt does not attempt to persuade Bolingbroke to be happy with his banishment, but he gives advice to him on how to persuade himself:

> Teach thy necessity to reason thus: (1.3.277)
> Think not the King did banish thee (1.3.279)
> Go, say I sent thee forth to purchase honor (1.3.282)
> Look what thy soul holds dear, imagine it /
> To lie the way thou goest. (1.3.386-387)

The techniques of rhetoric are psychologized and become a tool of self-persuasion. Shakespeare alludes to the mistrust to which rhetoric often gives rise. Arguments may not be fair, and may not be true; and you can easily twist the outcome. This means that someone who—like Stoic philosophers—is in command of his affections can use pretend arguments to mentally come to terms with a situation. Duke Senior in *As You Like it* is proceeding in a similar way when he makes his point that "the churlish chiding of the winter's wind" (2.1.7) is preferable to the life "of painted pomp" (2.1.3) at court. As Amiens remarks, the Duke has the enviable capacity "to translate the stubbornness of fortune / Into so quiet and so sweet a style" (2.1.19-20). The Duke does not need to persuade his friends but uses the notorious fact-changing potential of rhetoric to come to terms with a situation.[13]

A psychological turn also takes place in the king's soliloquy the night before the battle of Agincourt in *Henry V*. After talking to his soldiers in disguise, Henry soliloquizes about the privileges and responsibilities of kingship, and his frustration about "ceremony" as the only, and indeed doubtful, advantage kings have over commoners (4.1.230-284). His speech works with *apostrophe, interrogatio* (rhetorical question) and *ratiocinatio* (Question and Answer), while it dispenses with rules of *dispositio*. The king is not persuading anybody, but engages in introspection and self-examination. Rhetoric is used to address issues specific to this play and to Henry's character.

Scenes 4.2 and 4.3 then contain speeches by army leaders which can be compared to those of *Richard III*. The Constable of France, like King Richard, tries to motivate his soldiers by belittling and disparaging enemy soldiers (4.2.15-37), while

King Henry (4.3.20-67), talking to the Earl of Westmoreland, emphasizes the honor to be won and develops the theme of the "happy few" (4.3.60) privileged to achieve glory. His *distributio,* or reference to the alternatives of winning or losing the battle, testifies to his sense of responsibility: "If we are marked to die, we are enow / To do our country loss" (4.3.20-21). Starting from "classical" techniques of rhetoric, Shakespeare develops his own language of characterization and self-revelation.

Brutus's and Antony's speeches in *Julius Caesar,* however, are less about self-revelation than manipulation of public opinion. Brutus who claims to defend himself and his fellow-conspirators ends his speech using a figure of moral coercion: "Who is here so vile that will not love his country?" (3.2.32-33). When Antony is given leave to speak his praise of Caesar, he delivers an epideictic speech. The force of his speech derives from a subtle change of genre. By degrees, Antony changes from the epideictic to the deliberative mode and ends by persuading his audience to take up arms against the conspirators. As a manipulative tool rhetoric works best when its rules are subtly impaired.

Shakespeare, of course, was not the only Elizabethan playwright to make extensive use of his rhetorical training, and we may ask if earlier works influenced Shakespeare's use of rhetoric. As a rhetorician, Christopher Marlowe probably stands out. In *Tamburlaine the Great, Part I* (c. 1587), the art of making speeches is clearly more conspicuous than military prowess. The Prologue promises that the audience will "hear the Scythian Tamburlaine / Threatening the world with high astounding terms" (Prologue, 4-5); "scourging kingdoms with his conquering sword" (Prologue, 6) evidently comes second.[14] Tamburlaine builds up his power from scratch. A simple shepherd, he takes a travelling princess and her retinue prisoners. When meeting Theridamas, a Persian general, and his thousand horsemen, he manages to persuade him to change sides and submit to his command (1.2.165-208). As Kent Cartwright notes, "the yielding of Theridamas fulfills a humanist fantasy of the power of rhetoric," the fantasy of overthrowing an enemy by speaking rather than fighting.[15]

Like the Shakespearean speeches discussed above, Tamburlaine's address begins with an *exordium*:

> In thee, thou valiant man of Persia,
> I see the folly of thy emperor;
> Art thou but captain of a thousand horse,
> That by characters graven in thy brows,
> And by thy martial face and stout aspect,
> Deserv'st to have the leading of an host? (1.2.165-170)

Flattery of the addressee is subtly connected with the disparagement of an enemy, the Persian emperor. Tamburlaine thus combines two of the four methods of direct opening according to *Ad Herennium* (I, v, 8)—discussing the persons of the adversary and the hearer. This capture of the hearer's *benivolentia* is followed by the *propositio* (II, xviii, 28): "Forsake thy king, and do but join with me" (1.2.171), which will be taken up in the conclusion: "Join with me now in this my mean estate" (1.2.201). The *narratio*, or list of arguments, can be divided into two sections. Tamburlaine first hyperbolically boasts of his own greatness and claims to be favored by the gods, emphasizing his claims by referring to his booty of gold and the Princess (1.2.173-186). The second part is devoted to the benefits which will accrue to Theridamas from joining with him—material spoils (1.2.189-191) as well as power and glory (1.2.193-197). The *utilitas* is confined to what *Ad Herenium* calls *tuta*: power, glory and material wealth, while arguments referring to the *honestas* of the action proposed are missing (cf. *Ad Herennium*, III, 2. 3).[16] Tamburlaine's speech also contains a *refutatio*. By referring to Jove he counters the objection that he is only a simple shepherd (1.2.198-200). Like Katherine in *The Taming of the Shrew*, Tamburlaine ends his speech by a *confirmatio* (1.2.204-208).

While the *dispositio* of Tamburlaine's speech resembles that of the Shakespearean speeches previously discussed, its *elocutio*, following the precepts of *Ad Herennium*, is far less intricate. Metaphors and personifications are conventional, and most of them refer to the speaker's connections with divinities: "I hold the Fates bound fast in iron chains, / And with my hand turn Fortune's wheel about" (1.2.173-174); "Jove himself will stretch his hand from heaven" (1.2.179), and "See how he rains down heaps of gold in showers" (1.2.181). His view of government is slightly allegorical, as he proposes that he and Theridamas act as "consuls of the earth" (1.2.196) with mighty kings as their "senators" (1.2.197). Another rhetorical feature taken from classical rhetoric (though not from *Ad Herennium*) are the references to mythology

("As far as Boreas claps his brazen wings" [1.2.205]). Altogether, however, Marlowe does not use the arsenal of rhetorical features offered by *Ad Herennium* as extensively as does Shakespeare.

Similar examples can be found in the works of George Peele and Robert Greene. We can conclude that while all the dramatists draw on Latin manuals of rhetoric, Shakespeare does so independently and does not follow any previous dramatist's lead. It was his own study of the pseudo-Ciceronian rhetorical treatise which gave him the wherewithal to make his characters speak. However, both Marlowe's and Shakespeare's speeches testify to the uses of rhetorical studies in the Elizabethan grammar school system. Rhetoric taught students to organize an argument, convey it to their interlocutors, and thereby assert difference and individuality while keeping within the limits of civilized interaction. The stage also alerted wider audiences to the fact that the art of speaking could be misused for ethical manipulation.[17]

Notes

1. Sister Miriam Joseph, *Shakespeare's Use of the Arts of Language* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1947), 4.

2. T. W. Baldwin, *William Shakspere's Small Latine & Lesse Greeke*, 2 vols (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1944), 2:107. On the central position of the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, see also Anthony Grafton and Lisa Jardine, *From Humanism to the Humanities: Education and the Liberal Arts in Fifteenth- and Sixteenth-Century Europe* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986), 18-21, and Leonard Barkan, "What Did Shakespeare Read?" in *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare,* ed. Margreta de Grazia and Stanley Wells (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 34-35.

3. Baldwin, *William Shakspere's Smalle Latine*, 2:70-71.

4. Baldwin, *William Shakspere's Smalle Latine*, 2:72-76. See also Vanessa Lim, "The *Rhetorica ad Herennium*: A Source for *Richard II*," *Notes and Queries* 63.3 (Sept. 2016): 405-6.

5. Baldwin, *William Shakspere's Smalle Latine*, 2:77-84.

6. As Brian Morris has shown, *The Taming of the Shrew* is likely to be one of the first, and perhaps the very first, of Shakespeare's plays. See "Introduction," *The Taming of the Shrew*, *The Arden Shakespeare* (London: Methuen, 1981), 50-65.

7. *The Riverside Shakespeare: The Complete Works*, ed. G. Blakemore Evans (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1997).

8. *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, with an English translation by Harry Caplan, The Loeb Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1954).

9. They may also have been of interest to the Stratford schoolboys and their master, to whom, as Lynn Enterline points out, acting was certainly an integral part of rhetorical training. See *Shakespeare's Schoolroom: Rhetoric, Discipline,*

Emotion (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 33-61.

10. On the "ironic distance between speaker and speech that many hear in Kate's final speech," see also Enterline, *Shakespeare's Schoolroom*, 118-19. As Enterline notices, Shakespeare from the well-known "disjunction between a given rhetorical performance and what an orator thinks and feels … derived a way to create convincing effects of character beyond even the specific lesson offered in Aphthonius."

11. Joseph, *Shakespeare's Use,* 111.

12. Baldwin, *William Shakspere's Smalle Latine*, 2:87-88.

13. See also Keir Elam, *Shakespeare's Universe of Discourse: Language Games in the Comedies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 61.

14. Christopher Marlowe. *Tamburlaine the Great, in Two Parts*, ed. U. M. Ellis-Fermor (New York: Gordian, 1966).

15. Kent Cartwright, *Theatre and Humanism: English Drama in the Sixteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 211.

16. According to Harry Levin, Tamburlaine is characterized by a "*libido dominandi*" and is an "exponent of the new age." See *The Overreacher* (London: Faber and Faber, 1961), 51. While Theridamas evidently admires these character traits, however, Tamburlaine's choice of arguments clearly shows his lack of honor and honesty to all the spectators conversant with the art of rhetoric.

17. I cannot go along with Anthony Grafton and Lisa Jardine's contention that humanist education was designed to instill a fixed set of elitist values. See *From Humanism to the Humanities: Education and the Liberal Arts in Fifteenth- and Sixteenth-Century Europe* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986), 156.

Fools and the Circular Structure of *King Lear*

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In *King Lear* (1606) by William Shakespeare, Lear's final address to Cordelia as "my poor fool" (5.3.304) has drawn considerable scholarly attention,[1] prompting debate over whether the phrase refers exclusively to Cordelia or to both Cordelia and the Fool.[2] Yet, little attention has been paid to the fact that the two characters who remain on stage at the end—Albany and Edgar—are themselves "fools." Albany, husband to Lear's eldest daughter Goneril, is derided by her as "a moral fool" (4.2.59) for his moral rigidity. Deceived by his illegitimate brother and driven into exile, Edgar endures by adopting the disguise of the mad beggar "Poor Tom," describing his helplessness with the lament, "Bad is the trade that must play fool to sorrow" (4.1.40). Although Lear's Fool disappears from the stage after Act 3, Scene 6, his absence paradoxically governs the kingdom through the figures of Albany and Edgar. This paper argues that through the presence of these "fools" who remain at the end, *King Lear* reveals a structural circularity that extends beyond Lear's personal tragedy.

Much previous scholarship has regarded *King Lear* as a linear tragedy, viewing Lear's downfall and death as the ultimate conclusion of the play. For instance, Nicholas Brooke describes the play's ending as "the absolute negation of all forms of hope,"[3] while Jan Kott emphasizes the overwhelming destruction at the conclusion, asserting that "there is neither Christian heaven, nor

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the heaven predicted and believed in by humanists . . . All that remains at the end of this gigantic pantomime is the earth—empty and bleeding."[4] Similarly, William Elton characterizes the play's final scene as "this world's end; only suffering, tears, pity, and loss," concluding that "the devastating fifth act shatters . . . the foundations of faith itself."[5] In such readings, the play is often interpreted as a complete collapse culminating in the protagonist's death. This perspective assumes a linear structure that traces Lear's personal life from abdication to death, thereby overlooking the potential for those who remain to inherit the conflicts suggested within the play as well as the repetitive or cyclical structure that the drama itself implies.

There have also been attempts to identify a cyclical structure in *King Lear*. However, such interpretations have generally been tied to Lear's personal process of redemption or transformation, or to the inevitability of his death. As a result, the idea that the play's circularity depends on the presence of Lear's Fool—or on those who are left as "fools" at the end—has rarely been acknowledged. As exemplified by A. C. Bradley's description of the play as "The Redemption of King Lear,"[6] many critics have discerned a sense of redemption or renewal in its ending. For instance, Oscar James Campbell's "The Salvation of Lear" (1948) and John F. Danby's *Shakespeare's Doctrine of Nature* (1949) are representative of this approach.[7] Similarly, L. C. Knights in *Some Shakespearean Themes* (1959) writes that "the mind, the imagination . . . is directed toward affirmation *in spite of everything*" (emphasis original) and thus concludes that "[f]or what takes place in *King Lear* we can find no other word than renewal."[8]

Because critical attention has focused on Lear's redemption, the structure *of King Lear* has often been described as "the Christian cyclical journey from blessing to fall to redemption,"[9] with critics emphasizing changes in Lear's self-awareness. For example, Derek Traversi regards Lear's suffering as "the necessary prelude to a species of rebirth" and interprets the play through a three-stage framework of suffering, self-recognition, and renewal.[10] In this reading, Lear's trajectory is understood as "the intense suffering... with the force of a self-revelation," ultimately culminating in regeneration.[11] Reinforcing this view, Robert Lanier Reid interprets Lear's psychological journey as a cyclical process, which he terms

the "*three cycles*" (emphasis original), comprising the "superego disabled by false sublimation," "reconstituting ego by projection," and "restoring id by introjection."[12]

Charles Nicholl's *The Chemical Theatre* (1980) similarly regards Lear's transformation as the central theme of the play. Nicholl, however, also recognizes the significance of the Fool in this process of transformation. He observes that recurring images of wheels—such as "[t]he purgatorial Wheel of Fire, the fickle Wheel of Fortune, the cyclic Wheel of Generation"—play an important role in the overall narrative flow, and concludes that "The Wheel is, in short, the pattern of *King Lear*."[13] Yet, in focusing on the alchemical aspects of Lear's transformation, Nicholl tends to overlook the play's tragic dimension. Instead, he identifies a felicitous resolution in which Lear "dies then in joy, all sorrows [are] redeemed," and asserts that "the gene of royalty has been safely delivered" by Edgar.[14]

While the focus has often been on Lear's redemption, some critics have emphasized the recurring images of the "Wheel of Fortune" within the play (2.2.261-63, 5.3.71). Northrop Frye, Rolf Soellner, Tibor Fabiny, and François Laroque, among others, have interpreted *King Lear* as a tragedy in which characters are caught in the inescapable forces of fate.[15] In *"King Lear as a Vicious Circle"* (2009), for instance, Laroque argues that the prevalent circular motifs—such as shackles and the womb—express "the idea of inescapability of the tragic circle," concluding that *King Lear* itself functions like a vortex drawing the audience into the whirlpool of tragedy.[16] In *"*Just Nothing: How *King Lear* Means*"* (2021), Bradd Shore contends that Shakespeare aimed to evoke in the audience a sense of unmet expectation at the final stage of "the Christian cyclical journey . . . to redemption" by shifting the circle's symbolism from completeness to emptiness.[17] Discussions focused on the "Wheel of Fortune" often share the view that "the downward movement is the tragic movement, the wheel of fortune falling from innocence towards hamartia and from hamartia to catastrophe" and consequently, the play's conclusion has frequently been linked to the inevitability of death and unavoidable catastrophe.[18]

In discussions of Lear's redemption within a Christian cyclical framework or of the "Wheel of Fortune," the play's progression has

tended to be reduced primarily to the trajectory of Lear's personal life. Consequently, insufficient attention has been paid to the play's repetitive nature, its circular structure, and the role of the Fool and other characters labelled as "fools." Interpretations that emphasize Lear's redemption frequently position the Fool in a subsidiary role, as a catalyst for Lear's psychological development.[19] The Fool is often interpreted as a reflection of Lear's mind or as a witty advisor, and his involvement in the play's overall structural design has been underestimated.[20] In other words, traditional readings have tended to cast the Fool as a means of transforming Lear into a better man.[21] The significance of Albany and Edgar being labelled—or labelling themselves—"fools" has received little attention.

This article critically revisits such interpretive tendencies and seeks to illuminate a repetitive and circular pattern inherent in *King Lear* through the lens of the "fool." It demonstrates that the play's structure is circular, and that this circularity is visually emphasized through the presence of Albany and Edgar, who remain on stage as "fools" in the final scene. Even in the Fool's absence, the continued presence of these "fools" blurs the boundary between ending and beginning. Unlike the happy ending of the source materials, which conclude with Lear's restoration, Shakespeare's final scene suggests the recurrence of fundamental human flaws.

Lear Stories in Chronicles

The chronicles that serve as sources for *King Lear*, such as Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae* and Holinshed's *Chronicles* (1587), are fundamentally structured to record events in chronological order, presupposing a linear, temporal framework progressing from past to present. These works tend to arrange dynastic successions and political events in a causally connected and continuous manner, presenting history as an orderly progression.[22] For example, Geoffrey of Monmouth's work constructs a linear, historical narrative by depicting the royal succession as an "unbroken line of succession"[23] with "a strong sense of linearity."[24] Holinshed's *Chronicles* have been interpreted in various ways, yet it has been noted that "[e]ven when he does depart from [Edward] Hall's exact language in his 1577 chronicle, Raphael Holinshed usually does so only when he wishes to . . . rearrange material from Hall to provide a more linear

or chronological narrative."[25] In other words, both Geoffrey of Monmouth's and Holinshed portray history in a continuous and linear fashion.

In Geoffrey of Monmouth's account, the narrative unfolds in a clear linear progression. Lear divides his kingdom according to his daughters' declarations of love, marrying Gonorilla (Goneril) and Regau (Regan) to the Dukes of Albany and Cornwall, and banishing Cordeilla (Cordelia) when she refuses to flatter him and instead insists that "you are worth what you have, and that much I love you."[26] Lear subsequently suffers rebellion and dispossession at the hands of his sons-in-law.[27] Lamenting "the implacable progress of fate," he travels to France and seeks Cordeilla's aid.[28] He returns with the military support of Aganippus, king of the French and husband of Cordeilla, defeats his enemies, and is restored to the throne.[29] Holinshed closely follows Geoffrey of Monmouth's version and concludes with Lear's death and burial by Cordeilla in an underground tomb at the River Sore in Leicester.[30] The Lear stories thus proceed from error to exile to restoration, culminating in a peaceful reign and burial, thereby tracing a sequential and teleological arc.

The anonymous play *The True Chronicle History of King Leir*, published in 1605—around the same time that Shakespeare's *King Lear* was first performed—similarly maintains a linear structure.[31] In this version, Goneril's husband is changed to the King of Cornwall, and Regan's to the King of Cambria, but the drama begins with Lear's abdication and proceeds through the daughters' betrayal, Lear's reconciliation with Cordella, and the restoration of the throne, culminating in a conclusion governed by causal and teleological developments.

Thus, Geoffrey of Monmouth, Holinshed, and *King Leir* all depict the story of King Lear as a linear progression from abdication to restoration. At first glance, Shakespeare's *King Lear* appears to follow this same trajectory, as a tragic variation on the chronicle narrative of Lear. Indeed, because order is never restored and because the deaths of Lear and his three daughters—as well as those of Gloucester and Edmund, the parallel father–child pair—bring the play to a close, it has often been interpreted as an overwhelmingly bleak ending devoid of hope.[32] Yet, when attention is turned to the play's structure, a circular form emerges—one that,

rather than culminating in closure, returns at the end to its own beginning.

The Circular Structure of *King Lear*

One crucial aspect of Shakespeare's conclusion invites further consideration. When the kingdom is entrusted to Albany and Edgar, the superfluous dialogue among the survivors lays the groundwork for a new conflict over the realm. Act 5, Scene 3 thus echoes Act 1, Scene 1, creating a paradoxical circular structure in which the ending turns back into the beginning. Although critics such as John Kerrigan have noted the potential for renewed strife at the play's conclusion, this recursive movement may be read not only as a thematic echo but as part of a larger circular design that functions as the governing structural principle of the play.[33]

In *King Lear*, the survival of Albany and Edgar at the end transforms the conclusion from a definitive ending into a possible new beginning. The play opens in Act 1, Scene 1 with the entrance of the Earl of Gloucester and his illegitimate son Edmund, along with the Earl of Kent. The king's subsequent plan to divide his kingdom among his three daughters is revealed, explained as his means to "Unburdened crawl toward death" (1.1.40) and to "prevent future strife" (1.1.43). However, when Lear's youngest daughter Cordelia responds with "Nothing" (1.1.87) upon being asked to profess her love for him, Lear becomes furious, disowns her, and consequently divides the kingdom into two parts instead of three. This division eliminates the land originally intended for Cordelia, which would have served as a buffer zone, and the play repeatedly suggests the escalating discord between the households of Goneril and Albany, and Regan and Cornwall (2.1.11-12; 3.1.19-21).

Ultimately, in Act 5, Scene 3, Regan is poisoned by her sister, and Goneril takes her own life, bringing their storylines to a tragic conclusion. In this final scene, their corpses are brought on stage, and Lear enters carrying the body of Cordelia—marking the first time since Act 1, Scene 1 that Lear and all three daughters are together. Albany relinquishes all authority back to Lear, who is thereby momentarily restored to his former power. This re-creates the composition of Act 1, Scene 1; however, with two daughters

dead and Lear dying before realizing his reinstatement as king, Act 5, Scene 3 becomes a tragic repetition of the play's opening.

After Lear's death, Albany orders the bodies to be taken away, giving the impression that the play is moving toward a conventional resolution. In other Shakespearean tragedies, a character like Albany typically offers a vision of a restored social order. Yet *King Lear* deviates from this pattern. Albany's command does not lead to a traditional conclusion with funeral march, and the play ends with three remaining candidates to rule. Albany calls upon Kent and Edgar—"Friends of my soul, you twain, / Rule in this realm and the gored state sustain" (5.3.318-19)—but Kent declines the offer.

As a result, the play closes with two men—Albany, whom Lear calls "son" (1.1.41), and Edgar, Lear's godson—entrusted with the realm, recalling the initial assignment of the country to Albany and Cornwall in Act 1, Scene 1. Just as Lear's original plan to divide the kingdom into thirds collapsed into a two-part division, the proposed triadic leadership of Albany, Edgar, and Kent fails to materialize. In this way, *King Lear* presents a recurring structural pattern of three becoming two. Considering that the earlier bipartition of the kingdom led to open conflict between the factions of Goneril–Albany and Regan–Cornwall, the final pairing of Albany and Edgar inevitably evokes the possibility of renewed discord.

The tragic deaths of Lear and Cordelia, along with another possible division of the kingdom, constitute an unexpected turn for the audience familiar with pre-Shakespearean versions of the King Lear story. In sources such as Geoffrey of Monmouth and Holinshed, as well as the anonymous play, the narrative concludes with a happy ending. Cordelia's army triumphs, Lear is restored to the throne, and he lives out the remainder of his natural life.

Shakespeare could have concluded the play, as in these sources and other tragedies, with the restoration of order. Indeed, the reunion of Lear and Cordelia in Act 4, Scene 7 evokes the expectation of a happy ending. This scene is profoundly moving and creates the illusion that the narrative might end here; as Susan Snyder observes, it gives the impression that the story has reached its conclusion.[34] Yet Shakespeare's originality lies in his refusal to end the play at this point, leaving the outcome of the kingdom

ambiguous after Lear's death in Act 5, Scene 3. The potential for new conflict suggested in the final scene recalls the discord between Albany and Cornwall hinted at throughout the drama and prefigures the disputes among the sons of Albany and Cornwall following Lear's reign in the chronicles of Geoffrey and Holinshed.

In these chronicles, Cordelia succeeds to the throne following Lear's death, but the sons of her two elder sisters rebel; she is captured, imprisoned, and ultimately takes her own life. Scholars have often noted that Shakespeare may have drawn inspiration from these sources for Cordelia's death in captivity, yet the subsequent events are also noteworthy.[35] After Cordelia's death, her rebellious nephews divide the kingdom. Marganus, son of the Duke of Albany, rules the region from the river Humber to Caithness, while Cunedagius, son of the Duke of Cornwall, governs the territory south of the Humber.[36] Years later, Marganus instigates another rebellion aiming for control of the entire realm, leading to a war between the cousins.[37] In these narratives, the unification of Britain under Lear and Cordelia proves short-lived, as the kingdom splits once more and disputes over unity are repeatedly enacted.

Considering the subsequent events recounted in the chronicles of King Lear, it seems unlikely that Shakespeare's choice to leave two men on stage at the conclusion of the play is mere coincidence. Taking into account the symbolic associations of the numbers three with harmony and two with conflict, this arrangement can be read as foreshadowing future discord.[38] Albany and Edgar, as the husband of the king's eldest daughter and the son of Gloucester—a loyal servant to the king—appear well positioned to assume governance. Yet, given the "history" of Marganus, the son of the figure corresponding to Shakespeare's Albany, it cannot be ruled out that a struggle for control of the kingdom awaits after the events of *King Lear*. In this way, the presence of Albany and Edgar in the play's final moments evoke the onset of further conflict, simultaneously rendering the ending a new beginning.

The Final Scene with "Fools"

The circular structure of *King Lear* is underpinned by the presence of "fools." In Act 1, Scene 1, Lear unwittingly falls into "folly" (1.1.150) and later comes to recognize himself as "a very

foolish, fond old man" (4.7.60). In the final scene, he dies alongside Cordelia, his "poor fool" (5.3.304), yet those who remain on stage are also "fools." At the end of the play, which begins with Lear's "folly," two characters remain on stage—Albany, referred to as a "fool" (4.2.28, 4.2.62), and Edgar, who identifies himself as a "fool" (4.1.40). Considering how the play's beginning and end mediate through "fools," one can argue that *King Lear* depicts a world in which intrinsic human failings are recurrent, extending beyond the trajectory of Lear's life. The presence of "fools" in the final scene thereby illustrates a structure in which the ending circulates back to the beginning.

Highlighting this circularity is Lear's address to Cordelia as his "poor fool." This line has often been cited as demonstrating the strong bond between Cordelia and the Fool, yet the Fool himself vanishes abruptly after Act 3, Scene 6.[39] When Lear loses both his throne and his household, the Fool mocks him as "an O without a figure" (1.4.183-84), which can be interpreted as a zero without a numeral.[40] It is noteworthy that while the Fool exposes Lear as empty, he himself is marked by the symbolic figure of "0."

Emerging in the mid-fifteenth century, the tarot deck grants the Fool a distinctive position as the only card assigned the Arabic numeral "0." Although Arabic numerals began to circulate among the English merchant class in the fifteenth century, it was not until the sixteenth century that mathematical manuals using these numerals were published in English.[41] Thus, for Shakespeare's contemporaries, Arabic numerals were relatively novel. In particular, "0" functioned as a paradoxical symbol embodying "nothingness," something that could not be represented by Roman numerals.[42] The fascination with the concept of nothing, instantiated in the symbol "0," found literary expression in works such as Edward Dyer's *The Prayse of Nothing* (1585) and William Lisle's *Nothing for a New-Years Gift* (1603). As Lisle writes, "Searching Arts secrets, at the last I found, / Nothing to be of euery thing the ground," the feature of "nothing" in these poems is that it is simultaneously nothing and yet neither meaningless nor void.[43] Similarly, the Prologue to Shakespeare's *Henry V* (1599) presents a zero that is not valueless: "O pardon, since a crooked figure may / Attest in little place a million, / And let us, ciphers to this great account" (*H5* Prologue ll.15–17).[44] Here, the image of zero becoming a

million serves as a metaphor urging the audience to imagine a vast army from the modest presence of mere actors.

Like zero or nothingness, the Fool in the Tarot has been interpreted as lacking intrinsic meaning while being essential to all other entities. In one of the earliest studies on Tarot symbolism, *Le Monde primitif, analysé et comparé avec le monde moderne* (1781), Antoine Court de Gébelin notes that the Fool "qu'il n'a de valeur que celle qu'il donne aux autres, precisement comme notre zero: montrant ainsi que rien n'existe sans sa folie," that is, the Fool, like zero, possesses no value in itself but gives value to others; nothing can exist without its "folly."[45]

As William Willeford observes, "the fool is sometimes regarded as the last card, sometimes as the first, and sometimes as being outside the sequence of the cards and forming a link between the last and the first, marking the linear arrangement of the cards into a wheel."[46] In this way, the Fool in tarot is positioned outside the regular sequence and is seen as a figure that connects the beginning and the end. In the later scenes of *King Lear*, the Fool withdraws from the stage, and Lear departs with his "poor fool," Cordelia. Yet those who remain on stage are themselves "fools." This underscores a vision of the world as a "great stage of fools" (4.6.179) that does not end with the death of a single human being.

Just as the Fool in the Tarot occupies a position outside the sequence, linking beginning and end, Albany and Edgar in the final scene connect the main plot and subplots through the theme of "folly," linking the play's ending and beginning. Although Albany professes a commitment to "wisdom and goodness" (4.2.39) and positions himself on the side of reason—as suggested by his invocation to "hear reason" (5.3.83)—his conduct nonetheless exhibits elements that are curiously fool-like. Drawing on Walter C. Foreman's observation regarding the interlude-like nature of Act 5, Scene 3, I read Albany and Edgar as "fools" who shape the play's circular structure through their limited perspective and absorption in immediate concerns, catching them in an illusion of closure while catastrophe remains unresolved. Foreman refers to the 215-line scene between the exit of the captain sent to assassinate Cordelia and the entrance of Lear carrying Cordelia as an interlude.[47] He does so because the main themes of Lear and the kingdom are seemingly set aside while a private subplot unfolds.[48]

However, rather than merely sidelining the main narrative, this interlude serves to connect the main plot as well as subplots through the figures of the "fools."

Foreman does not label Albany or Edgar as "fools," yet their behavior exhibits fool-like characteristics. In Act 4, Scene 2, Albany reproaches his wife Goneril for oppressing Lear: "She that herself will sliver and disbranch / From her material sap perforce must wither, / And come to deadly use" (4.2.35–37)—correctly foreseeing Goneril's murder of Regan and subsequent suicide. Goneril dismisses him as "the text is foolish" (4.2.38), mocks him as a "Milk-livered man" (4.2.51), and later exclaims: "O vain fool!" (4.2.62). To her, Albany—preoccupied with the legitimacy of Lear's treatment during the impending French invasion—appears as "a moral fool, sits still and cries, 'Alack, why does he so?'" (4.2.59-60). Albany thus manifests both the insight of a wise fool and the lack of judgement typical of a natural fool.

In Act 5, Albany continues to exhibit foolishness alongside wise-fool qualities. His ironic remarks to Regan regarding Edmund—"That were the most, if he should husband you" (5.3.71) and "If you will marry, make your love to me; / My lady is bespoke" (5.3.89–90)—contrast with his previous serious tone and adopt a jesting nature. In Act 5, Scene 1, Albany is entrusted with the letter from Goneril to Edmund, which Edgar obtains in Act 4, Scene 6, and is aware that they exchanged "reciprocal vows" (4.6.257) and are plotting to murder him to seize power. In light of this knowledge, Albany's irony and comic behaviors in Act 5, Scene 3 can be understood not as mere foolishness arising from ignorance, but as an active engagement informed by his awareness of the situation—as that of a wise fool. Regan's response, "Jesters do oft prove prophets" (5.3.72), simultaneously mocks Albany as a fool while acknowledging the prophetic dimension of his words and highlighting their ambiguity. Furthermore, the Folio adds Goneril's exclamation, "An interlude!" (5.3.90), amplifying the scene's absurdity.

Meanwhile, Edgar, deceived by his illegitimate brother Edmund due to his own "foolish honesty" (1.2.179), is stripped of his title and inheritance, and forced into exile. Thus reduced to "I nothing am" (2.3.21), he hides in the hollow of a tree and assumes "the basest and most poorest shape" (3.2.7) to survive. Later, when

he encounters his outcast father Gloucester, Edgar continues to feign madness as a wandering beggar to avoid recognition. At this point, he characterizes his own helpless state as one in which he "must play fool to sorrow" (4.1.40)—momentarily taking on the Fool's emblematic role of exposing folly through suffering.

In the guise of a beggar, Edgar leads his blinded father and later reappears in the final act as an unnamed knight. Having defeated Edmund in combat and declaring, "My name is Edgar" (5.3.167), he seems to have reclaimed his identity—emerging from "nothing," through the "fool" to selfhood. However, as Foreman observes, "Edgar, after defeating Edmund, gets involved in his private story and Albany gets involved along with him."[49] Edgar's "brief tale" (5.3.180), which extends over forty lines despite the urgency of Cordelia's life being at stake, reveals what Foreman describes as "human incompetence and human insularity"—that is, the tendency to become absorbed in immediate concerns and to operate within a limited perspective.[50] Prompted by Edmund's line, "speak you on" (5.3.199), Edgar continues to recount Gloucester's end in vivid detail, as if all pressing matters have been resolved, demonstrating that his "foolish honesty" (1.2.179) remains unchanged even in the final act.

In this way, Albany and Edgar in the final scene, as Foreman observes, behave "as if everything were over when it's not," disregarding Lear and Cordelia's unresolved fate and acting as though it had already been settled.[51] Foreman describes their "preoccupation with their own insular desires and griefs" as "a little comedy of adultery, jealousy, and murderous intrigue," which may more broadly be termed "folly."[52] That Albany and Edgar remain as agents of political resolution does not signify the complete restoration of order or the definitive conclusion of the narrative. Rather, by acting as if the play has concluded before its actual end, these "fools," who remain at the final moment of the drama symbolize an unfinished ending—follies arising within the ending, echoing Lear's folly at the beginning.

Conclusion

Those referred to as "fools" remain on stage in the final scene of Shakespeare's *King Lear,* destabilizing the happy endings

presented in both the chronicle accounts of King Lear, which conclude with his restoration, and the anonymous *King Leir*, which similarly ends with Lear's reinstatement. In so doing, they blur the boundary between ending and beginning. This structure suggests the recurring nature of human folly and moral failure across time, giving a cyclical sense of temporality. This notion is symbolized by the figure of the "fool," whose presence depicts the world not as a site of historical progress, but as a stage on which the fundamental flaws of human nature are endlessly enacted. Even after Lear's Fool has withdrawn from the stage, the "fools" who remain ensure that *King Lear* is structured not merely as the progress of Lear's life, but as a drama depicting the unending theme of human folly. On "this great stage of fools" (4.6.179), the "interlude" (5.3.90) of the fools is always unfolding.

Notes

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"We give you a bloodbath": Bloodless Violence in Jude Christian's *Titus Andronicus*

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In the Sam Wanamaker performance of *Titus Andronicus* in 2023, directed by Jude Christian, a curious taming of the material occurs. From its position as the notoriously grisly Shakespearean tragedy, Christian alters it into a cabaret-style show that reduces one of Shakespeare's bloodiest plays to a bloodless affair, using wax candles carried by each character as a substitute for the body. These candles are meant to withstand the violent acts of *Titus Andronicus*—being snapped, cut in half, chopped, and finally literally snuffed out even as the characters' lives are snuffed out metaphorically. As the Sam Wanamaker Theatre is a candlelit theatre, these candles serve both as lighting and bodily metaphor, removing the bloodshed from this bloody play.

By using Christian's production as a case study, and considering the implications of the waxy metaphor used by Jude Christian, as well as by removing the shed blood—a metaphorically rich and coded substance signifying race, identity and kinship—I argue that blood becomes something that frequently *must* be spilt in some more concretely bloody way for violence to have impact.[1] Wax succeeds as a bodily metaphor, connecting to an early modern sensibility regarding the connections between wax and flesh, but wax struggles to convey the violence and bloodshed which are demonstrated by bodily mutilation, especially for a modern audience. Metaphorical bloodshed is one thing, but removing

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blood and relocating violence away from the body creates too many complicated visual issues. Blood, a key element in playacting pain, adds verisimilitude in a way that watching a candle be snapped in half does not. In a play so "self-consciously histrionic"[2] as *Titus Andronicus*—labelled in the opening song as a "bloodbath"—we require a bloody spectacle that is intrinsically graphic and violent, whether that spectacle is metaphorical or literal.[3]

I want to first briefly consider the theatrical landscape of *Titus Andronicus* in the period in which it is written to better understand Christian's good faith intervention. Wax had a part to play in the Elizabethan psyche in regard to malleability and the uncanny nature, in particular, of dead flesh. Therefore, Christian's use of wax as a bodily substitute has early modern grounding and merit. Wax is, in fact, an apt material for an early modern concept of flesh, as Elizabeth Harvey notes:

> Wax is like flesh in its responsiveness to touch: it warms and changes shape, it seems almost to respond to touch as if it were flesh. It is, then, an ideal medium in which to fashion bodies made to be touched.[4]

Wax was incredibly popular in creating wax figures of the human body, especially those of saints, but this began to fall out of favor in the mid 1600s, as wax, in another link to flesh, decays over time, creating an unintentional dismemberment of saints, as noted by Hanneke Grootenboer.[5] In the 1590s, however, wax was still a common medium for relics in particular, owing to their tactility for pilgrims and believers alike, as well as the flesh-like properties that Harvey notes.

The purity of virgin wax also aligns it metaphorically with the chaste female body, as Lynn M. Maxwell suggests, which has interesting implications for the debasement and defilement of Lavinia's body.[6] In Christian's interpretation, Lavinia's defilement has no waxen substitute, with no damage being inflicted on the candle, only wax covering the hands that she has lost. Her rape has not been figured in wax as damage, and the wax used to show harm is from the melted remains of previous candles; there is no virgin, untouched wax to fashion for the unsullied body, which has deeper implications.

In regard to the early modern desire for accuracy in violence, Christine Woodworth writes that

> Elizabethan plays were riddled with stabbings, decapitations, and disembowelments, calling for props as simple as "sponges of vinegar" and as complex as bladders filled with sheep's blood and entrails.[7]

This adds credence to Michael Caines's note about *Titus* being a play of the "horror-mad 1590s,"[8] for the play lends itself well to the realistic theatrical interventions of early modern stage violence.

This is not to say that bloody depictions of *Titus* necessarily create the desired tone; as Lucy Munro argues, "stage effects involving blood and body parts can often create an uncertainty of tone—it does not take much for grand guignol (a sensationalistic horror show) to tip into parody or even farce."[9] Overkill, in the eyes of the audience, ceases to horrify and starts to amuse unless handled carefully. However, a play labelled as a "bloodbath" that does not deliver on its bloodiness quickly creates a disconnect between text and action, and in Christian's production moments that have been written as affecting an audience—so much so that prior performances of this play have been riddled with "fainting, vomiting and escaping audience members"—become farcical, dramatically altered to the point of non-efficacy, and simply stripped of their affective power.[10] "It is the symbolic value of the acts that instills a nightmarish terror in the play," posits Stephen Gregg, but these visual symbols have been altered or removed.[11]

In the modern day, war is commonplace, and violence is increasingly ubiquitous in the media in the same fashion as the early modern public executions were a commonly attended event. The difference is that while the early moderns aimed for verisimilitude by substituting actual violence and bloodshed with simulated pain and animal blood, the modern theatrical sensibility stages *Titus Andronicus* using techniques ranging from stage blood, to red ribbons (in the case of Peter Brook in 1955) and scarves, to even more abstract methods of conveying pain and harm. Christian's approach stands out as a method of conveyance that not only removes the concept of blood in any form, but also alters the site of violent acts.

Natasha Tripney contrasts Christian's production with Serbian director Andraš Urban's production of *Titus Andronicus* for the Yugoslav Drama Theatre in Belgrade in the same year. She says of Urban's production that "Most of the violence isn't enacted

on stage, rather we see blood splatter on plastic sheeting—lots of it—but it's still visceral."[12] Katy Stephens, who plays Titus in Christian's production, has argued that stripping out the violence allows more room to concentrate on the relationships.[13]

The violence is positioned not on the body, but on candles that the actors carry. These serve as metaphors for their bodies, while also being physically present onstage to be touched, grabbed, and so forth. Lives are extinguished by snuffing out candles. The one character who is not physically present onstage is Aaron's infant son, who is only ever onstage in the form of a tiny candle, carried by the nurse, cradled by Aaron in his hands and then placed on a shelf for safety. The reduction of violence to the minimal—gouging wax out of a candle to replace a hand, melting a candle to simulate blood for the ill-fated sons of Tamora, who are blended into a waxy paste for the pie—creates issues for Titus's characterization. The violent acts that he bears witness or is victim to are nowhere near as affecting as in previous performances. The reduction in harm and increase in humor that such attacks on wax generate reduces the plausibility of Titus's mad state by the end of the production. The maddening sight of his maimed daughter who cannot tell him of her experience, and the mirroring of Ovid's Philomela, who loses her tongue, is lost, and his motivation for revenge along with it, as I will explore later. Ovid does not shy away from the grotesque; Philomela's tongue is described as "writh[ing] convulsively," trying to return to her "like a snake's tail"[14]; the sight Titus encounters is nowhere near as affecting as this, and hence, wax quickly becomes a problematic medium to substitute for the mutilated body.

Rosie Elnile, one of the set designers for Christian's production, says of the candles that "The flame feels like the consciousness, the wax the flesh and the fat [and] the wick the bones."[15] The waxy nature of the injury in this performance, as well as the fact that every death is punctuated by the dead character dipping a ring of wicks into a vat of wax before exiting—creating new candles even as theirs is destroyed—does punctuate the cycle of violence that continues through the play. Playing off of their venue, the candle-lit Sam Wanamaker Theatre, it also links to the waxy nature of *The Duchess of Malfi's* prop victims, built to horrify the Duchess in another of the Wanamaker's oft-performed plays. In inserting this metaphor for bodies, "it means that there's real violence performed

on stage—to the candle," says actor Lucy McCormick who plays Saturninus in the production. She continues, "but it's also leaving a lot to the imagination, which can be even more disturbing and terrifying and cruel than just watching a choreographed violent scene."[16] I argue, however, that as an audience member, I was neither disturbed nor terrified more by seeing a candle be mutilated than I would be witnessing flesh being treated in this way. It fails to satisfy as a bodily metaphor when subjected to violence in this play, in part due to its stylistic impact being softened. As the late Sarah Kane, a modern writer presenting similarly grotesque subject matter puts it, "Take the glamour out of violence and it becomes utterly repulsive. Would people seriously prefer it if the violence was appealing?"[17] By making the wax a surrogate body, it becomes too glamorous, to use Kane's phrasing, and hence doesn't have the same effect.

The distinct difference between flesh and wax is that the body cannot suffer nearly as much violence without breaking and bleeding. Especially at body temperature, wax becomes entirely malleable, able to be punctured without issue, making it symbolically important as Maxwell writes, whereas flesh, if alive when the injury is suffered, will necessarily bleed when such force is inflicted upon it.[18] The gouging of fake flesh in this case feels like second hand violence, dislocated from the body because there is no bodily reaction to being maimed, tortured, or killed save actors' behavior. These "bodies" are not being touched by others when violence occurs but are instead being taken away from the physical body without any kind of bleeding or other visceral proof of harm. This deadens the impact upon an audience; Michael Caines writes that Christian's production has "the bitter matter of the play's bloody absurdities held at arm's length," and notes that "there isn't a bloodbath at all, in fact, at least not here at the Globe," as Christian chose to challenge the expectations of blood in *Titus*.[19] (An understandable expectation, given that Lucy Bailey's production, also for the Globe, released 156 liters of fake blood during its 52-show run, and is not unusual in its use of so much blood.[20])

As noted in the introduction to *Blood Matters,* "Wounds register the vulnerability of the human body, reminding us how easily the skin, which ought properly to contain our blood, can be

ruptured," but these wounds are not serving that function.[21] The skin of candles *can* be ruptured, but it is not vulnerable to puncture or tearing in the same way, nor does it create a sense of empathetic discomfort when it is punctured, torn or dripping, nor can it generate five-star reviews for being a "brutally powerful, blood-soaked nightmare" as the Telegraph dubbed the RSC production directed by Max Webster in 2025.[22] As an insensate object, wax cannot feel pain or express pain. An actor embodying pain that is not being inflicted upon them struggles to maintain the necessary verisimilitude for empathy, sympathy, or much reaction beyond humor.

In contrast to the warming, semi-sensate nature that Harvey describes in his concept of wax as a flesh substitute, is the deadening of flesh with waxen substitutes that Christian's production explores. By dipping his hand into the vat of candle wax, Titus can remove his hand without maiming his hand. Similarly, Lavinia's mutilated hands are dipped in wax, to simulate their removal. From that point onward, that hand is dead, removed from the body metaphorically and unable to be used due to the thick coating of wax. Having Titus pinned down, acting as if in pain with a candle sawn in half beside him, becomes darkly humorous as Titus writhes in pain that is not being inflicted upon him. It lessens the sacrifice he makes so that his family does not have to mutilate themselves. The action is cheapened to a moment of humor, with no visible bloodshed on the body, and hence no required emotional investment from the audience. Christian's *Titus* becomes "all about the "funny business"[23] and misses Shakespeare's intended engagement with relationships that are breaking down.[24]

The ephemeral nature of markings on wax is noted by Maxwell, who remarks that there is great potential for wax to be wiped clean and re-used in the form of wax slates because of its malleability.[25] However, the body does not have this potential, and it is partially due to this that the use of candles as signifiers for the body fails. The human body, especially in *Titus Andronicus,* is permeable and vulnerable to damage, but any damage inflicted is permanent by design. The revenge that Tamora and Titus seek for the attacks against themselves or their families is designed to be lasting. Its effects cannot be removed, and any healing only lasts until the next onslaught of violence or mental trauma disfigures the body

anew. Hence, the metaphorical nature of wax as bodily surrogate is faulty, and the affective power of such bloody acts is nullified.

Blood and affect

Christopher Behnke et al. quantify affect as "locat[ing] the production of emotions in interactive relationships, in chains of interaction, that […] can also carry individuals away in the sense of a mutual entrainment," which is particularly useful in contemplating the affective nature of *Titus Andronicus*.[26] In witnessing the violent spilling of blood, we enter an interactive relationship with the victim of violence. The audience frequently reacts to violence through visceral reactions, such as gasps, shouts, and screams, or at least facial reactions of consternation as I experienced when watching this performance in March 2023. The spilling of blood brings into contention the line between sensate being and insensate object.[27] Having the bodily surrogate of candles serve as a buffer between violent action and the body, as well as between the actor's body and the audience, the interactive relationship loses its immediacy. The insensate object becomes shorthand for the sensate being, making the transition from living person to dead flesh less clear. This becomes problematic when the production emphasizes the "bloodbath" nature of the play, as callously hewing people apart, an intrinsic feature of this play, does not occur.

Katherine Rowe, writing on dismemberment in *Titus,* makes this very salient point: "Read as grotesque and abstract, aesthetically engaging and distancing, dramatically pivotal and superfluous, the severed hands, heads and tongue [of *Titus Andronicus]* have always had a profoundly equivocal status in the critical and theatrical reception of the play."[28] While severed flesh does straddle the line between extremes, it also exists as a straightforward marker of dead flesh and a visual reminder of harm inflicted. Bloodshed is also a marker of being alive; the dead do not bleed. Where the distinction between dead and alive is so marked—Titus's twenty-five sons are decimated to only five living children by the start of the play, and only one surviving heir, Lucius, by the end—the demarcation of who is living and who is dead becomes crucial in ascertaining the stakes for Titus and Tamora. Whoever has more to

lose has a higher stake in not being the "loser" of this competition of excessive violence, and the ability to bleed marks their family as being damaged or destroyed bodily. It also serves as a marker for the audience to recall the score in the form of bloodstains and bodily injury that can be visually read upon the characters in a naturalistic portrayal. In the case of a wax substitute, little can be read upon the characters, clad in pastel pajamas, in terms of their traumas, as these have been made metaphorical or internalized.

As Katherine Craik notes, "blood reveals the difficulties involved in determining where one person's identity starts and another person's ends."[29] It is a crucial effluvium in self-identification, and the identification of kin; by removing the blood from this production, Christian belies the importance of blood as kin and as visually important viscera textually in *Titus Andronicus.* The word "blood" appears thirty-six times in this play, from Tamora pleading with Titus to "stain not thy tomb with blood" (1.1.119) to Lucius grieving his dead father, shedding "sorrowful drops upon thy blood-stain'd face" (5.3.153).[30] As Albert Tricomi notes,

> The figurative language, in fact, imitates the gruesome circumstances of the plot, thus revealing that Shakespeare subordinates everything in Titus, including metaphor, to that single task of conveying forcefully the Senecan and Ovidian horrors that he has committed himself to portraying.[31]

The metaphors and graphic imagery, however, are not being matched by stage action. Titus's speech regarding Lavinia's broken body, for example, has graphic references to the sheer bloodiness he sees:

> a crimson river of warm blood,
> Like to a bubbling fountain stirred with wind,
> Doth rise and fall between thy rosèd lips,
> Coming and going with thy honey breath. (2.4.22-25)

No such river is in existence in any capacity, metaphorical or literal, and hence, this vivid image falls flat, losing some of its potential to affect an audience. It also fails to lend credence to the unravelling of Titus's mind and Marcus's anger in response to this sight. The natural imagery in this speech, the bloody river included, creates a textual link to the hunt already witnessed, where Lavinia's husband is slaughtered, as well as linking to Ovid's *Metamorphoses.* By removing the image that comes with the speech, which remains

textually intact in Christian's staging, there comes a disconnect. Cutting parts of the speech would have dulled the emotional outburst, but would have gelled with the theatrical desiccation of the bloodbath.

Within the context of other, gorier recent productions both prior to and following this production—including Lucy Bailey's 2006 production for the Globe Theatre that was revived in 2014, and Max Webster's 2025 *Titus Andronicus* for the RSC, with "gallons of blood"[32] requiring a wet room set and a drainage system to clear it—Christian's stands out as anomalous for bloodlessness, even as it emphasises the bloodiness of the play in its auxiliary songs.

Blood and the shedding of blood not only stand as markers of bodily harm, something that there are twenty-seven different instances of, compassing fifteen deaths, but also heredity, kinship, and comradery. The latter is something that the Roman sensibility of *Titus Andronicus* requires to push it along narratively, creating the reciprocal retaliation culture between Titus and Tamora that devolves into a bloodbath in the final scene. Without the rivers of blood and bodily harm referenced, there is no impetus for further action as retaliation for filicide, and there is a weakened expression of the Roman sacrifice.

Bilal Tawfiq Hamamra argues that "the family [in *Titus Andronicus*] is a site of emotional distress and instability manifested in the discourse of disowning (fathers and mothers severing their relations with their children verbally and physically) that paternal and maternal figures employ, and, further, this discourse is fulfilled through murderous violence."[33] While there are indeed key moments of violent disowning in *Titus,* in particular in the murder of Lavinia by Titus, as well as the disowning of his sons who will not commit violence in his name, I argue that this emotional distress and instability instead comes from the discourse of violence and reciprocal bloodshed between Tamora and Titus. These escalating displays of violent power target the other party's family, rather than the destruction of their own line. While Tamora first targets the societally weakest and most vulnerable of Titus' children—his only daughter, Lavinia—and inflicts sexual and physical harm upon her, Titus begins with the "proudest of the Goths"—Tamora's eldest

son, Alarbus, who is hewn apart and burned. Lucius declares upon arriving home to Rome:

> Give us the proudest prisoner of the Goths,
> That we may hew his limbs and on a pile,
> *Ad manes fratrum*, sacrifice his flesh
> Before this earthy prison of their bones,
> That so the shadows be not unappeased,
> Nor we disturbed with prodigies on Earth. (1.1.96-101)

By sacrificing Alarbus in the name of their dead brothers' spirits, they both reinforce the barbarism of Roman ritual in the Elizabethan imagination and set in motion the bloody nature of the play, although not always as onstage violence. In Jude Christian's staging, they sacrifice a snapped candle to the fire. As well as being a more alienating image for an audience to connect to the loss of a life, it becomes a cumbersome metaphor; candles are designed to burn, tidily without extrusion and beneficially, to create light and heat. Similarly, they are more adapted to smoke "like incense" and "perfume the sky" (1.1.145) in a way that entrails are not and are routinely employed in ritual in their usual guise as illumination. This reduces dramatically the horror of this sensory input, robbing the burning entrails of their disgusting replacement for ritual incense and confusing the significant sacrifice of flesh that creates an eye for eye retaliation.

This sacrifice of Alarbus mirrors the hewing apart and cooking of her last remaining two sons, Chiron and Demetrius, in the last act to make the grotesque banquet Titus serves to Tamora. As Munro puts it, "stage blood and violence against the human body represent in vividly theatrical fashion both the exercise of tyranny and attempts to control or pre-empt it."[34] This pie is the epitome of Titus's retribution against the tyranny Saturninus and Tamora have inflicted upon him and his children, whether in their murder, their mutilation, or their mental suffering. As well as being a grotesque stage image, it becomes an emblem of Tamora being forced to relive the hewing apart and burning of her oldest son in the butchering, cooking, and consumption of her youngest.

The creation of this pie in particular creates problems of legible stage imagery when the proceedings are so bloodless. A wax-filled pie stretches the believability of so dramatic a violent climax and creates a weakened sense of horror. Cedric Watts notes:

"In Shakespeare's day, the pastry of a pie, we are reminded by the text, was called 'the coffin'; never so aptly as here: the pastry in this case being made from blood and powdered bone, to contain the cooked human flesh."[35] In this case, the pie is not made from flesh and blood at all, but wax. To chew a pie made of wax, while difficult to contemplate due to the presumably terrible taste of candle wax, does not disgust an audience like the image of a meat pie, made of blood both in filling and casing, would. She is not fulfilling the image of Revenge consuming Rape and Murder as in the masque she presents for Titus, or of the mother consuming her young that the metatheatrical play about Mrs. Rabbit warns of. It is inserted into the play to foreshadow this gruesome feast, and hence it becomes weaker as an affective stage image.

While I am not convinced of Stephen Gregg's assertion that Tamora's consumption of her sons is "a form of incest" in "representing the climax of nightmarish transgression in the play,"[36] I am convinced that it is a climax of transgression, both in the consumption of her own children and the consumption of human flesh, rather than just the mutilation of flesh that we have seen to date.[37] This transgression also parallels the starvation of Aaron with the excessive consumption that deceives Tamora. Through the divorce of violence from flesh in Christian's play, this transgression becomes entirely metaphorical and hence loses a good portion of its impact and its ability to shock and appall audiences. Alienated from its meaning, as well as its ability to escalate the emotional stakes by escalating violence, the many violent acts in Christian's *Titus* become a weakened stagnation of violence that can only result in humor and the release of tension it has not generated.

From starving Aaron to eating Chiron and Demetrius, flesh can be consumed, reduced, punctured, torn, or removed entirely. The waxen substitute for the body becomes even more malleable and vulnerable to attack. Yet, it fails to bleed, to react in pain, or to give violence any kind of visceral weight. The fascination for flesh, for the hidden that is revealed in the slasher's violence, is not sated. What is hidden inside bodies remains hidden, and what is so viscerally alive becomes dead. Lavinia's removed tongue, for example, does not serve as the permanent removal of agency that the play represents in this iteration. Nor does it prove the last straw for Titus's struggling sanity, as she is only partially maimed

in addition to being sexually defiled, something that is truly the last taboo.

Thomas A. Oldham convincingly argues in his article on Lucy Bailey's staging of *Titus Andronicus* for the Globe in 2006 and 2014 that "violent stage effects were used to invite prolonged engagement with and meaningful consideration of Lavinia."[38] Bailey's production, notoriously gory, creates a bond between Lavinia and the audience so that her mutilation has an affective effect on onlookers. It generates pity for her, and bolsters Titus's desire to avenge her mutilation by creating an audience reaction to the graphic violence inflicted upon Lavinia, who remains innocent in the actions her father takes against Tamora. I argue that by taking this display of bloodshed away from Lavinia's entrance after the attack, we remove her power to move the audience to pity and to a desire for retribution against her attackers. Indeed, in this production, she becomes her own revenger, and while this is empowering, it destabilizes the emotional reactions from this point forward.

Jude Christian's production is punctuated at the start and end of acts with songs written by Bourgeois & Maurice and arranged by Jasmin Kent Rodgman, thematically relevant to the play's progression. We are promised "men killing men, killing men, killing women killing men" and after Lavinia is led on, weeping, choking and trying to hide her lost (wax-covered) hands, her mouth unmarked but firmly closed, a song starts that Lavinia joins.[39] Her glossectomy is reversed for the span of one song, where she lays out the vengeful acts she wishes to inflict upon those who have harmed her, before returning sadly, and silently to being mute and choking on invisible blood. Unlike any other Lavinia, she is given the chance to express herself one more time after she is mutilated. Bjork's assertions to the contrary, this Lavinia does indeed have autonomy, in that she can make it known that she wants to take revenge on Chiron and Demetrius as much as Titus and Marcus do, though perhaps not to the same (now) melodramatic extent.[40]

What results is a Lavinia unlike some of the other characters who slip into farce in this staging, overreacting to cartoonish violence such as feeding candles to a mincer to represent the butchering of Chiron and Demetrius. Lavinia is instead incredibly convincing as someone who, if not the instigator of the revenge,

wishes it to be carried out. She gets some kind of justice for herself by aiding in the murder of her rapists, blocking their path, and staring them down until they sink to their knees, waiting for the deaths Titus has promised them. Empowered as it may be, it creates a Lavinia who does not serve her narrative function as a "cipher of loss" and "a body riddled with holes."[41] Instead, she becomes another revenger, unbloodied and externally mostly intact.

As a result, Marcus and Titus have little to react to, and their beautifully eloquent speeches about the loss of Lavinia's ability to speak and her desecrated beauty become nonsensical, at least on a physical level; we have heard her speak not a minute ago and she is facially unchanged. The implied rape of Lavinia remains untouched, so on this level she is desecrated, but this is never staged in any production, nor should it be, and is not numbered among the bloody acts the audience has to stomach. Unlike the other mutilations of the Andronicus or Goth families, Lavinia's body is upheld as a lasting image, a desecration of beauty and innocence. The entrance of Lavinia, mutilated, has become an iconic moment for this play, even becoming the focus of the subtitle, *The Rape of Lavinia* in a Restoration adaptation.[42] The image of her bloodied and traumatized body haunts the rest of the narrative even while she is alive, frequently becoming the promotional materials' focus as well as the impetus for Titus to slowly lose his wits, and without this image, the narrative impact is softened immensely.

As Oldham warns, if not correctly handled, Lavinia's trauma "could disappear into metaphor or become reduced to trope," and while Christian's Lavinia does not become a trope, it potentially does disappear into metaphor, as the wax candle metaphor becomes a hindrance to affective power.[43] Maybe if Lavinia had been gagged by wax in the same fashion as when Titus's hand is removed, the metaphor of wax as deadened flesh, useless to its owner, would have been carried through the play, and the image of her brutal silencing would have made some sense of the dramatic reactions and soliloquies written in response to more brutal acts. To end on Solga's rhetorical question of "what gets lost when critical eyes turn away from *Titus Andronicus* as … of and for a culture that increasingly saw itself in terms of performative acts undertaken in the public realm?", I argue: a great deal.[44]

Notes

1. This idea has been explored by Farah Karim-Cooper during a past conference at Shakespeare's Globe. See Farah Karim-Cooper, "Stage Blood: A Roundtable," The Globe Theatre, 13 July 2006, 37, https://archive.shakespearesglobe.com/CalmView/GetMultimedia.ashx?db=Catalog&type=default&fname=05%5C303ff7-01cf-4ea1-b1e2-0e1488590372.pdf.

2. Kim Solga, *Violence Against Women in Early Modern Performance* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 43.

3. Lucy Munro, "'They Eat Each Other's Arms': Stage Blood and Body Parts," in *Shakespeare's Theatres and the Effects of Performance*, ed. Farah Karim-Cooper and Tiffany Stern (London: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 2014), 76.

4. Elizabeth D. Harvey, *Sensible Flesh: On Touch in Early Modern Culture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), 101-102.

5. Hanneke Grootenboer, "Introduction: On the Substance of Wax," *Oxford Art Journal* 36.1 (2013): 1–12, https://doi.org/10.1093/oxartj/kct001.

6. Lynn M. Maxwell, *Wax Impressions, Figures, and Forms in Early Modern Literature: Wax Works* (Cham: Springer, 2019), 6.

7. Christine Woodworth, "'Summon up the Blood': The Stylized (or Sticky) Stuff of Violence in Three Plays by Sarah Kane," *Theatre Symposium* 18.1 (2010): 11.

8. Michael Caines, "An All-Female, Mess-Free Titus Andronicus," *TLS*, 10 February 2023, accessed 8 February 2026, https://www.the-tls.com/arts/theatre/titus-andronicus-sam-wanamaker-playhouse-arts-review-michael-caines.

9. Munro, "'They Eat Each Other's Arms': Stage Blood and Body Parts," 76.

10. Holly Williams, "'We Are Doing Gallons of Blood': The Ultra-Violent Shakespeare Play That Makes Audiences Faint," *BBC*, 23 April 2025, https://www.bbc.com/culture/article/20250422-the-gory-shakespeare-play-that-makes-people-faint.

11. Steven Gregg, "Titus Andronicus and the Nightmares of Violence and Consumption," *Moveable Type* 6 (2010): 2.

12. Natasha Tripney, "Blood on the Boards—How Realistic Should Onstage Violence Be?", *The Stage*, 16 February 2023, https://www.thestage.co.uk/opinion/blood-on-the-boards--how-realistic-should-onstage-violence-be.

13. Tripney, "Blood on the Boards."

14. Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. Mary M. Innes (London: Penguin Books, 1955), 149.

15. Rosie Elnile, qtd. in Pete Messum, "A World in Which Candles Represent Life: Designing *Titus Andronicus*," Shakespeare's Globe, 2023 https://www.shakespearesglobe.com/discover/blogs-and-features/2023/02/02/a-world-in-which-candles-represent-life-designing-titus-andronicus/, accessed 25 July 2023.

16. Holly Williams, "*Titus Andronicus* 'Unplugged': How the Globe Is Staging the Gory Play in a New Light," *The Stage*, 11 January 2023, https://www.thestage.co.uk/features/titus-andronicus-unplugged-how-the-globe-is-staging-the-gory-play-in-a-new-light.

17. David Benedict, "Disgusting Violence? Actually It's Quite a Peaceful Play," *Independent*, 22 January 1995: 3.

18. Maxwell, *Wax Impressions*, 11.

19. Caines, "An All-Female, Mess-Free *Titus Andronicus*."

20. Caines, "An All-Female, Mess-Free *Titus Andronicus*."

21. Bonnie Lander Johnson and Eleanor Decamp, "Introduction," *Blood Matters: Studies in European Literature and Thought, 1400-1700* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018), 6.

22. "*Titus Andronicus* | Royal Shakespeare Company," *Royal Shakespeare Company*, 2025, https://www.rsc.org.uk/titus-andronicus/about-the-play.

23. Caines, "An All-Female, Mess-Free *Titus Andronicus*."

24. Williams, "'*Titus Andronicus* "Unplugged': How the Globe Is Staging the Gory Play in a New Light."

25. Maxwell, *Wax Impressions*, 11.

26. Christopher Behnke, Cornelia Kastelan, Valérie Knoll, and Ulf Wuggenig, eds. *Art in the Periphery of the Center* (London: Sternberg Press, 2015).

27. Johnson and Decamp, "Introduction," *Blood Matters*, 6.

28. Katherine A. Rowe, "Dismembering and Forgetting in *Titus Andronicus*," *Shakespeare Quarterly,* 45.3 (Autumn 1994): 279.

29. Katherine A. Craik, "Sorting Pistol's Blood: Social Class and the Circulation of Character in Shakespeare's *2 Henry IV* and *Henry V*," in *Blood Matters: Studies in European Literature and Thought, 1400-1700* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018), 44.

30. William Shakespeare, *Titus Andronicus*, ed. Jonathan Bate (London: The Arden Shakespeare, 2018).

31. 16. Albert H. Tricomi, "The Aesthetics of Mutilation in *Titus Andronicus*," in *Shakespeare and Language*, ed. Catherine M. S. Alexander (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 226, https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511617379.014.

32. Williams, "We Are Doing Gallons of Blood."

33. Bilal Tawfiq Hamamra, "Disowning Familial Relations in Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*," *The Explicator* 78, no. 2 (2020): 80.

34. Munro, "'They Eat Each Other's Arms,'" 75.

35. Cedric Watts, "The Bloody Banquet in *Titus Andronicus* | Blogs & Features," Shakespeare's Globe, 14 May 2014, accessed 12 October 2025, https://www.shakespearesglobe.com/discover/blogs-and-features/2014/05/11/the-bloody-banquet-in-titus-andronicus/.

36. Gregg, "*Titus Andronicus* and the Nightmares of Violence and Consumption," 1.

37. I do not see the inevitability of the connection between consumption and incestuous consummation that Gregg draws. It is far more likely the consequence of her sexual appetite for Aaron at the expense of her children, resulting in the consumption of her children metaphorically by others.

38. Thomas A. Oldham, "The Affective Appeal of Violence and the Violent Appeal of Affect: *Titus Andronicus*, Lucy Bailey, and Shakespeare's Globe," *Shakespeare Bulletin* 40.1 (2022): 70.

39. *Titus Andronicus,* directed by Jude Christian, (London, Sam Wanamaker Playhouse) attended 11 March 2023.

40. Kiersten Bjork, "'And With Thy Shame Thy Father's Sorrow Die': The

Rape, Mutilation and Murder of Lavinia as a Reflection of the Position of Women in Elizabethan England," Theatre Fairfield. https://www.theatre-fairfield.org/newpage5c6de04c, accessed 9 October 2025.

41. Bjork, "'And With Thy Shame Thy Father's Sorrow Die."

42. Sally Barnden, "Photographing *Titus Andronicus*: Textual Fidelity, Spectacle, and the Performance Tradition," *Theatre Journal*, vol. 69.4 (2017): 555–571.

43. Oldham, "The Affective Appeal of Violence and the Violent Appeal of Affect," 71.

44. Solga, *Violence Against Women*, 43.

ACTING SHAKESPEARE: A Roundtable Discussion with Artists from the Utah Shakespeare Festival's 2025 Production of *Antony and Cleopatra*

Stewart Shelley
USF Education Director

Featuring: Gabriel Elmore, Cassandra Bissell, Chauncey Thomas, Geoffrey Kent

Shelley: Good morning, everybody. Welcome. Hopefully this morning has been productive thus far. I heard applause in the other room, so I'm assuming things are going well. By way of introduction, my name is Stewart. I'm the education director with the Utah Shakespeare Festival, and I'm delighted to introduce you to the amazing friends, brilliant company members, and some of the best verse speakers in the nation, who you were able to see last evening in *Antony and Cleopatra*. I'm interested to hear your thoughts and your questions. We have Gabriel Elmore, Cassandra Bissell, Chauncey Thomas, and Geoffrey Kent who are joining us. All of them incredible. I'm going to let them introduce themselves, and tell you a little bit about where they're from. I also like to pose a question just to get brains kind of warmed up. What is it about *Antony and Cleopatra* that surprised you, delighted you, or caught you off guard in this show particularly?

Elmore: Hello, I'm Gabriel Elmore. I'm from Philadelphia. I do most of my acting there. This is, weirdly, my second consecutive

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production of *Antony and Cleopatra*. It's very jarring to think that I've sat with this for seven months. I think the thing that surprised me most about the play was that Shakespeare has power plays, and he has love plays, and I think *Antony and Cleopatra* is the only example of both existing in the same framework. And I think that provides a lot of relief from the tragedy. In the staging and the exploration, it's very compelling and tragic and it's also kind of hilarious and touching at the same time. That was what surprised me.

Bissell: I am Cassandra Bissell, and I play Agrippa in *Antony and Cleopatra*. I'm based now in northern Wisconsin in a little village, Egg Harbor, in Door County. This is going to be similar to what you're saying, but I was surprised at how funny it is. I really did not expect that. And a lot of that is specific to our production, too, I think. I think it can be done much more seriously. But there's a lot of humor written in there, and I really do appreciate that. The mix of a political play with the larger world stage, which is ultimately domestic because it's about this romance, means there's room for humor.

Thomas: I'm Chauncey Thomas. I'm currently in New York, but I'm from central Illinois. I would say—I mean, I would echo both of these, but, personally, when I got my offer for this summer, I was like, "Oh, Banquo. Sweet. Okay. Duke Senior. Cool. Pompey. Who is Pompey?" And now it's my favorite character to play this summer, so it kind of shocked me how much fun I had, which I think also relates to how we are finding the comedy in the production. My director kind of let me run wild.

Kent: Pompey rules. Hi, I'm Geoffrey Kent. I played Antony in the show. I'm also the fight director for the season, so I staged the action for the season. I'm based out of Denver, Colorado. I adore this play. Often my favorite play is the play I'm working on, but this play has been my favorite play for five or six years, and I've been in search of a return to it. "My name is Geoffrey Kent. I have not done *Antony* for six years." I feel like I'm in Alcoholics Anonymous. The show will make you feel like you're a recovering addict.

I think the thing I love about this play is not only that they fight a war over love, which is very unique to a Shakespeare play but also that as a late Shakespeare play, it starts to deconstruct

what he likes to do, taking very linear, beautiful storytelling into a very episodic, cinematic play. *Antony* has sixty scenes transpiring over a decade. It's very different from a lot of plays. I think *Mac's* a good example, because it just kind of ramps, ramps, ramps, ramps to act five, whereas I always feel like *Antony's* like a rollercoaster with ups and downs. It's very manic, and a bit exhausting to do because if you have a scene go well, it doesn't really help you in the next scene, because the next scene is a year later. You're in a different place. You exit saying you're going to kill Cleopatra. You enter saying, "You think that cloud looks like a dragon?" That is why I like *Antony and Cleopatra*.

Shelley: Fantastic. Thank you all. [speaking to the audience] Let's hear your questions. Let's hear your thoughts. You have seen the production, you have been on campus, you've presented your papers, and dived into Shakespeare. Now, what would you like to know?

Audience member: Thank you for spending time with us today. I'm really interested in the sort of manic, frenetic energy that this play has because I think it brings out a lot of difficulties in performance. How do you go about conceptualizing a play that covers such a huge span of time and so many changes to characters, where a lot of Shakespeare's plays are much tighter? How do you develop that on stage, rather than in the longer episodic form that you might have in other media?

Kent: We can all share. We'll try to make sure all four of us don't answer every question. I use the *Asimov* a lot. The *Asimov Guide to Shakespeare* is really incredible because he takes every play and gives the historical references that Shakespeare is pulling from, and where he's at, and what the battle he's referencing really was. There are maps. I find it very useful because, as the actor, I need to have some sense of time, some sense of events—I mean, we have multiple children throughout this play that are barely mentioned. It's crazy. And then you have to let go of that. You have to just play the scene. Because Shakespeare didn't need his audience to know how much time has passed. He very rarely needs you to know where they are. And when you're not doing massive scene changes, and it would kill the momentum of the play to get out a different table to go, "Oh, that's the Athens table," you have to play the truth of the scene and trust that he knew that these scenes worked

together and brought the audience to the place he wanted them to bring. So I think a lot of it is sucking in a ton of knowledge and then letting go of everything that's not useful for the audience. You can't begin every scene with a footnote like, "By the way, two years have passed. We've had three children." Because ultimately Shakespeare didn't feel that was important for the scene to have legs.

The scene with Antony and Octavia at the end, his last scene with her, is about realizing that the woman he made a deal with to protect his reputation loves his enemy as much as she loves him. And that's just not cool for Antony's ego. Anyone want to add to the timeline or story real quick?

Elmore: I completely agree with what Geoffrey was saying about how Shakespeare deconstructs the linear nature of his plays in his later work, but that also does really lend to how much time doesn't matter. *Richard III*, I think, technically takes place over 23 years. But you're not bogged down by that information. Everything feels like it's attached to the unities, even though Shakespeare did not care about them. The thing that I think the actors really are forced to bring to it is pace. When you have all that knowledge, you think, "Okay, how do I convey that six years have passed and you and Octavia have been married for four and had two kids," and none of that matters, essentially. There's no way that an audience can glean it. So you really have to start every scene going from 0 to 100 because you're just picking up from scratch again and again and again. And I can't speak for anybody else, but by the second half, I'm exhausted emotionally because you just have to drop into, "Oh, yeah, Antony's dead. Great." How do I deal with that?

Audience member: A follow up question: it seems to me like this is just a really difficult play to do, no matter what. One of the most difficult plays to make into a convincing performance for audiences today, that's compelling and entertaining and so on. You guys did a great job last night, by the way. Thank you. I enjoyed it. But it's tough because, as a non-actor, it seems to me the exhaustion you're talking about is from trying to accommodate current audiences' tastes, and the conventions of theatre, which are based on psychological realism. Every scene, you have all these gaps and these jumps. So it isn't really a play that's written about identification in that kind of psychologically realistic or

Stanislavskian way where the characters are like real people. It's so artificial and emblematic all the time. It might zero in on an emotional moment, which is real, as if that were a real person, and then it becomes something emblematic and something artificial, and it's all about the artificiality at the same time. I think that's really difficult to turn into a performance that pleases audiences who have certain conventional expectations today. I almost think it would be easier to do a super weird, non-naturalistic production of Antony and Cleopatra. Do you think it's a really difficult play to perform for those reasons? Is what I'm saying making sense for you as actors having to put this on for audiences?

Bissell: I'm curious if you feel that *Antony and Cleopatra* exists in that realm more than other Shakespeare plays.

Audience member: There are no soliloquies, really, in this play. The major events take place offstage. Yeah, I think he was intentionally moving into new territory, getting away from certain conventions about tragedy and things that he had already done with tragedy, say with *Hamlet*. To me, it's the manic-ness that you talk about. When I read this play, in terms of the scaling out and in--it's not going to be naturalistic character psychology. And I feel like it's a struggle to try to do that with this play. Maybe it can be done, but I think that must make it very exhausting.

Bissell: It's unlike any other Shakespeare that I've been a part of. I'm also playing Agrippa, so I don't have quite the same journey. I mean, it's funny what Chauncey was saying, since, because of my other loads in the season, *Antony and Cleopatra* did end up being the show I had the most fun with during the rehearsal process, in part because I didn't have the burden or responsibility or pressure of doing what these guys have to do. It's really fun to play Agrippa and have my little tiny part of the storyline that is not emotionally weighted per se. So I can't speak to the difficulty—

Elmore: I think for me personally, one of the things that makes the play so difficult is that Antony and Cleopatra and Caesar are all demigods, basically. The way that they conceive of themselves and were treated in that time period, they're the closest you can get to immortality. And I think that's reflected in their personalities, which can make them very tricky to play because some of the language—I'll just speak for my character. I don't want to speak for Geoffrey. But some of the language for Caesar is very much

like, "Oh yes, their story is tragic, and we're going to build this enormous crypt for them. And it's going to outweigh any funeral that's ever happened in history. And it's a very tragic story, but it is nothing equal to the glory that I experience by causing that tragedy." You know what I mean? There's such a self-aggrandizing outlook that I think all three of the main characters really struggle with. They are inevitably balanced by some of the other more realistic characters in the play, but I think that's one thing that lends to the difficulty of staging it and producing it. You need people who can ride the line of being simultaneously a person and a god. Where does that fall through, and where can you flip that on its head? I don't know if anyone else had thoughts on that.

Kent: That's a great answer.

Audience member: I appreciated that you called out the humor that you folks brought to the show as a particular choice for a tragedy which does end with a lot of death. I'm wondering if you could speak to that choice a little bit, especially you've just come off of a production of *Antony and Cleopatra*. So how did that silliness, frankly, in certain parts of the scene affect your relationship with the play? Particularly with Antony, for example. I would say this was a surprisingly whiny teenage Antony with a full on tantrum.

Kent: Way to catch it. That's what it was.

Audience member: Like, "Look at these asshole teenager royals," even though they're supposed to be these demigods, right? Which I thought was really interesting. If you could speak a little bit on how that affected your relationship with the text or throughout this process, I think a number of us found it to be a really interesting choice.

Kent: I can speak to that a little bit. Because I've always felt it, in all of Shakespeare's plays. When you're in a tragedy, it's really funny backstage because you're letting off steam, because there's so much death and destruction. And when you're in a comedy, everything's really quiet backstage because you're listening to see how the comedy is working with the audience. And then in a history, they're just hilarious. The histories are actually very funny to me. Comedy creates empathy, so I also am a big fan of finding humor in these characters. Because if I can get you to laugh, that means you start to care, and you, by caring, then can journey through the tragedy. I think Hamlet is hilarious, right? In Katy's

and my opinion as we worked with Carolyn on this production, they are essentially two overpowered teenagers that have never been really, fully in love in their entire lives until this moment. And that means they're experiencing all the things a kid feels when they're first madly in love. The doubts, the fears, the jealousies. When I start jumping up and down and throwing a temper tantrum, that's very deliberate, both to trigger the humor in the play, but also to show the ridiculousness of a fully grown man who has ruled a third of the world being really upset that his girlfriend let someone else kiss her hand. Yeah, he's upset that politically she's making a deal behind his back. And throughout her life she's had to politically maneuver through lots of things, but he's mostly just really mad that someone else kissed his girlfriend.

When you die in act four, in a five act play, you have to play the Mercutio rule. Mercutio's death speech is also very, very tragic and very, very funny. And I think Antony needs to bring humor to the death because I'm not the end of the play. There's another 25 minutes to go with Cleo, and if I chew a bunch of scenery out there and give a big dramatic death, I'm robbing her of that glory. So when we were in rehearsals, I was like, "Carolyn, you cut some lines here that I think are really funny, and I think we need that." And Carolyn is a huge fan of humor. So she said, "Well, what are they?" I'm like, "Not dead, not dead." She'd given only one and I said, "No, there's two. The two is funny." Three would be great. She also cut, "When did she send me?" There's a third one I can't even remember. But when you look at Antony's death, he's like, "I've heard my girlfriend's dead. I'm going to kill myself and run to her because it was my fault she killed herself. Kill me. Okay. You killed yourself instead. Okay. Crap. Okay, I'll kill myself. Oops, I failed. Hey, soldiers, kill me. You say no. You're going to take my sword to Caesar? Great." And then in comes Cleo's servant and says, "Hey, Cleo sent me to talk to you." And it's just this massive comic failure. And he dies, poorly, across two scenes. And I think Shakespeare wrote that. I don't think we're spinning it to be humorous. I believe Shakespeare wanted that death to be, not broadly comic, but to have comic underpinnings. It's an empathy tool. Comedy is always an empathy tool. I think ultimately we lean into the comedy because it helps make the complexity of the play palatable. Anybody else have comedy stuff?

Audience member: That was awesome. How do you balance that demigod figure with the comedy? Because there is so much of that teenage angst. It's part of his character. How do you bring in the powerful conqueror?

Kent: I don't. I think it's in the play, so I don't have to play it necessarily. When I first played Antony, I was really caught up in the political manifestations of the play and how he was deft at that. In this production, I was not as engaged in that because some of that's a given. I think of it more as someone who really wants to be with his girlfriend and be completely absorbed in that and lost to the world. He's like, "I still want to be really important. I still want to be known and be famous. I want to be famous, and I want to be happy; show me a way to do that," which you can't. He eventually has to choose between being famous and being with his girlfriend. In the first half of the play, Cleo and Antony never think they should have stayed at the top. And then we're separated for the whole first half, and then when we get back together, all I do is freak out that I made a terrible decision. Antony is just like, "You knew how much I loved you. How could you do this to me? I love you so hard." Katy and I always have a little decompression after the show together, and she told me last night that, "I really think I realized that that's where Cleo realizes, 'Oh, crap, I have a lot of power over this guy. And I did not realize what power I had. Now what do we do? Because now he's just going to do whatever I want, and that's not going to serve any of us." I don't know if I'm answering that demigod question.

Thomas: One thing I can say is that if there's a god or a ruler, whether I'm playing it or I'm not, I don't think it's that particular actor's job to project any kind of sense of superiority. That's everybody else's job. It's the way we react to you. In act two, I'm Caesar's servant. And then it's like, "This is the dude. That's the man. I'm going to make sure we all know that's the man." So I hope I'm taking care of that instead of Gabriel having to.

Audience member: I want to add that I see Pompey, at least in your performance, as part of the demigod status. When I see this play, and when I think about what's coming, I see Pompey in retreat. But based on your performance and that wonderful tension and the camaraderie, my response as the audience was like, "Yeah, Pompey!"

I'm not supposed to know what's happening. But I felt that was a moment in the play that worked against what Daniel [another audience member] talked about: the weirdness, the structure, the fact that you're restarting. And to me, that felt like a wonderful moment. If I hadn't known the play, I would have thought that you were going to continue on and be a very important person until the end of the story.

I think another great thing about this production, in part because of the comedy, is that it reset the play for me. I wasn't just thinking about the play on the page or comparing it to the production that we did here ten years ago. When I talked about it, I remembered the actor who played Enobarbus, and that was it. Michael Bahr said it was more of a pageant. Whereas this was bringing energy, human emotion, even if it isn't the very complex character study and psychological drama of *Macbeth*, which you were all wonderful in. Anyway, that's all I wanted to say, Chauncey.

Thomas: When Pompey says "The people love me," if the audience doesn't respond, we're like, "We're doomed."

Audience member: I'm assuming that's been your experience.

Thomas: Yeah. In the first preview, I didn't know that was going to happen, and it happened.

Bissell: And so now all of us backstage, we listen, and we're like, "Are they going for Pompey?"

Thomas: I want to give our director, Carolyn, credit for this because when I come into a play as a supporting character, I'm interested in the play and the story that we are telling as a whole, but what the leads are doing, and what kind of obstacle I need to be for them was one of my big questions. And Carolyn was just like, "I see you as a biker gang, and I need you to be tough. And I need you to be a proper foil for them." That's the reason for his choices.

Kent: He also has a ton of charisma. He's Antony-adjacent in that sense. Right? There's that opening scene with Canidius where Walter [the actor playing Canidius] said, "The people really like him, and they're really into him, and they really think he's important, and they really think he's charming." And you can watch Antony respond with, "I gotta take care of that. No one can be more charismatic than me." And then you can see in the ship scene that Shakespeare wrote that the two of us are just having

a great time, and Caesar's written to be non-participatory to a certain extent. Shakespeare's showing you two charismatic guys throwing a party where Caesar is not really included in it, and not only to humiliate him. So Pompey is an amazing trigger to, as you said in rehearsal, break the triumvirate. He creates and exacerbates the tension in the triumvirate to the point that Antony and Caesar come to blows, which unravels the whole thing. That, and the marriage to Octavia are the two things that the first half of the play really deliver.

Elmore: I think Pompey's tragedy is that he would be up there in that demigod realm with the other three. He would absolutely go on to rule part of the world or rule the whole world. But the tragedy that Shakespeare wrote for him is that he's the only one that's honest. He's the only one that's got honor. He has an opportunity to kill all of them and he responds, "I can't. I can't do it. For my pride, for my honor, for myself, I cannot be a part of that." And then you never see him again. You spend the rest of the play with the three people who don't really have it.

Audience member: But you hear about what the villainous Octavius does to him.

Elmore: One of the things we cut out of the text that annoys me ever so slightly, though I understand why we did it, is that when we go back to war with Pompey Lepidus betrays Rome. He betrays Caesar and goes to Pompey's side to help to hedge his bets. And then he just gets it wrong. That's why he has Lepidus executed. And we just we sort of gloss over that a little bit, so I think add to the tension, which is cool.

Kent: Last time I did this play, I did it in rep with *Julius Caesar*, and the same two actors. I called it Maximum Antony day. I don't think Octavius called it Maximum Antony day. But--if you just look at the end of *Julius Caesar* and watch Mark Antony and Octavius's scenes in *Julius Caesar*--in the first play, Antony is always talking about how "Fortune is with me. Fortune is ours. Fortune, fortune, fortune. Fortune's amazing." Shakespeare then many years later writes this play, and all Antony can say is, "Why do I have no luck? Why is it I lose every bet? Why is this happening?" not realizing it's because he's doing it to itself. He has to externally project that, but it's fun to watch.

At the very end of *Julius Caesar*, Mark Antony delivers a speech that very much feels like the end of a Shakespeare play. And then Octavius goes, "No, I'm going to finish the play," steps forward and does another speech that is very political and less emotional. That is the beginning of what you then watch an entire play do in *Antony*. It's not that we're not both emotional and political, but Antony's deeply emotional to the point of fault, and Octavius is deeply politically savvy and intelligent about such things. You can watch that little conflict in *Julius Caesar* explode into a full play. It's so cool.

Audience member: Talking about the rehearsal process and coming to understand these characters and what you were doing with this production, I want to know, are there "Aha" moments or moments you had to untangle with this? I'm especially interested in moments that you found difficult and worked through. What did you come to in this production because of that? What did you figure out in the process? It's a big question.

Kent: Actually, talk about Agrippa and Caesar because the rehearsal process illuminated your relationship in a way I had not seen on the page. The kingmaker part.

Bissell: The kingmaker part.

Elmore: Yeah. Historically, if I remember right, Octavius and Agrippa were lifelong friends. I think after the events of this play end, they were schooled together, and then Agrippa ends up marrying Octavius' daughter or something. There's a kind of family tie. They're close their whole lives, and they're good friends and confidants in that regard. Which we don't necessarily set up, but we do set up that there's a familiarity and that Agrippa can say things to Caesar that other people can't.

Bissell: It's interesting that Agrippa's a woman in our production and historically was not. I think what's interesting to me about that is that a lot of people talk about this play as Rome versus Egypt, masculine versus feminine, emotional versus analytical. And when you do some cross-gender casting and you have a woman as the right hand person to the person who's supposed to represent the analytical, masculine world, it's a way of cracking open this gender dynamic and saying, no, women are capable of being emperor makers. And beyond the Agrippa Octavius relationship, in the National Theater production, they also cast Agrippa as a

woman, and there was clearly a relationship between Agrippa and Enobarbus. So I brought that to the table. Chris Mixon, who's playing Enobarbus, really liked it. And we kept building on that as a way to show Agrippa, yes, she's having her fun, but she's also gathering information by having access to Enobarbus. And very late in the process, Carolyn said to me, "This plan to marry Antony to Octavia. I think that Agrippa knows it's not going to work, and it's all part of the plan." That was something Carolyn said to me pretty late in the process that she was realizing "Agrippa's behind it all. Agrippa's the kingmaker."

Elmore: What a take.

Kent: I love that.

Bissell: I haven't ever been in any other production of *Antony and Cleopatra*, but you said it illuminated things about the relationship.

Kent: It's partly your relationship with the actor playing Cleopatra. But also, what I love about the play, and Shakespeare is doing it on purpose, is that Antony and Cleopatra's relationship is extremely public. They are never, in the entire play, alone together, except for when he says he's going to kill her. It's the only time in 60 scenes that *Antony and Cleopatra* are alone on stage, without attendants, without someone to perform for, or someone to be witnessed by. And I think in the other production I learned that kind of late in the run, and in this production I started to realize that this is always witnessed. Who are they playing to? How often are they being truly honest with each other when his soldiers are always standing behind him when he talks to her? I don't think he forgets they're there. Her servants, who are her friends, are all there every time they have an argument, make out, whatever. It's always witnessed. So what is it like as a famous character to always be seen? They don't get that balcony scene. They don't get a scene, just the two of them, to say how much they love each other. It never happens. And I think in this production I really, really enjoyed being aware of the fact that he is always performing and so is she. So you never really get to see the entirety of their honest selves because they're always being witnessed.

The other thing I learned about the play in this production that I think I didn't pick up on earlier is that it's a love story, but this love story is way bigger than Antony and Cleopatra.

There's a complicated love between the two of us. There are other relationships. But what hits me most profoundly is both of us have someone who is a friend that dies of a broken heart. Iris and Enobarbus die of their connection, of love and loss. And then Charmian and Eros both kill themselves. It's partially tied to the philosophy of the time, because you have to chase the spirit or it's gone because the train has left the station, right? But also there's the parallelism that each of them has a servant that kills themselves for them, and each of them have someone who just dies for the lack of them. That is incredible.

And then the other thing is to do *Macbeth* at the same time, because he wrote them very close to each other. And you can feel it. You can feel the parallelism of it. You can feel how Lady M exits the play, and then Mac continues on. You can see how I exit the play, and Cleo—There's a lot of parallelism between these two plays. In this production I'm always on stage with Katie, and we each have an aide de camp in the play. I have Walter who plays Canidius and Caesar has you, who plays Agrippa. And that's Mac and Lady Mac, both working as the advisors to these two, which is a great thing about rep.

What else do you want to know before we finish?

Audience members: Fight choreography question.

Kent: Sure.

Audience member: I've seen a handful of the things that you choreograph, etc. I don't know if I've seen you participate, particularly against four at the same time. Are there any sources or inspiration for your fight choreography?

Kent: For this show, particularly?

Audience member: Yes.

Kent: There are two ship battles in this play, which are kind of unstageable, hence the flags, right? And every production I've ever been in insists that you can't cut it because it's an important plot point. So you go do a ship battle, wondering what would Shakespeare do? I've seen people walk around with tiny boats around their waists. Last production I did, we had little ship sails, and people walked around on the stage with tiny ship sails. The National had boats, and they pushed them with sticks as they talked about it, like it was a military table showing you World War II stuff of battleships moving around.

Carolyn and I were talking about wanting a piece of action, and Shakespeare does this really weird thing in this play, and it's historical but he's also picking and choosing what to do, where he shows loss, loss, loss, and then he gives him a victory. He gives them both this random victory, which I assume is just so he can knock them back down again because they're so low that he needs to lift them back up first. So he chose a victory so that they can all be super happy. So then he can now give them more misery. So when Caroline and I were talking about that fight, we were like, we want to do that too. "How many people can I have," I said, "in our cast?" We did the math, and we were like, "Four." And I remember going to you and going, "Wanna be in a sword fight?"

Bissell: If you'll have me.

Kent: Because I needed a fourth, and I had a few choices, and I thought you might be interested. So first I built the team. It's like doing a heist movie. You build the team. I was staging a four on one, and it wasn't working for me, artistically because--I've done a lot of *Musketeers*, and when you're fighting multiple people, the hard job is coming up with why they don't kill you when waiting for their turn. You have to constantly keep four people in motion to make it work. And we were hitting diminishing returns in rehearsal. I went home, and I thought about it, and I came back to Carolyn, and said, "I think it's like the *Cyrano* fight." Cyrano fights Valvert, and then later in some productions he does what's called the 100 on 1. He fights a hundred men in the streets. Of course, I've never done a production with 100 actors, but I've definitely done it with eight actors who just keep coming on and coming on and coming on. It's vignettes. Let's do vignettes. Let's take the flags we're using in the ship battle, and let's use them as wipes, like improv scene wipes, where they just wipe through an hour in different parts so you get the sense that this battle has been happening over a long period of time. That was the archetype which allowed me to do one on ones and two on ones, and then combine them into what we had.

The only reason in the entire play they have those shields is because Geoff Kent wanted to go through a shield wall, because I just thought that'd be cool. And those shields are mostly Lexan. They really lightweight. We're working with aluminum swords, really lightweight. And the nice thing about Roman sword work is

that it's really close because the swords are already really short. So you're really in punching distance because the swords are this long. So that's where that came from.

While performing it, 60 seconds into it I'm always like, "I should have ended this right here because I have to talk, and I am tired." And it goes on for another about 25 seconds after that. But it didn't get to speed until right before we opened. And so when I realized it was too long, it was too late. And I did it to myself, so I just had to deal with it at the end.

Audience member: I really appreciated that you brought up gender and playing with gender. I think this play is particularly interesting with masculinity, which is something that we actually talked about with *Macbeth*, as well. There was this really interesting question of what masculinity is, what does it look like? It felt like *Macbeth* played with that with Macduff and crying about the death of his family. And now with the way that you're portraying Antony, you're doing more of that. There's not so much of this hyper masculine broness. It's like, "Look at this whiny teenage boy."

Kent: He's pretty weepy.

Audience member: Yeah. Right. Almost like a Romeo in some ways, right? That kind of weepy emo boy situation going on. I'd appreciate hearing from you folks. How did that playing with gender roles affect your experiences so far with this performance or how did it change your relationship with the text?

Kent: You're playing multiple roles that have been re-gendered. Do you want to talk about that?

Bissell: You're gonna put it on me.

***Thomas*:** I mean, I have not gotten to play many female-identifying characters in Shakespeare, but—

Bissell: It's not going that direction.

Thomas: Which is probably for the best.

Bissell: That's true. I mean, it's interesting. I feel like—gender is a construct, and it's cultural, and it's where we are in time and it changes. And one of the things that I love about Shakespeare's plays, and why we're still doing them all, is that ultimately he is tapping into our humanity. There's a universality to all of these journeys. And it's interesting for our modern sensibilities when we have these conversations about gender and our notions of what's

masculine, and what's feminine. But also that's cracking open a larger fact, which is that gender is a thing that has always been fluid. It's always changing. I love getting to do these plays and speak these words because ultimately everybody should be able to find something relatable in all of these characters. And yes, gender is a factor. I don't mean to be dismissive of that. I have a degree in gender studies, in fact. But it's glorious that we are now living in a moment where I get to play Jaques, and I get to play Agrippa, and that hopefully is cracking open conversations. Hopefully people are walking away from the theater thinking, "How did that change it for me? Why did it change it? Why does it change it to see a woman playing Agrippa or a woman playing Jaques? What does that do for us?" And that then makes us reflect back on our current society and why we feel the way we feel. So that's a rambling answer. Anybody else?

Kent: I'd like to speak to it as a stage combat teacher, I generally teach multi-gendered rooms, and often, I'm teaching rooms that are predominantly feminine in terms of the students that are participating in theater studies. That's often where that energy is. And I find female-identifying students pick up swordplay faster than male-identifying students who just assume they know how to do it, because men know how to war. Things are stereotypical. There are always exceptions to these rules. But, we all have even more than a binary, but we all have both sides of the yin and yang within us. And when you're playing characters, when you're performing actions, you're pushing parts of yourself forward and pulling parts of yourself back.

As Antony, the feminine side of me, that is stereotypically emotionally available and willing to show that emotion is something I lean into. I think Shakespeare was also limited in what gender he could put on stage, no matter who they played. He's already showing a fluid gender construct, because Cleo was played by a man when the show opened, and that man was probably exploring his femininity in the performance of it. Gender is so fluid. But also the minute you flip the gender of the actor playing it, you then get to analyze. Are we re-gendering the character? Are they performing as that gender? Are we changing the pronouns? Are we not changing? And that discussion happens in every play, and it's a great discussion because there's not a right or wrong answer to

it, because every play has got to find its own way. Sometimes you end up in that role because they needed more women in another play. Other times you have a situation like this with Carolyn, who wanted to flip the gender because she thought it was going to change the dynamic. And that's what makes rehearsals so much fun.

Elmore: Yeah, I think the dynamic between the masculine and the feminine is probably what Shakespeare was going for. But I also wonder, some days, if that's the most productive way for us to think about that dynamic between Rome and Alexandria in the 21st century. Because I think there are other ways that you can go about it. You know, the militarism versus the hedonism or the sexual oppression versus the sexual freedom. The dichotomy exists no matter what, given the structure of the play, so we can sort of tweak it however we want in order to convey the message that we want to convey. And then you have characters like Agrippa and Maecenas who are played by women in Caesar's camp. I think it inherently calls attention to the tradition of that dichotomy without necessarily making a statement either way about it. We can address the fact that these dichotomies can exist within anybody. That was the way that I was looking at it. And I thought that that was really, really productive because then we can take it out of the realm of masculine versus feminine traits and put it more in the realm of diametrical opposition where there could be any number of reasons why. We just need to put them on the stage.

Audience member: Can I ask a question? First of all, I love Pompey, and I'm interested in—

Bissell: The people love Pompey.

Audience member: And you're a man of the people. But we had a conversation in the grocery store last year.

Thomas: Yes.

Audience member: It was when you were in *Winter's Tale*, and we were talking about Leontes, and I said, "Is it hard to do this?" And you said to me, "No, because Leontes thinks he's right." And in this play you've talked about characters being whiny teenagers, kingmakers, demigods, or arrogant. How does it help in your playing of these characters if they think they're right? Do they ever question whether they are not, in your minds?

Thomas: Do they ever question—hmm.

Bissell: Agrippa doesn't.

Thomas: It is not like last year when I did *Winter's Tale*. I was frequently aware that I had doubts that I was suppressing or constantly overcoming. And that's not something I feel as Pompey. As Pompey, I do kind of feel like I'm doing what needs to be done, and I'm making whatever kind of calculation I need to make, and ultimately, it's for the greater good. But, like they've said, I have an opportunity to kill them all, and I don't take it. But I also would have been fine with it had it happened, if I didn't know about it.

Bissell: "Thou wouldst not play false and yet would wrongly win."

Thomas: Yeah, there is some sense of morality. Pompey feels he needs to take over, but I ultimately think Pompey thinks that his intentions are noble.

Kent: Does Caesar have any regrets?

Elmore: Actually, I do have a real answer to this question. The way that I conceived of Caesar for this production he questions whether he's right every time he gets to look into Antony's face. I don't think Shakespeare wrote him as the villain, but I do think Shakespeare wrote him as the foil. And that's really hard to do in a play where Antony and Cleopatra are is such delicious characters that the audience loves to see. Arrogance, which you were talking about, becomes an obstacle, but I think that Caesar's questioning sort of sets up the fact that, yeah, Caesar may be kind of an ass, and he does have that demigod sort of complex going on, but ultimately he makes all the right decisions. And Antony could have made all the right decisions too, and just doesn't. Going back to what Chauncey was saying, and I completely agree with, about thinking, "Okay, who's the lead and how can I help them tell their story," setting up that self-doubt catapults that relationship into new levels. I don't know if you want to speak to that.

Kent: Well, in this play there aren't soliloquies where we can express confusion and mistakes. *Macbeth* gets those. He gets, "What have I done?" moments. And Antony doesn't get those textually. But this production is so different from my last production. In the last production, I really felt like he got trapped into marrying Octavia. He wasn't playing chess very well, and he exited that scene with a new wife wondering, "What do I do now?" And in this production it was fun to explore something different.

Enobarbus, every chance he gets, is like, "This is never going to work. He's going to go back. He's gonna-- he loves her. I've seen it. It's all fine." But I realized I didn't have to play that. I played walking willingly into the marriage with Octavia, making the choice to stay there and believe he's never going back in that moment. And the regret he has is in his realization when she doesn't let him kiss her on the lips, and then when he realizes that she wants to go to her brother because she loves him as much as Antony. I think that's where he knows he's made a huge mistake.

And Antony is drawn to amazing women, right? Fulvia is an amazing person in history. If you haven't read it, she's incredible. And then he has Cleopatra. And then he has Octavia, and Octavia is an amazing woman in history. All these amazing women and Antony manages to marry all three of them and not be the right match for any of them. So I think he does have regret. The way the play is written, he doesn't regret that he hurt Octavia. But I do think he realizes that by marrying her and now abandoning her, he has forced Caesar's hand. And in doing so, he regrets the collapse of what he held so dear, his reputation and his third ownership, or half; sometimes he says half because nobody counts Lepidus anymore. "With half the world I played as I please making it my fortunes." He regrets that he has destroyed himself, but only in those moments.

As the play goes on, what confuses the audience all the time is at the end, I'm like, "Ah, Cleopatra betrayed me. My fleet has yielded to Caesar. And that is definitely Cleopatra's fault." He projects that failing onto somebody else. We all have had that moment in our life. We blame someone else for our own mistake. And he definitely blames Cleopatra for a mistake that he completely created on his own. He doesn't regret it. He just projects it. But I do think the Octavia decision is a mistake he doesn't realize he's making until he's already made it.

Shelley: We're drawing up on the hour, so we've got time for probably one or two more questions. Go ahead.

Audience member: I'm curious about the repertory experience for this. You've alluded a little bit to that with *Macbeth* and the connection between these plays. How do you navigate the bleed over that might happen, especially for this play, for *Antony and Cleopatra*? Do you lean into that? Do you move away from that?

What is your experience with that, especially with your characters? Has there been crossover, and have you tried to avoid it?

Kent: It doesn't cross over in the sense that you're never making pasta for dinner and accidentally cook a hamburger. You are able to compartmentalize. But as we all know here, if you've not experienced the way rep gets built, for the first month, we switch plays every four hours. But in those four hours, we also often end up jumping into the other plays because you're not called for an hour. And then they pick up a secondary over here, and then you have a fitting, you know. So you'll do an *Antony* scene, then do a secondary that is a fight rehearsal for *Macbeth*, then do a costume fitting for *As You Like It*, then have a character meeting for that, and then come back, and you're Antony again, and that's in four hours. And I think we all experience that, which is manic. It's crazy. How do you approach building three different plays as an artist?

Elmore: Supreme diligence. All the famous actors that you've ever read about have said that rep is where actors cut their teeth, right? It's where you find out what you're made of. And I think it's insanely difficult because you're switching every 4 hours or 2 hours or one hour. You write everything down, and then you go home. And technically, the way the schedule works out is every other day you're not working on one specific play. So there is a little bit of time to marinate in thoughts and possibly work notes because there's no room to backslide. But the other benefit of rep here, and the thing that made it easier versus reps I've done in Philly in the past is that I'm on location. I'm in that artist housing. My entire purpose while I'm here is just to work on these plays, and rehearsals don't start till 1 p.m. so sometimes you wake up at 9:30, and you're busting out those lines for three hours. The other benefit that I really enjoyed is that casting in rep, the matrix that they use is insanely complicated and difficult, but if it's used really, really well, oftentimes, you've got characters that are not similar in any way. Orlando is not similar to Caesar by any stretch of the imagination. And it does make that separation a little bit easier, I think. Where you can switch gears into a lighter, more vulnerable place or switch gears back into a more driven sort of power dynamic.

Bissell: While it's frustrating to not get to land in one play for very long before you have to go to another one, it also does allow for variety. If the casting has been done well and it's been

distributed well, I get what I have now that we're in full runs, where I'm very, very grateful that we do the Scottish play, and then the next night is *Antony and Cleopatra*, because for me, Agrippa is definitely fun. I really enjoy playing Agrippa, but it is my lightest load. It does not have an emotional life to it. So after doing a *Macbeth* night, it sort of feels like a night off. It is not a night off because I still have to have a cheat sheet in my pocket of what scene is next and where I enter, because that's the nature of *Antony and Cleopatra*. But it doesn't have the emotion. It doesn't take what *Macbeth* takes out of me. I love it once we get into performance, and I feel settled, and I feel solid in each of the plays. That's really a cool thing about rep. The building of it is hard. And this is the first time I've done three here at the same time. And I really felt it this season. I was like, "Oh my gosh, my brain is struggling with this." But you know, you do what you gotta do. Get up at 9 o'clock in the morning and—

Elmore: Just come in and make a choice.

Bissell: Right.

Elmore: There's no use dilly-dallying.

Thomas: For me, I remember coming into this before I knew what we were going to be doing in *Antony and Cleopatra*. Knowing Banquo I was thinking, "serious dude." And then doing Duke senior, who is kind of nurturing, I was just thinking, "I just want to be funny. No one's let me be funny here. I don't know if they know that I'm funny." So I came into *Antony and Cleopatra* going, "I hope that I get to be funny in this play." Very quickly in rehearsal, once I heard where Carolyn was going, I went that direction, but also, my Banquo started to get funnier.

I do feel like I am trying to delineate the characters in all three plays. I think that's the main point. For the most part, when I'm doing one play, I'm just doing that play. I don't really think about what I'm doing in the other shows, but at the same time I am trying to show a variety. I know the audience is going to see me three times. I want them to see three distinct things.

Kent: I'd say, rep here used to be a different schedule every week. They shuffled the cart, and there were literally days when I would come to the theater at seven and see the costumes and go, "Oh, we're doing that. I thought we were doing--"Rep gives you chances to change gears. It also gives us a chance to support each

other, which I think is really special about rep. You know, Lennox barely talks, and I get to be there to just listen to Walter. And then we turn right around the next day and he's Canidius out there listening to me, and that's really, really unique.

We were talking last night about the fact that we only have nine left. We have nine Mac-B's [*Macbeth*] left. We have nine *Antony's* left. And there's just miles of it that I haven't unpacked in my mind. There's depth I haven't remotely been able to reach yet. And I'm feeling the clock. But I don't know that that hunger would exist if I was doing it eight shows a week in the same way, which is the normal game. Eight shows a week, same show, then it ends. And every day is Tuesday is what we say here. Because normally in theater, here it's Monday, but every day, the first day of the week is your first show. You're always a little herky jerky in your first show. Well, every single day we do a show here, it's the first day of the week because you haven't done it for three or four days, and in between that you have done two other plays. So I'll exit an *Antony* scene and go, "Oh yeah, next time we do that, I'm going to do this." And then I do *As You Like It*, I have a day off, I do *Macbeth*, I come back around, and that moment goes by me like a speeding bullet. "On Friday I do--"

You're chasing your own tail a bit, but it's really refreshing, and it's really fun to support. I think my favorite part about rep is, sometimes in normal plays, you can drop into a hierarchy of leads, supporting, and small bits, and they create their own microsystems in rehearsal. They talk to each other, they hang out with each other, and it kind of falls apart. Whereas here, we take turns grabbing the mic, and the other people take turns listening to that person speak. And that is really special.

Shelley: Thank you. Please give them a round of applause. Give yourselves a round of applause. Great questions. Really thought provoking. Thank you for your time, for your expertise. For your gracious answers. I will make sure, Chauncey, to let John know you are funny. What an incredible opportunity to engage in conversation. I've been saying all season long that this seminar grove, where we usually have our discussions with Dr. Isabel Smith-Bernstein, and where we have our actor seminar, this is the Forest of Arden. You have arrived. You're at the heart of Arden, where we can ask questions, where we can be honest, where we can

be real and be who we choose to become. So thank you for joining us in Arden.

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