

Sederi 29

2019

IN MEMORIAM
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María Luisa Dañobeitia Fernández

In memoriam

Jesús López-Peláez Casellas
Universidad de Jaén, Spain

I met her thirty years ago, back in 1989, when I took a class she used to teach at the Universidad de Granada. Throughout her career, students' reactions to her teaching went from passionate adoration to puzzlement, and the truth is that many could not begin to understand what she was about. Of course, she immediately blew my mind (and a few other minds too). It was a last-year survey course on medieval and early modern English literature, and I found it enthralling: so much so that, a few months later, I started under her supervision a PhD thesis on Shakespeare (and Calderón).

As a matter of fact I did not know much about her (and neither did any of my fellow students): the only thing we knew for sure about María Luisa Dañobeitia was that nobody really knew who she really was, or where she came from, and her eccentric, almost bizarre, demeanor (the way she talked, the way she dressed and moved) added to the mystery. I have to say that I had enjoyed, and would later enjoy, some very good lecturers in literary subjects, in Jaén, Granada, and Cork (Ireland), but she was a class of her own, and her lessons were completely different from anything I had ever experienced. Consequently, she became, from the very first class I attended (and remains to this day), the most memorable, attractive and fascinating personality I had ever met at any university.

María Luisa did not exactly introduce you to the literature of the period you were studying. She did not examine or discuss, say, *The Canterbury Tales*: she made you *feel* like you were one of the pilgrims, and took you along for the ride. She could appear as beautiful as Stella and as dangerous as the Dark Lady; as witty as Gill and as mysterious as Morgan Le Fay, although you always suspected she really was the sweet Lady of Shalott. And you could do nothing but read over and over again those texts you thought you had “understood” until you actually came to see what she suggested you might find in them. It was only then that you realized they were completely different from what you thought (and anybody thought!) they were. “Read against

the grain” was an expression invented for her, and something she generously passed on to young scholars like I was then.

As I became one of her doctoral students I soon learnt that her approach to literature, radically original as it was, also stemmed from the frequent visits she had paid to the British Library while she was living in London in the late 1950s (where she arrived from her family’s Basque Country and Navarre), and mostly from having studied at the University of Toronto in the 1960s, where she became heavily and directly influenced by Northrop Frye (who taught her and later introduced her to the study of archetypes, which in a way makes me and others, through her, Frye’s academic progeny...). And, through Frye, she became conversant with the work of Carl G. Jung, Robert Graves and James Frazer, among many others. These authors and their works (*Psychology and Alchemy*, *The White Goddess*, *The Golden Bough*...) were with María Luisa most of her life, and left a big mark on her and on her work: hence María Luisa’s incessant production of always insightful and extraordinarily rich examinations of all kinds of symbols, motifs and signs in such different and varied literary works as *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, Shakespeare’s and Marlowe’s drama, Blake’s *Book of Urizen*, Richardson’s *Pamela*, Yeats, Chaucer, Murdoch, Spack, Tennyson, among others.

However, one of the most important things she taught me (and something I now try to instill in my own students) was that criticism does not mean a thing if you don’t close read the texts first... and then read them again. All of María Luisa’s PhD students (and there were as many as six of us at the same time) had to know and practice this: it was the only thing she demanded from us: read incessantly, read up and down, backwards and sideways, read as if your life depended on it... because in a way it often does. Indeed, María Luisa’s PhD students have all eventually followed very different paths in terms of our critical approaches to the examination of literature and cultural artifacts, but I guess all of us have a certain family resemblance. I, for one thing, like to believe this is so, and I fancy I find this connection in those colleagues who, like myself, began their academic careers with her, and are now well-established scholars in their own right: Mauricio Aguilera (who was probably closest to her, especially in the last years), Mary Gleeson, Eugenio Olivares, Cristina Pérez and María José de la Torre. Also, there are many others, students and academics (most notably Adelina Sánchez, Ángel Díaz or Nieves Pascual), who

felt similarly attracted by her personality, and – I am convinced – will never forget her.

Probably because she always was a maverick of sorts, María Luisa, shortly after becoming a well-established member of the English Department at the Universidad de Granada, played a central role in the movement that in the late 1980s led a group of young English scholars, from various Spanish universities, to found such groundbreaking, successful and important associations as SELIM (for medieval English studies) and SEDERI (for early modern English literature and culture). María Luisa became the President of the association in 1991 and 1992, and she actually took me and other PhD students to our first SEDERI in Oviedo in 1991; she then organized the third SEDERI conference in Granada in 1992. Now SEDERI has become a leading academic association for the study of the English Renaissance in the world, and the success of today (a prestigious journal, world-class speakers in our crowded conferences, the union with our Portuguese colleagues, SEDERI junior...) may make it difficult to realize how precarious our association was in those difficult years, when María Luisa and a bunch of scholars (Patricia Shaw, Juan Tazón and Javier Sánchez, among others) fought against all odds to put the bases of our association. Such a feeble-looking woman full of the fire of determination and – like Yeats wrote – “with beauty like a tightened bow.”

It is hard to find anyone with such a wide range of interests: she loved to read (from eighteenth century novel, to Celtic mythology, Arthurian narratives, Iris Murdoch and so many others), to paint, to write, to study all sorts of things (the universe, sorcery, Jack the Ripper, William Blake’s prophetic work and illuminated plates, Van Gogh’s life); she loved her dogs and her plants, she loved looking at the stars and the moon... But I’d say that most of all she loved to talk, to connect with people (or, I should say, with some people...). For me (and for the rest of us PhD students) it was quite common to spend afternoons and evenings at her place or at her tiny office drinking tea and coffee and discussing everything that came to her mind (related or, most likely, unrelated – at least in a self-evident manner – to our theses), learning more literature in a few hours than in a college semester or from a deeply scholarly handbook. The truth is that I have never encountered anyone so self-sufficiently independent (on account of a clearly superior intellect), and at the same time so much

in need of reaching out to others. This is only one of the many contradictions that made her who she was. But we who knew her know this well: she was a constant paradox, a walking epiphany, an enchantress and—for us who felt close to her—a princess: someone English academics in this country will never miss too much. I only hope she made me at least half the scholar, and the person, that she was.

María Luisa Dañobeitia Fernández
passed away in Granada
on 4 June, 2018.

Articles

Leskov's rewriting of Lady Macbeth and the processes of adaptation and appropriation*

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ABSTRACT

This article tries to provide a thorough analysis of Nikolai Leskov's rewriting of Lady Macbeth, the Shakespearean character, in the novella *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District*, from the perspective of Translation and Adaptation Studies. The focus will be placed on the ideology of the author who, with full knowledge, rewrites a previous work to adapt it to a specific context. Apart from Leskov's work, attention will be also paid to two of its subsequent adaptations: Dmitri Shostakovich's homonymous opera and William Oldroyd's filmic version, *Lady Macbeth*.

Finally, the importance of these processes for the development of target literary systems will be discussed and emphasized.

KEYWORDS: William Shakespeare; Lady Macbeth; ideology; rewriting; Nikolai Leskov; Dmitri Shostakovich; William Oldroyd; Translation and Adaptation Studies.

La reescritura de Lady Macbeth de Leskov y los procesos de adaptación y traducción

RESUMEN: Este artículo trata de ofrecer un exhaustivo análisis desde la perspectiva de los Estudios de Traducción y Adaptación sobre el proceso de reescritura de Lady Macbeth, el personaje shakesperiano, en la novela corta *Lady Macbeth del Distrito de Mtsensk* del escritor Nikolai Leskov. Para ello, se prestará especial atención a la ideología del autor, quien, de manera plenamente consciente, reescribe una obra anterior con el propósito de adaptarla a un contexto concreto. Aparte de la novela corta de Leskov, también analizaremos dos de sus

A reescrita de Lady Macbeth por Leskov e os processos de adaptação e de apropriação**

RESUMO: Este artigo propõe uma análise exaustiva de Lady Macbeth, a personagem shakespeariana, na novela *Lady Macbeth do Distrito de Mtsensk*, na perspectiva dos Estudos de Tradução e de Adaptação. Será prestada especial atenção à ideologia do autor, que, de maneira plenamente consciente, reescreve uma obra anterior com o propósito de a adaptar a um contexto concreto. Para além da obra de Leskov, serão analisadas ainda duas adaptações posteriores da sua

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adaptaciones posteriores: la ópera homónima de Dmitri Shostakovich y la versión cinematográfica de William Oldroyd, *Lady Macbeth*.

Por último, destacaremos la importancia de estos procesos para el desarrollo literario de la cultura de llegada.

PALABRAS CLAVE: William Shakespeare; Lady Macbeth; ideología; rescritura; Nikolai Leskov; Dmitri Shostakovich; William Oldroyd; Estudios de Traducción y Adaptación.

novela: a ópera homónima de Dmitri Shostakovich e a versão cinematográfica de William Oldroyd, *Lady Macbeth*.

Finalmente, será discutida e enfatizada a importância destes processos para o desenvolvimento de sistemas literários de chegada.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: William Shakespeare; Lady Macbeth; ideologia; rescrita; Nikolai Leskov; William Oldroyd; Estudos de Tradução e de Adaptação.

1. Introduction

The transference of knowledge among countries and its importance for the development of cultural and literary systems is often disregarded or only considered as a contemporary phenomenon; however, it dates back to the beginning of civilization and the influence of cultures such as the Spanish, the English or the Portuguese offers a great variety of examples. In order to underscore the importance of cross-cultural relations and the exchange of knowledge in the contemporary age, while paying special attention to how this adapts to specific contexts, this article will try to provide a thorough analysis of the rewriting of William Shakespeare's *Lady Macbeth* as it appears in Nikolai Leskov's *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District*, and two of its subsequent adaptations: Dmitri Shostakovich's homonymous opera and William Oldroyd's *Lady Macbeth*.

The reasons for choosing these three rewritings are manifold, and they will be appropriately discussed later, but they could be summarized as follows. The novella *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District* by Nikolai Leskov (1831-1895) continues a tradition inaugurated by Ivan Turgenev's "Hamlet of the Shchigrovsky District," a rewriting of Shakespeare's play *Hamlet*, whose main contribution was the discussion about the figure of the "superfluous man" in Russia. Leskov, inspired by Turgenev's example, appropriated another of Shakespeare's characters, Lady Macbeth, and adapted it to rural Russia in order to offer an alternative to the original work and, at the same time, a "Russian tragedy" in a provincial environment. The fact that Leskov chose Shakespeare's play as an inspiration for his novella reveals the importance of cross-cultural

relations and the creative possibilities of adaptation. Leskov's masterpiece was later rewritten by other authors and here we will only analyze two of them: the homonymous opera by Dmitri Shostakovich (1906–1975) and the filmic adaptation by William Oldroyd (1979–). Shostakovich's opera appeared during the sexual revolution in the Soviet Union, trying to examine and criticize the confinement and lack of freedom for women in different periods of Russian history. However, as a consequence of its emphasis on sex and violence, it became a scandal and the opera composer had to struggle for acceptance during the next decades. Oldroyd's adaptation is remarkable in many aspects, but the most important is probably that the character of Lady Macbeth returns to a British environment after a long period of critical analysis and reinterpretations, placing now the focus on questions of social and class discrimination.

For the purpose of this article, it is essential to understand that literature, and the arts in general, are not immune to cultural phenomena. In fact, the study of processes of rewriting from the perspective of Translation and Adaptation Studies reveals that the knowledge transference shows, in most cases, a remarkable tendency to conform to the very specific conditions of the target language and culture. This could well be understood as a reaction against the homogenizing effect of global cultures, or a mechanism to conceptualize universal themes and transform them into something local or more easily comprehensible. In those cases, the work of art undergoes a highly elaborate process of ideological transformations to convey the author's purpose.

We are aware that "universal" and "classic" are two concepts for which no clear-cut definition can be provided, but, at the same time, it becomes essential for the aim of this article to state how they are going to be considered here. "Narrative universals" could be defined as those features of story or discourse which appear in great number of related or unrelated traditions (Herman, Jahn and Ryan 2005, 384), assuming that universality is not a normative concept and that any piece of writing or tradition cannot be considered more "universal" than another. In fact, one of the purposes of this research is to state that narrative universals are not directly comprehensible cross-culturally (Herman, Jahn and Ryan 2005, 384) and, precisely for that reason, the study of these processes of rewriting unveils that some

changes or deliberate alterations of the original are sometimes necessary to conform to the target culture. As for the concept of “classic,” Ankhi Mukherjee regards it as “closely related to the idea of canonicity [...] The classic, like the canonical work, is a book that is read long after it was written—and that demands rereading” (Mukherjee 2014, 30-1). One of the features that best defines it is probably its capacity to survive critical questioning, produce startlement and still be perceived as strange, fresh and fit. Although closely related to the idea of canon, some differences can be found: “the classic is primarily a single act of literature, while the canon, Guillory states, is an “aristocracy of texts” (“Ideology,” 175, Quoted in Mukherjee 2014, 31”).

In order to carry out this discussion, we will adopt the perspective of Translation and Adaptation Studies, two closely related fields of research which have grown during the last decades incorporating scholars from different academic disciplines and cultural traditions. In fact, Translation Studies has thrived on a great variety of approaches which consider that translation has played an active role throughout history in shaping the appreciation of literature, traditions and cultures among nations. The translator has not only fostered the evolution of cross-cultural images, opinions and stereotypes, but has also promoted ideological and aesthetic values, because there is a certain degree of manipulation, conscious or unconscious, in every translation. Although Leskov’s novella and the subsequent rewritings and adaptations proposed here are not translations *per se*, all of them are the resulting product of a translated text which conveys a certain image and representation of Lady Macbeth. The reinterpretation of this character in Russia and England and its adaptation to a rural environment, the provincial Mtsensk District in Leskov’s and Shostakovich’s rewritings, and a small village in the English north east of the nineteenth-century in Oldroyd’s version, deserves a thorough analysis, as it perfectly portrays how these processes work within target literary systems, fostering and arousing alternative readings.

2. Theoretical framework

In Western culture, the concept of translation has been traditionally understood as an intercultural exchange of knowledge, in which some

linguistic materials are transported from one language into another. However, especially after World War II, with the evolution of the modern discipline of translation studies, scholars and translators started to pay attention to this linguistic exchange, concluding that the traditional interpretation of the concept was an oversimplification which did not provide a positive answer to all the processes involved in this transference of knowledge. Although it is worth mentioning the contribution of James S. Holmes in the 1970, the great development of this research area as an interdisciplinary field of studies came during the 1980s and the 1990s. Far from a homogenous approach, Translation Studies is a conglomerate of dissimilar theories or trends about the translating task and the surrounding world (Calzada 2003, 7). This discipline thrives in an interdisciplinary context, because it establishes a dialogue among cultures, histories and languages. Precisely for that reason feminists, descriptive scholars, gay and lesbian academics or contrastive linguists, among many others, seem to have found a place for their research in this academic field and, at the same time, it has helped to explain the position of minorities in society (Kuhiwczak and Littau 2007, 4). Although their approaches are not homogenous, all of these scholars share a similar idea of translation as a complex process of knowledge transfer in which many factors are involved:

Translation is not a simple matter of communication and transfer. In turn, as interest in and presumptions about linguistic fidelity and the communicative values of translation have given way to a deeper understanding of how translations work within cultural systems and how they are shaped by sociopolitical and historical frameworks, the role of translators as active figures in history, art, politics, and belief systems has become ever more manifest. (Tymoczko 2006, 447)

Accordingly, translation is not merely a transference of linguistic materials, but an interpretation of a different culture in order to make a text available to readers (Bielsa 2009, 14). In this process, the role of translators becomes essential and acquires some visibility as a global actor, because he/she “necessarily promotes, actively or tacitly, ideological, aesthetic, and cultural values. That is, the translator cannot absolutely avoid transforming (changing, modifying) source texts to some degree” (Jaques 2002, 14). This manipulation of the text, always understood by the scholars of Translation Studies as a product, could vary. In most cases, the language of the original is domesticated through translation, and concepts such as intelligibility,

fluidity or transparency acquire special relevance. The text becomes then a sort of a hybrid, an in-between piece of writing that the reader of the target-language can easily understand: “translation is the forcible replacement of the linguistic and cultural difference of the foreign text with a text that will be intelligible to the target-language reader” (Venuti 1995, 18). Therefore, the more closely the translator follows the processes of the original, the more foreign the text will seem to the public (Lefevere 1992, 155). The analysis of the degree of domestication in a rewritten text or a translation is quite revealing for this research, because it brings in contact the global with the local and portrays how knowledge adapts to specific contexts for certain purposes. This domestication could be purely linguistic, but it should be understood in broader terms, especially cultural and ideological.

A complementary approach to that of Translation Studies is the discipline of Adaptation Studies, which has predominantly developed in English-speaking universities (Milton 2009, 51). Julie Sanders, one of its main theorists, highlights the concepts of adaptation and appropriation. As she explains in her most celebrated work, *Adaptation and Appropriation*, the concept of adaptation would refer to the rewriting of a text, which includes omissions or additions, but still can be recognized as belonging to the original author (2006, 18-9). In contrast, appropriation implies a more decisive journey away from the source text, and requires the juxtaposition of at least one text against another to reveal the similarities and differences between both texts. In those cases, the reader recognizes the appropriated text as belonging to the rewriter or the adapter (2006, 26). Unlike Translation Studies, adaptation scholars focus on inter-semiotic and intralingual versions, rather than interlingual texts. An example of this would be a novel which later becomes a film or an opera. Most of these authors derive from post-structuralism and question the concept of authorship, Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, Julia Kristeva or Roland Barthes being some of the thinkers and philosophers most typically quoted and cited (Milton 2009, 55).

It is obvious that both disciplines are complementary and closely related and some authors, as for example Lawrence Venuti (2007), underscore the need to find a link between these two fields of research and a shared theoretical framework. An example of this is the recent incorporation by the discipline of Translation Studies of the analysis of other text types that represent source texts. This article offers

further evidence of this need by presenting one case that is located precisely at the intersection between Translation and Adaptation Studies. Leskov's *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District* or its subsequent reworkings analyzed here cannot be considered as translations, but rather as appropriations or adaptations. However, due to the fact that there is a necessary interlinguistic exchange (from English into Russian, and from Russian again into English), the exercise of translating is needed as well, illustrating the intersection between these two fields.

Before starting with the analysis, it would be interesting to define the concept of ideology, which in this article will be close to the interpretation given for language-related studies by authors such as Verschueren (1999) or Van Dijk (1998). For the former, "ideology is interpreted as any constellation of beliefs or ideas, bearing on an aspect of social reality, which are experienced as fundamental or commonsensical and which can be observed to play a normative role" (1999, preface). This definition is close to that of Van Dijk, who understands ideology as "the set of factual and evaluative beliefs – that is the knowledge and the opinions – of a group [...]. In other words, a bit like the axioms of a formal system, ideologies consist of those general and abstract social beliefs and opinions (attitudes) of a group" (1998, 48-9). Consequently, ideology is not only a set of beliefs, but the mode of thinking of a group which considers some opinions and beliefs as fundamental or commonsensical.

If it is assumed that literary systems include a large proportion of translated literature, and this is influenced by ideology (as it is understood here), we can conclude that the intercultural transference of knowledge is a much more complicated question than a simple and mechanical exchange of linguistic information.

3. Nikolai Leskov's rewriting of *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District* (1864)

Leskov's novella *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District* has been traditionally considered as his masterpiece. The book, written in 1864, narrates the story of Katerina Lvovna, who marries the wealthy merchant Zinovy Izmailov. Katerina commits a series of murders as a consequence of her love affair with Sergei, one of Zinovy's workers and a local womanizer. When a dam bursts in one of the mills owned

by her husband, she initiates a covert romance with Sergei, who even occupies Zinovy's place in the marital bed. However, they have to face many difficulties in order to hide their romance. One of these is Katerina's father-in-law, Boris, who catches Sergei leaving his lover's bedroom. The result is a severe punishment which infuriates Katerina and moves her to murder her father-in-law. This killing enables the beginning of a relatively public relationship between Katerina and Sergei, who, it should not be forgotten, belong to different social groups: while Katerina is a *khoziaika* (a mistress), Sergei is a *prikazchik* (a steward). Both lovers fear Zinovy's return, especially Sergei, the more socially disadvantaged of the two, but this circumstance does not hinder in any way their romance. Although they continue their relationship, both characters internalize fear differently: while Katerina starts to have strange dreams about a cat, which she clearly identifies as a bad omen, Sergei reinforces his commitment to the relationship and reveals his desire to marry her. When Zinovy finally returns to the estate, he takes some time to confront his wife, since he has heard rumors about her romance with Sergei. When the merchant faces his wife to reprimand her, Katerina calls her lover and provokes Zinovy. The fight ends with the merchant's death and his body is buried in the walls of the cellar.

The couple lives happily for a time and Katerina discovers that she is pregnant, something which her strange dreams about the cat had anticipated. The announcement is received with happiness, because Katerina is the heir to the house, the fortune and the estate, but suddenly Fyodor, her father-in-law's nephew, appears and prevents her from inheriting all the properties. The relationship changes immediately: Katerina tries to be a good aunt, while Sergei complains constantly about their new situation. Finally, his complaints impel her to murder the nephew when he falls ill; however, a group of townspeople see them while returning from church and, as a consequence, they decide to burst into Katerina's house. The steward confesses to the crime and both of them are exiled to Siberia. Before the journey, Katerina gives birth to the child but rejects the newborn, who will be raised by Fyodor's mother and will become the heir to the house, the estate and the family's fortune.

During the journey to Siberia, Sergei starts to flirt with two other women: Fiona and Sonya. The first is not a serious hindrance to Katerina, as the sexual encounter is interrupted and seems to be

sporadic, due to Fiona's indifference to the whole situation; but Sonya poses a real threat to Katerina. In fact, the former mocks the latter publicly so, while they are crossing the Volga on a ferry, Katerina sets upon Sonya and both of them fall overboard and die.

If we compare Leskov's novella with Shakespeare's play, some similarities and differences can be clearly seen, but the first remarkable clarification to be done appears on the first page, when the narrator himself reminds the reader of the terrible and hideous resemblance between the incident which is going to be described and the original Lady Macbeth:

In our parts such characters sometimes turn up that, however many years ago you met them, you can never recall them without an inner trembling. To the number of such characters belongs the merchant's wife Katerina Lvovna Izmailova, who once played out a terrible drama, after which our gentlefolk, on someone's lucky phrase, started calling her "the Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk." (Leskov 2014, 1)

The paragraph, not lacking a certain irony, reveals that "Lady Macbeth" is in fact a nickname coined by townspeople to refer to Katerina Lvovna and describe her murderous actions. The use of this nickname, considered a "lucky phrase" by its narrator, shows the indirect construction of the character upon the Shakespearean classic. Her representation in *Macbeth*, as she was interpreted in Russia, both as a killer and a merciless person, is the starting-point for the novella and influences the reader negatively. About this first impression, it is relevant to add that this will fluctuate throughout the story.

The first analogy between both works is the role of the instigator. It is well known that, in the original, Lady Macbeth played an essential role in plotting against the "good" king Duncan. This participation has long been discussed and interpreted. For some, the "fiend-like queen," as she is stigmatized at the end of the play by her enemies (1990, V.VII.98-101), has been used to establish a link between her and the Weïrd Sisters. For some researchers, as for example Stephanie Irene Spoto (2010) or Pragati Das (2012), this relationship makes her undergo a highly unnatural process of gender disruption, which enables her to abandon the stereotypical role meant for women during the early modern period. Other exegetes interpret the "unsex me" scene (1990, I.V.39-43) in different terms: for them (and here Cristina Alfar's article "Blood Will Have Blood: Power, Performance, and Lady Macbeth's Gender Trouble" [1998] should be cited),

Shakespeare's female character encourages her husband to attain kingship in order to perform gender according to the politics of power of her period (1998, 190). One way or another, Lady Macbeth is guilty of plotting and, consequently, condemned for her crime. In Leskov's work, by contrast, the instigator is Sergei: firstly, because he was severely punished by Boris, and Katerina felt impelled to murder his father-in-law in order to release him; and secondly, because the steward constantly complains about their unequal social status and expresses his desire to marry her: "I'd like to be your husband before the pre-eternal holy altar: then, even considering myself as always lesser than you, I could still show everybody publicly how I deserve my wife by my honouring her" (2004, 16).

The reversal of the role of the instigator is important from the ideological perspective of the story, as it is the man, and not the woman, who leads directly or indirectly to crime. This circumstance becomes essential for the reader in order to empathize or not with the character at the end of the story:

If I were to speak, your equal, a gentleman or a merchant, never in my life would I part with you, Katerina Lvovna. But as it is, consider for yourself, what sort of man am I next to you? [...] I'm not like those others who find it all the same, so long as they get enjoyment from a woman. I feel what a thing love is and how it sucks at my heart like a black serpent. (2004, 15)

The presence of the verb "suck" should be noted in Sergei's words, which clearly recalls Lady Macbeth's words in Shakespeare's play and proves that the source of the evil instigator has been reversed:

I have given suck and know
How tender 'tis to love the babe that milks me:
I would, while it was smiling in my face
Have plucked my nipple from his boneless gums
And dashed the brains out, had I so sworn
As you have done to this. (1990, I.VII.54-59)

Another remarkable analogy between the original and Leskov's rewriting is the source of violence. While, in *Macbeth*, violence appears every time manhood is questioned – and, consequently, depicted as a socially distinctive feature – in *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District* violence is a consequence of love and Katerina's commitment to the relationship. As the end of the novella shows, Katerina is willing to die for her lover: "No, no, don't speak of it, Seryozha! Never in the

world will it happen that I'm left without you [...] If things start going that way [...] either he or I won't live, but you'll stay with me" (2004, 16).

Apart from that, Lady Macbeth's involvement in the crimes is much more active. While, in Shakespeare's work, she participated in the instigation and the plotting, in Leskov's novella, the protagonist plays an active role in all the murders. In relation to that violence, there is another strong connection between the original and the rewriting: blood. Its presence is remarkable and depicts a different kind of character. While, in the original, Lady Macbeth was seen rubbing her bloodstained hands—a symbol of remorse and guilt which clearly recalls her previous "a little water clears us of this deed" (1993, II.II.67)—in Leskov's work, the reader can see the ironic reflection of these words:

Under his head on the left side was a small spot of blood, which, however, was no longer pouring from the clotted wound stopped up with hair [...] Katerina Lvovna, having rolled up the sleeves of her bed jacket and tucked her skirt up high, was carefully washing off with a soapy sponge the bloodstain left by Zinovy Borisych on the floor of the bedroom [...] and the stain was washed away without a trace. (2014: 23)

It is obvious that the complete disappearance of blood suggests that the murder had a liberating effect on Katerina and, consequently, she did not feel any remorse. The only minimal reference to Katerina's psychology in the story is the description of her dreams. For his work, Leskov chose the form of the Russian folk tale, which lends a particular Russian flavor to the narration. Apart from this formal choice, one of the most characteristic features of his prose is the use of the *skaz*, a particular type of narration in which the figure of the author is dissociated from that of the narrator, so that the ideas expressed in the narration are not the author's words:

[Skaz is] a stylization of the narrative text according to the non-literary forms of colloquial speech, as well as in the presentation of verbal communication and the strengthening of the expressivity of the narrative text, which reveals a non-professional narrator, whose thoughts, values and speech can become more important than the story which he is in the process of narrating. (Schmid, 2010: 122)

The *skaz* was a form of experimental narration cultivated in Russia in the literature of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, especially

during the modernist and avant-garde periods (1890-1930). Although some similar forms can be found in other Western literatures (as, for example, in Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn* or J.D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye*), these did not play so great a role as in this country. First mentioned by the Russian formalists, the *skaz* normally appears where literate and non-literate traditions coexist (Herman, Jahn and Ryan 2005, 535-36). Derived from the verb *skazat* ("to tell"), this narrative technique tries to reproduce oral speech, including articulation, mimicry and sound gestures so that "there is no direct authorial commentary, no analysis, no psychological interpretation" (Leskov 2004, xxiv). Consequently, the use of the *skaz* and the importance given to dialogue in the novella makes it especially suited for later adaptations to the opera and the cinema.

The psychological treatment of the protagonist, a characteristic of the nineteenth-century European novel, is completely absent in Leskov's work, to the extent that the author himself always "insisted that art must serve the true and the good and that art for art's sake did not interest him at all" (Leskov 2004, xxiv). The reader and only the reader must interpret and judge the characters described in the story:

Leskov is a master at this [...] The most extraordinary things, marvelous things, are related with the greatest accuracy, but the psychological connection of the events is not forced on the reader. It is left up to him to interpret things the way he understands them, and thus the narrative achieves an amplitude that information lacks. (Benjamin 2006, 366)

The only psychological insight present in the book has to be inferred from Katerina Lvovna's dreams; however, again, the role of the oneiric seems to be strongly rooted in the Russian folklore tradition in order to recreate the atmosphere of the Russian countryside (Wigzell 1988, 625). The protagonist has two dreams. In the first, which takes place soon after the poisoning of Boris, she dreams of a grey cat lying beside her on the marital bed. When Katerina tries to touch the cat, it fades into the thin air. She fails to interpret it but the cook, Aksinya, unveils the dream and sees it as a prophetic allegory: "A crescent moon means a baby" (Leskov 2014, 12). In the second, the cat (which exhibits the head of the poisoned Boris) claims to be her father-in-law. As Faith Wigzell suggests (1998, 629), the presence of a large cat in a dream means sorrow or disaster in the Leskov's native province of Oryol, where the Mtsensk District is to be found:

It would be inconsistent with the rest of the story if the large grey cat that Katerina Lvovna sees in her dreams were purely the product of Leskov's imagination. In fact, as a symbol, it is taken primarily from Dream Books, where dreaming of cats is a sign of marital breakdown. That the cat is large and male reflects local beliefs from Oryol province, where this portends sorrow or disaster. The doubly unlucky symbol partly explains Katerina's sense of supernatural horror. (Wizgell 1989, 181)

The presence of the oneiric in Leskov's novella links his work to Shakespeare's, as the presence of the supernatural is remarkable in both of them. While in *Macbeth* the presence of the witches, for whom no explanation is given throughout the play, sets the play in motion, fuels Macbeth and Lady Macbeth's ambitions and anticipates the final disaster; in Leskov's novella, the oneiric world does not reflect the main character's psychology, but emphasizes that the narration is rooted in the Russian storytelling and folk tale.

The last of the analogies we could trace connecting the original with the rewriting refers to the protagonist's death. As it is known, both of them die at the end of the story. Lady Macbeth's suicide, although probable, is not clear but a rumor spread by her enemies once Macbeth has been finally defeated on the battlefield and Malcolm crowned as the new king. By contrast, Katerina Lvovna sets upon Sonya while crossing the Volga, they fall overboard and drown. In both cases, death seems to ask for purification, redemption and forgiveness, although the reader's reaction to it is probably different. For Shakespeare, Lady Macbeth's sleep disorder and her confession to the crimes at the end of the play could be understood as a sign of concern for the afterlife and the salvation of her soul. The case of Katerina Lvovna is slightly different, as its perception on the part of the reader varies throughout the story. At the beginning, she is described as bored, rejected and bound to a loveless and childless marriage, so the audience can easily empathize with the character:

Katerina Lvovna lived a boring life in the rich house of her father-in-law during the five years of her marriage to her unaffectionate husband; but, as often happens, no one paid the slightest attention to this boredom of hers. (Leskov 2004, 3)

As a consequence, she throws herself into an extramarital romance with Sergei, which leads to three terrible murders: Boris, Zinovy and Fyodor. The third one, the assassination of the child, is the most abominable of the three, as the only reason is economic. After these

incidents, Katerina is perceived as a cold-blooded and merciless criminal who does not deserve pity or compassion.

However, at the end of the novella, when she is betrayed by Sergei and mocked publicly, the Volga becomes a redemptory journey to death and the perception on the part of the reader changes again. At this moment, Katerina is no longer a criminal, but a victim of an unfair marriage and a hostile environment which have led her toward vengeance. In that light, it is remarkable to highlight the symbolism of water, which appears at two important moments in the novella and reinforces this perception of the protagonist. At the beginning, a dam burst makes Zinovy leave the house to supervise the repairs. Symbolically for Katerina, this means the release from her confinement and freedom, and the return to a life that had been denied after marriage (Aizlewood 2007, 408). And secondly, the Volga, at the end of the story, which embodies the journey to death. Consequently, water encompasses both life and death (Aizlewood 2007, 409), but the perception on the part of the reader of Katerina as a victim of society leaves open the path to forgiveness and rebirth. In fact, according to Caryl Emerson, this idea is going to be reinforced in subsequent rewritings of Leskov's novella, especially in Shostakovich's opera, in which Katerina Lvovna becomes a martyr (1989, 76).

All these analogies connecting Shakespeare's classic with Leskov's rewriting obey some ideological patterns, as it was previously mentioned. The main one is that this work becomes a treatise on social order in nineteenth-century Russia to denounce the situation of confinement and lack of freedom for women, especially in rural environments. The use of the *skaz* narrative or the form of the storytelling should be understood, not as a literary device to create ambiguity, but quite the opposite: the author tries to portray this situation in the most objective way, so that the reader, as Walter Benjamin suggested, interprets the real facts in order to draw a final conclusion. The same ideological reason can be found in the subsequent adaptations proposed here; however, this will show some differences, as we will analyze later. The second motivation has to do with the setting: Leskov seems to suggest that Russian provincial life could produce its genuine types of tragedy (Wigzell 1989, 170), which clearly criticized the over-mythicized motif of peasantry and rural life.

This capacity on the part of Leskov to represent oral speech, traditions, folklore and the heterogeneity of the Russian people has made some authors, as for example D.S. Mirsky, define him as “the most Russian of Russian writers”:

Those who really want to know more about Russia must sooner or later recognize that Russia is not contained in Dostoevsky or Chekhov [...] they will perhaps come nearer to Leskov, who is generally recognized by Russians as the most Russian of Russian writers and the one who had the deepest and widest knowledge of the Russian people as it actually is. (Leskov 2004, xviii)

4. Dimitri Shostakovich’s rewriting of *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District* (1930–1934)

Dimitri Shostakovich adapted *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District* to the opera but, unfortunately for him, Stalin greatly disapproved of it and allowed the publication of an article in *Pravda* entitled “Chaos Instead of Music” condemning his work (Wells 2001, 163). It became a scandal and the blow for the opera’s composer was nearly fatal, because he had to struggle for acceptance for the next decades. After the incident, Dmitri Shostakovich became immediately one the greatest symbols of Censorship and Fear in Stalin’s Soviet Union.

When Leskov’s novella and Shostakovich’s opera are compared some significant differences can be found, the emphasis on sex and violence in the latter being one of the most important. The opera is divided into four acts and nine scenes and was understood as part of a trilogy portraying the situation of confinement and lack of freedom for women in different historical periods; but, after the *Pravda* incident, the project was abandoned. However, in 1962, Dimitri Shostakovich retook his work, included some minor arrangements, softened the use of sex and violence and even changed the name for that of *Katerina Izmailova*. The new version was performed in Moscow in December of the same year for the first time and it was a great success.

In the first version, two main categories of infidelities related to Leskov’s original work can be found: those involving changes in the plot and some characters; and those which slightly modify the attitude toward the protagonists and their fates (Emerson 1989, 62).

Regarding plot and character changes, the presence of a highly eroticized Boris Timofeevich, who harasses Katerina and competes for her sexual favors, should be emphasized. In fact, Sergei becomes a symbol of raw virility, while Boris and Zinovy are examples of sexual impotence (Wells 2001, 166). It should be also underscored that Boris's nephew, Fyodor, disappears. Some scholars such as Caryl Emerson have pointed out that this elimination is clearly ideological: in the first place, Fyodor's murder is only connected with Katerina's economic welfare and the future of the estate; and secondly, the killing of a child does not fit with the redemptive features the opera composer had imagined for his heroine (Emerson 1989, 63).

Another important adjustment has to do with the celebration of a wedding between Sergei and Katerina, which is not mentioned in Leskov's novella. On the one hand, the wedding shows Sergei's greater commitment to their relationship; but, on the other, it means that Katerina Lvovna is going to be abandoned by her husband twice. Neither her first marriage nor her second can release her from the constraints of nineteenth-century Russian society and the patriarchy. In fact, her depiction in *Siberia* is much more pathetic than in Leskov's work, and suicide, more than ever, becomes the only escape.

There is another important difference between the original and Shostakovich's opera regarding the character of Katerina. In Leskov's work, she is a frustrated woman in a childless and loveless marriage; but in the opera, despite her unhappiness, she still tries to fulfill her obligations, or at least, what society understood as the duties for a woman in the nineteenth century: to give birth and provide an heir to her husband. This ideological adjustment makes her appear in front of the audience as a victim of the patriarchal society more than in Leskov's novella.

As it was previously mentioned, the use of violence and sex in Shostakovich's rewriting is extensive, but the presence of humorous and comical situations is also remarkable. In fact, the real drama is sometimes surrounded by some peripheral scenes in which other minor characters laugh and dance on stage:

[Katerina] sings in opposition to her environment. She casts her lyrical confessions against the crudeness of the world, and against the parody embodied by the other characters. The heroine becomes most lyrical and victimized, in fact, precisely at the point where the

most crimes have accumulated [...] the opera enters the mainstream Russian tradition of purification through crime. (Emerson 1989, 70)

For Shostakovich, one of the main problems in Leskov's story was precisely the use of the *skaz* which, according to him, produced ambiguity and lacked authorial responsibility. The story was told from the outside, so that readers could judge for themselves:

The tone of Leskov's narrator is both "folk-like" (that is, oral and colored by folk expressions) and at the same time elevated, distanced; the tale is told from the outside, efficiently but sparingly, without relish. The narrator rarely reproduces an inner thought as direct discourse, assumes no responsibility for the tale, and demonstrates little sympathy for (or even interest in) the heroine. (Emerson 1989, 67)

This use of the *skaz* was a serious problem for Shostakovich and, for that reason, he tried to reach the opposite effect in order to make the audience aware that Katerina Lvovna was not only a victim of the patriarchal society, but also a martyr. The murders are somehow understood as acts of self-defense and they become, not only a way to escape from captivity, but a pathway toward purity: "Shostakovich had a chance to cleanse his Katerina morally, to justify her (as Leskov did not) in her intoxicating physicality and intensely Russian-style unfreedom" (Emerson 2011, 353). Shostakovich himself explained this situation:

If one remembers Leskov's story, Katerina Lvovna Ismailova commits three murders before she is sent into hard labor [...] My problem was to acquit Katerina Lvovna so that the spectator would be left with the impression of her as a sympathetic character. (qtd. in Melick 2000, 32)

This effort to justify her actions creates a prototype of Lady Macbeth different from that planned by William Shakespeare. Shostakovich's character cannot learn or express regret. She is not looking for forgiveness, as she does not consider the moral consequences of her actions: "In the opera, Zinovy and Boris seem somehow morally deserving of their fates, the former for his complete neglect of Katerina, the latter for his cruel tyranny" (Melick 2000, 34).

Leskov's version of the character looked for salvation. Feeling herself innocent, Shostakovich's Lady Macbeth does not feel she needs it. The resultant image is static, while all the previous versions were highly dynamic:

The mixing of pathetic and grotesque in this releases Katerina from all serious moral obligations. She is a tragic victim, but the victim of an environment so musically trivialized that for most of the opera we cannot take its threat seriously. (Emerson 1989, 78)

In conclusion, it can be stated that Shostakovich's adaptation of *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District* offers a much more ideological depiction of the character, who has not only abandoned the stigma of witchcraft, but also become a martyr of her time. Rather than evil, her acts are presented as self-defense so that the protagonist becomes a weapon against the male-dominated society. However, in the process, the ethical debate is sacrificed and the resultant Lady Macbeth becomes a monolithic statue unable to question the morality of her own acts.

5. William Oldroyd's rewriting of Leskov's novella: *Lady Macbeth* (2016)

William Oldroyd's adaptation to the cinema of Leskov's masterpiece is the most recent one and the best example of how literature and the arts conform to new historical periods of time and different environments. In Oldroyd's version, Russia is abandoned and the story is set in nineteenth-century rural England during the mid-Victorian era. Consequently, the main protagonists' names have been transformed or adapted. Katerina becomes Katherine; Zinovy turns into Alexander; Sergei is Sebastian now; and Aksinya, the maid, becomes Anna.

The film does not provide any reasons for the change of location, but it can be assumed that the change obeys an ideological motivation as well: rural England does not seem to provide a better environment for women either and the sense of confinement remains. In fact, Katherine's lack of freedom is underscored and described in depth, and the contrast between light and darkness plays a remarkable role.

In the film, Alexander is no longer an impotent man; he just does not have any interest in her. Katherine, confined and sexually rejected, is a prisoner of the estate and a loveless marriage. Her female duties do remain as well, and her father-in-law, no longer a competitor for Sebastian but an authoritarian man, symbolizes the social pressure to perpetuate the future of the family.

Sex and violence are significantly softened in Oldroyd's adaptation. The incident with Anna, which in Shostakovich's opera was understood as rape, becomes now sexual harassment. The scene serves to humiliate the maid, who appears naked, but the workers are not trying to rape her. In that sense, Oldroyd comes back to Leskov's original version, where it was the bored Katerina who initiated the flirt with Sergei.

Another important difference is the constant presence of the bed. Everything happens around it, which suggests a transition from the opera toward the theater. In fact, the film exhibits some theatrical features which can rarely be found in contemporary film productions, which underscores Oldroyd's previous experience in this genre.

The complete disappearance of the oneiric parts or the supernatural in the film is also a relevant variation with regard to Leskov's novella, and *Lady Macbeth* does not suffer from any sleep disorder. There is no trace whatsoever of remorse in the film either. The murderous acts are understood as self-defense or the direct consequence of a lack of freedom. The reason is that William Oldroyd tried to depict a real story, and not a folk tale with supernatural elements. The ideological reasons for portraying *Lady Macbeth* as a victim of the patriarchal society transform the folk tale into a realistic story, which could perfectly fit in the nineteenth-century English tradition of Realism. There is no ghost, and the only exception is the presence of a cat, a far and distant memory of Leskov's novella. Blood as a symbol also disappears in all its possible interpretations, physical or symbolical. Perhaps, the only enigmatic phenomenon is that, after Boris's murder, Anna loses her capacity to speak, which, instead of the supernatural, implies two ideological problems: the social clash between masters and servants, and race discrimination:

While *Lady Macbeth* speaks to the claustrophobia of mid-Victorian-era life for women, it also takes a bold look at class and race. Both Sebastian and Anna are black [...] Oldroyd explores these explicitly gendered hierarchical themes through the taut relationship between Katherine and Anna, "two sides of feminine oppression" [...] As unbearable as Katherine's situation may seem, Anna's is the true tragedy of the film, forced to witness Katherine's terrifying reign in silence. (Weston 2017, 36)

The end of the film is probably the most interesting part and, perhaps, the most ideologically affected. After Fyodor's murder, renamed in

the film as Teddy, Sebastian confesses to the crimes, but Katherine denies the charges and accuses Sebastian and Anna of committing them. The police arrest them and Katherine is exonerated from any suspicion or charge. At the end of the film, she is left alone with her unborn baby, who will become the future heir to the estate and the fortune. Consequently, there is no journey to Siberia in the film and Oldroyd's rewriting portrays an ironic interpretation of Leskov's work. The transformation from a victim of the patriarchy to a heroine is complete at the end of the film, which offers alternative possibilities to women rather than suicide and purification by murder.

6. Conclusions

It is obvious that ideology shapes the vision of the world and how other cultures are interpreted. Translation and adaptation have become a tool for connecting different societies and peoples, but this transference of knowledge is nothing new. On the contrary, rewriting processes have always been present, as the examples discussed here have proven, making possible that exchange. This cultural connection encourages discussion and debate, bringing closer to the reader or the spectator alternative interpretations of those works of art. At the same time, the study of these rewritings shows that they tend to turn the foreign into something much more recognizable, by adapting universal themes to specific contexts and local concerns.

Leskov's novella provided an alternative interpretation of Shakespeare's play, reversed the role of the instigator and offered a "Russian tragedy" in the countryside. His work proves that literary themes produced in other parts of the world can have an influence on regional conflicts.

Shostakovich's opera discussed the situation of confinement for women in the Soviet Union during the sexual revolution. Although his work did not have the expected results at its premiere, it became later a success, which shows the capacity of adaptation to reopen debates and foster discussion.

Oldroyd's film takes the Russian version of *Lady Macbeth* and brings it back to a British environment to discuss social and racial discrimination. The comparison between Oldroyd's and Shakespeare's protagonist becomes the perfect example of how

adaptation can enrich the target culture by offering multiple interpretations and views on a specific subject matter. It is, therefore, evident that some processes of rewriting such as adaptation and appropriation stimulate the evolution of target cultural systems and foster analysis, discussion and debate. In fact, the character of certain literatures could be measured, not only by the number of national writers and translations, but also by their adaptations.

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The blurring of genus, genre, and gender in Margaret Cavendish's utopias

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ABSTRACT

The Blazing World was the first utopia in English written by a woman, and likely, the first science fiction text in English. Yet it was not Margaret Cavendish's only utopic text. The separatist spaces of her plays, and the virtual communities of her epistolary collections, were earlier utopias that contributed to her construction of *Blazing World*. Cavendish established the characteristics of utopian literature through the transgression of categories and hybridity. I consider her blurring of genus, genre and gender in two of her utopic texts, *Sociable Letters* and *Blazing World*, and her strategic development of the blurring of these categories.

KEYWORDS: Margaret Cavendish; utopias; gender; genre; genus.

El desdibujamiento del género biológico, el literario y el sociocultural en las utopías de Margaret Cavendish*

RESUMEN: *The Blazing World* fue la primera utopía en inglés escrita por una mujer y, probablemente, la primera obra de ciencia ficción en inglés. Sin embargo, no fue la única obra utópica de Margaret Cavendish. Los espacios separatistas de sus obras de teatro y las comunidades virtuales de sus colecciones epistolares fueron utopías anteriores que contribuyeron a la construcción de *Blazing World*. Cavendish estableció las características de la literatura utópica a través de la transgresión de categorías y la hibridación. Considero el desdibujamiento del género, el género biológico y el literario en dos de sus textos utópicos, *Sociable Letters* y *Blazing World*, y el desarrollo estratégico que hace de la difuminación de estas categorías.

A mescla de género biológico, literário e social nas utopias de Margaret Cavendish**

RESUMO: *The Blazing World* foi a primeira utopia em inglês escrita por uma mulher e, provavelmente, o primeiro texto de ficção científica em língua inglesa. Contudo, não foi o único texto utópico de Margaret Cavendish. Os espaços separatistas das suas peças e as comunidades virtuais das suas coleções epistolares foram utopias iniciais que contribuíram para a sua construção de *The Blazing World*. Cavendish estabeleceu as características da literatura utópica através da transgressão de categorias e de hibridez. Irei considerar esta mescla de género biológico, literário e social em dois dos seus textos utópicos, *Sociable Letters* e *The Blazing World*, e o seu desenvolvimento estratégico da mescla destas categorias.

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PALABRAS CLAVE: Margaret Cavendish; utopías; género; género literario; género biológico.
PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Margaret Cavendish; utopias; gênero biológico; gênero literário; gênero biológico.

In July 2015, *New Statesman* published a conversation between Neil Gaiman and Kazuo Ishiguro titled “Let’s Talk about Genre” that begins with their exasperation at the critical complaints garnered by Ishiguro’s novel, *The Buried Giant* (2015). His novel was successful with readers, but critics and authors accused Ishiguro of disparaging fantasy by not publishing the novel as such despite its ogres and magical creatures. Gaiman and Ishiguro go on to discuss the how and why of genre, with Ishiguro proposing it is defined by shared elements that “titillate” or “satisfy” a reader and insisting that the “essence” of a genre must be distinguished from what is “merely characteristic of it.” Gaiman, a renowned fantasy writer, counters with his theory that perhaps “subject matter doesn’t determine genre” at all, blaming it on the needs of bookstores and publishers instead. Mostly anecdotal and jovial, their conversation confronts the very real stigma fantasy writers face, which Gaiman insists did not exist in the days of J.R.R. Tolkien. They conclude with the hopeful observation that the essentialist rules of genre are crumbling, and the barriers between them “breaking down.” After all, both authors are renowned for writing in different genres through innovative textual forms. Yet Ishiguro’s description of his reaction to the critics is most insightful. It was, he wrote, as if he “stepped into some larger discussion that had been going on for some time,” and that led him to wonder, “What is genre in the first place? Who invented it?” and most intriguingly “Why am I perceived to have crossed a kind of boundary?” (2015, n.p.).

Indeed, this discussion *has* been going on for some time. Ishiguro asks the same question Margaret Cavendish asked 350 years earlier when she addressed similar doubts concerning the same genre, then generally known as “fancy.” The first line of Margaret Cavendish’s *Blazing World* (1666, 1668) is, after all, a question of wonder. Not because she introduces a wondrous new world as expected of a text titled *A Description of a New World called the Blazing World*, but because she immediately anticipates the wonder her mixture of forms would inspire. In her first letter to the reader, she writes “if you wonder, that I join a work of fancy to my serious philosophical contemplations;

think not that it is out of disparagement to philosophy" (Cavendish 2004, 123). She was aware of the skepticism that might arise from her crossing boundaries yet was certain of the value of mixing forms insisting, in a preface to *Sociable Letters*, that: "Variety of Forms did Please the Readers best" (Cavendish 1997, 9). The resulting texts included fantasy, science fiction, and most vividly utopia, which Cavendish wrote in several forms across her career. These include from the separatist female spaces of her plays, such as *The Convent of Pleasure* (1668) and the earlier *The Female Academy* (1662), to the virtual spaces of her epistolary dialogues in *CCXI Sociable Letters* (1664) and *Philosophical Letters* (1664), and in her most dramatic science fiction utopia, *The Blazing World*. Provocative in its categorization and designation, *Blazing World* is the earliest utopian text in English written by a woman, and perhaps the earliest example of science fiction in English by any author.¹

As her most recognizable utopia, *Blazing World* is a surprising combination of elements and forms that celebrate hybridity.² It is a work of hybrid genre, describing a world peopled with hybrid beings, ruled by an Empress and Duchess who embody hybrid characters from imagination and reality, communicate, and move, via hybrid means of spirit and body, and who ultimately unite to create infinite hybrid worlds. Moreover, this persistent hybridity is not restricted to

¹ Cavendish was one of only two women to write either science fiction or utopia before Mary Shelley's science fiction *Frankenstein* (1818). Sarah Scott's 1762 *A Description of Millennium Hall and Country Adjacent* is the other early utopia. The early modern utopia was most often an idealized structured society, rather than the imagined perfect places of divinity, legend, or mythology, but utopias existed long before Thomas More named the form. Cavendish's *Blazing World* is the closest to the early modern form, but she also wrote utopias the followed women such as Christine de Pizan whose *Le Livre de la cité des dames* (1405) is representative of a utopian same-sex space, a popular form for women.

² The concept of hybridity is loaded with "hybrid" literary, cultural, historical and linguistic capital. Each understanding contributes to reading Cavendish within her seventeenth-century context, but here I consider her hybridity as an anticipation of Bakhtin's heteroglossia, and particularly the hybrid utterance as Cavendish is often the only speaker in a text that employs several voices. Similarly, her hybridity participates in the challenge to authority of permitted language through the Carnavalesque, which she generates through the self-defined chaos of her forms, style, and content. These frame how Cavendish mixed styles, modes, and genre and how that hybridity reflects her hybrid characters. Such hybridity requires and facilitates a disruption of categories because it questions power and authority in all its conceptualizations.

Blazing World; Cavendish herself attests to the hybridity of *all* her texts in *Sociable Letters*:

Yet you will find my Works like Infinite Nature, that hath neither Beginning nor End, and as Confused as the Chaos, wherein is neither Method nor Order, but all Mix'd together without Separation, like Evening Light and Darkness, so in my Sixteen Books is Sense and No Sense, Knowledge and Ignorance Mingled together so that you will not know what to make of it. (1997, 140)

We might well call it “Cavendishian Hybridity” given its ubiquity in her texts and its prevalence in the critical literature.³ It was the primary means by which she demonstrated the potential of a fluid epistemology; one in which learning and teaching was more effective through a variety, or mixture, of narrative forms and writing styles. To that end, she chose elements purposefully from across literary forms if she felt one might better convey, demonstrate, or represent an idea, often explaining her reasoning repeatedly in her many prefaces. In *Blazing World*, her most thoroughly hybrid text, Cavendish’s only prefatory letter offers a detailed reasoning behind her mixture of forms (Cavendish 1997, 123–24).

In this article, I trace Cavendish’s hybridity as it emerges through three closely related categories. More broadly through *genre*, most provocatively through *gender*, and most explicitly through *genus*—which I show she establishes in *Sociable Letters* only to resolve in *Blazing World*. In the process, it becomes evident that her hybridity was less a characteristic born of an untrained approach to philosophy and writing, and more a decisive critical strategy. However, my goal here is more specific. Cavendish fashioned her hybridity through a deliberate blurring of categories that materializes through a metaphoric connection to performance, spectacle, and (most deliberately) in the hybrid beings that such fluid spaces could better contain. Her hybrid forms allowed for a rejection of categorization that I trace through *genre*, *gender* and *genus* because these were swiftly developing scientific, social, and cultural relevance and authority in the late seventeenth century—a process that led to their

³ In their introduction to *Authorial Conquests*, a collection containing several articles exploring Cavendish’s hybrid forms, Line Cottegnies and Nancy Weitz note that “Cavendish’s works, more than any others’, it seems, require a hybrid perspective, and it bears evidence to their complexity and modernity that they still challenge their readers’ responses and reading practices” (2003, 8).

progressively “categorical” definition. Two of the terms share the third as a Latin root, *genus*, which has varied etymological descendants emerging from *gene-* meaning “to give birth or beget.” Genus as easily meant *origin* and *race* as it did *kind* or *sort*, and thus represents a common semantic origin to the social and cultural violence of rigid categorization.⁴ It split across culture and history, giving way to both *genre* and *gender* in different languages, losing its more general form in English to become a specifically taxonomical term. In contrast, despite the diverse areas in which the word *hybrid* is applied, it has only ever meant specifically “offspring” or generally the “mixture of different elements.” Cavendish was writing against the moment of emerging scientific, linguistic and literary authority by demonstrating that if genre and genus, as they increasingly related to species, blurred in the hybrid beings found in her hybrid texts, so too could the categorical certainty of gender.

In *Sociable Letters*, Cavendish discusses topics generally considered unconventional for a women’s epistolary collection, like politics and philosophy, and when she discusses conventional topics, like marriage or society, it is her *approach* that proves unconventional. Less cautionary or instructive than essentially informative, some of her letters support marriage, and others warn against the abuses of marriage, yet always demonstrate that worthwhile and tenable alternatives exist and are not only feasible, but in certain situations, preferable. Yet content is not the only provocative quality of this text. Cavendish described her writing as “confused as chaos” often, but not as self-criticism (1997, 140). This “chaos” allowed for the fluid hybridity through which she realized utopia in her texts by challenging genre, and the categorization and assumptions of genus and gender. Here, she reveals the strategy of her chaos, prefacing this collection with a commendatory poem titled “Upon Her Excellency

⁴ The OED lists several related contemporary usages for all three words. As early as 1551, *genus* appears in connection to categorization of kinds and sorts, and in 1651, Hobbes used it regarding *species* suggesting the hierarchical categorization that would come to define the work of zoology and biology in the coming century. *Genre*, denoting literary kind, sort, or style would not appear until 1770, but *genre* was more directly associated with *gender*, though it referred to the quality of being male or female. Some languages today, like Swedish, retain *genus* as a word for *gender*. Moreover, several closely related terms also stem from this common root, including *genesis*, connecting doubly to *Blazing World*’s location of Eden and the Duchess as a creator of new worlds, and *genius* indicating a spirit or deity, who appear as teaching spirits in the *Blazing World*.

the Authoress" writing that "This Lady *only to her self* she Writes | And all her Letters to her self Indites; For in her self so many Creatures be, | Like many Commonwealths, yet all Agree" (1997, 10). If taken literally, Cavendish is suggesting that the collection contains only Cavendish talking to herself, but her detailed instructions to the reader in the first letter reveals her plan. In this brief letter, she establishes the requirements for her utopia. This is not a solipsistic text, but one that allows for a "you" that readers can embody to participate in the ideal commonwealth:

Wherefore I am never better pleased, than when I am reading your Letters, and when I am writing Letters to you; for my mind and thoughts are all that while in your Company: the truth is, my mind and thoughts live alwayes with you, Although my person is at distance from you; insomuch, as, if Souls die not as Bodies do, my Soul will attend you when my Body lies in the grave; and when we are both dead, we may hope to have a Conversation of Souls, where yours and mine will be doubly united, first in Life, and then in Death. (1997, 13)

Utopia is folded into these few lines: by noting the pleasure of reading and writing letters she evokes the means of access, with "distance" its spatiality, with "in your company" a physical presence within that space, with "conversation" a verbal exchange, with "souls" intimacy, and with "doubly united" in death and life evokes eternity while simultaneously evoking marriage on a physical and spiritual level as *both* her physical mind and spiritual thoughts are present. To populate this textual space, each letter is written to "Madam" from Cavendish (a very few are addressed to family and friends) and are *in media res*, including references to earlier conversations, rebuttals to ongoing debates, responses to questions Madam posed, and topics that Madam asks Cavendish to discuss; but we never see the letters to Cavendish from Madam. By generating a correspondence that suggests an ongoing exchange but leaving one side present yet absent, Cavendish allows for, and insists on, the reader adopting "Madam" as an avatar, embodying the other in an ongoing virtual conversation and, moreover, establishing an educational ethos to this utopic space that allows informative discussion and debate between women.

A literary utopia requires a vision, or plan for achieving, an ideal state, and a space (real or imagined) in which to realize it. Cavendish approached her texts as inhabitable spaces through which one could realize the ideal which speaks to her idealization of the potentiality of

the *topos* of texts, and the presence of hybrid characters that can “live always with you” in reality and fiction at once. The “doubly united” souls that appear in *Sociable Letters* will reappear in *Blazing World*, after all. Two elements were fundamental to realizing any utopia for Cavendish: choice and education.⁵ *Sociable Letters* allows for a virtual ideal community, for want of a real space of conversation with women, offering unity in commonwealth and learning if one chooses to participate. A critical facet of its ideality was learning through discussion and debate realized through the hybrid forms that allowed for a more fluid epistemology. Cavendish demonstrated this through a circular progression within, and across her letters, rather than presenting an argument and then resolving it as conventional rhetoric required. Accordingly, a common thread connects each new, or reintroduced, subject, and we follow the thread from letter to letter, and back again, as we might explore rooms within rooms. Irrespective of the subject, this common thread was often a deliberation of gender, or rather, what she termed the “nature” of men and women and when these blurred. Via hybrid texts (of mixed genre and form) peopled by hybrid beings (fictional and real characters, alter egos, or animal-people), Cavendish forces an association with hybrid gender to demonstrate the potential that hybridity allowed, and the resultant fluidity only seems chaotic. Several letters refer directly to effeminate men and masculine women who she defined first by juxtaposing them, and in later letters, by connecting them with theatrical performers.

Cavendish neither wholly retains nor reverses gender conventions; instead, she approaches gender from the inevitable impasse that prohibits men and women from reaching parity when this “nature” is narrowly defined. What is appropriate for each remains ambiguous through balanced contrast as she reflects on gender through socially

⁵ Cavendish’s discusses education, and the freedom of choice it offered, in almost all her books. Often mentioning it immediately in prefatory texts lamenting the educational inequalities between men and women and blaming her inadequate education for hindering the acknowledgement of her work. Her utopias consistently offer access to education and, thereby, the freedom to choose, for instance, in her two separatist utopias *The Female Academy* and *The Convent of Pleasure* women are offered education, choosing first to undertake it, and thereafter how to use it, and both her epistolary collections, *Sociable Letters* and *Philosophical Letters*, offer ideal spaces of conversation by and for women where they learn from each other choosing topics to discuss, while Part I in *Blazing World*’s follows the Empress learning from her academic societies and making leadership choices after learning from experience.

determined roles. As such, she elevates virtuous women and valorous men, and levels unvirtuous women with effeminate men. Gender assumptions emerge in contrast to individual qualities and act as a recognizable anchor to her more ambiguous examples. Letter 9, for instance, discusses women who use persuasion to gain “advancement in Title, Fortune and Power” (1997, 18–19). Cavendish offers this as evidence for women sharing a desire for ambition equal to men, and hindering such ambition, she warns, may manifest itself as a physical illness that will then influence society. She returns to persuasion in letter 12 by comparing two women who use it to different effects. The quality of their desire differs, but both women use “designs,” “insinuating flattery” and “perswasion” to make their husbands “Pimps to Cuckold themselves” because, she continues, “most husbands are either deluded with Politick wives, or forced to obey, or humour their Turbulent and Peevish wives, or deceived by their Insinuating and Flattering wives, to betray themselves” (1997, 20–21). The “state-ladies” of the previous letter are now “politic-wives,” and both are persuasive and influential, but neither are named masculine in their roles. One woman enjoys company and acts perfectly in that company, only to act badly in her husband’s presence, while the other hates company, but pretends to enjoy it. Persuasion becomes pretense, or rather, a performance of powerful roles chosen as need demands: politic, turbulent, peevish, insinuating, or flattering. Should we chide the wife for her manipulation, or celebrate her performance? Or chide the husband for neither recognizing the manipulation nor celebrating her social skills? Cavendish will only answer by saying she will not divulge “too much of the nature of our sex” (1997, 21).

A similar strategy emerges in letter 26 in which she discusses a woman who beats her husband. Cavendish insists that the woman’s anger and violence are inappropriate but describes her strength and size as positive physical qualities. She further emphasizes the woman’s strategy and forethought at choosing to beat her husband publicly so that he will endure greater shame. Whether the husband is weak or noble in his patience is left to the reader, but Cavendish does list the husband’s recourses: He may tame her (like a Shrew), bind her (like a criminal), or simply leave her (which would, incidentally, grant her freedom). Cavendish expresses distaste for the woman acting badly but concludes with a clear reason for the woman’s actions: women express “unruly passions and appetites” because they are not “instructed and taught more industriously”

(1997, 36–37). Thus, her true purpose emerges. What can you expect when a woman's mind becomes "wild and barbarous" for lack of a civilizing education? Consequently, men are left with only one effective recourse: leave them to be educated so they can govern their own appetites with "ease and regularity" (1997, 36–37). A letter that began with a woman acting badly ends as a call for men to take responsibility for "binding" women to rigid categories so as to "tame" them. It should not escape notice that Cavendish is using language associated with animals in a letter discussing marital strife. She elaborates on the woman-as-animal connection only to reorient it.⁶ She is a character of hybrid gender in that she possesses a physical masculinity burdened by the weakness of an education deemed "feminine" which reveals and condemns the social structures "binding" women to categories, and by association, animals.

If we turn to the letters that confront men's natures, there is a marked difference. In letter 33, Cavendish wonders why "Lord C.R." likes to delight in "Effeminate Pastimes, as Dancing, Fidling, Visiting, Junketing, Attiring, and the like, because he is an Effeminate Man, fitter to Dance with a Lady than to Fight with an Enemy" (1997, 45). Cavendish resisted by using provocative language that did not immediately seem so. Here, Cavendish dismantles gender categorization by not calling these pastimes "feminine," but rather "effeminate." The prefixed form defines the *qualities* as effeminizing, not essentially feminine; the action, not the being. Critically, the "skills" she assigns to "effeminate men" are the same skills central to women's inadequate education from letter 26, and Cavendish disparagingly defines them as indicative of "effeminate man." In contrast, throughout *Letters* she uses "feminine" only twice, and each as a complaint of the categorization through contrast. Once in letter 21 condemning the irresponsibility of "Masculine Gamers" because gambling was "never so much practiced by our Feminine Sex," (1997,

⁶ In her *Philosophical and Physical Opinions* (1655a), Cavendish offers her most thorough reflections on nature, including several discussions on animals. Though the text includes almost no reference to women, or gender differences, in her prefatory letter to "To the Two Universities" addressed to the "Most Famously learned" she cites the "despisements of the masculine sex to the effeminate" as reason for why women "quit all industry towards profitable knowledge" leading them "to become like worms that only live in the dull earth of ignorance" (n.p.). Women are thereby not equated with animals, but described as becoming *like* animals, suggesting the mutability of their bodies and minds, rather than monstrosity.

31) and in letter 16 in direct relation to women in power: "yet men will not believe this, and 'tis better for us, for by that we govern as it were by an insensible power, so as men perceived not how they are Led, Guided, and Rul'd by the Feminine Sex" (1997, 26). Women are simultaneously lauded and condemned because they rule in unacknowledged practice, but in *Blazing World*, they will rule in acknowledged, celebrated, fact. Only the world needs rewriting to achieve this ideal.

Through these effeminate men and masculine women, the feminine emerges as powerful, while *acts* that feminize emerge as diminishing. Through subtle shifts in references and terms evoking hybridity of natures and forms Cavendish facilitates the embodiment of hybrid gender constructions. She compares the qualities of good and bad men noting that she "does not wonder" why one is "Debauch'd" and the other "Generous," because one's actions show one's quality. The worst she describes as "Idle, Wicked, and Base," and as "The Slime and Dung of Mankind," but his "sins" only echo the skills women must master in their meagre education. Effeminate men are not monstrous because of her blurring of gender, they are monsters when they perform acts society deems categorically feminine. Critically, Cavendish closes by assigning men responsibility for the world no longer being utopic, or "a heaven," and then "rests" by "leaving them and Beasts." Her last word leaves them in the company of, and associated with, not animals but the more connotative "beasts" evoking not beings who reflect nature, but the unnatural, biblical form (1997, 46). This poignant ending is particularly shrewd in how it connects to Cavendish's hybridity in *Blazing World*. Often in Cavendish's texts, *animals* emerge as natural, *creatures* are lauded as the results of "creation" or the creative process, while *beasts* are reflective of social violence and strife.

She returns only briefly to the effeminate man in letter 53 in which a woman refuses the suit of an effeminate man whom she hates, as "nature abhors vacuity" (1997, 67). Cavendish leaves that woman "without a Husband's kisses or Blows," for neither affection nor cruelty will serve if it is better to have neither; remaining single emerges as a favorable option. Her discussion of effeminate men, considering her earlier insistence that women influence government, suggests, as Susannah Quinsee writes, that "implicit in this call for women to enter the public realm, is the idea that if men can assume

feminine characteristics women can appropriate masculine ones" (2000, 98). However, this appropriation emerges more specifically as a performance. Cavendish declares later "there are far more Effeminate Men than Masculine Women, that is, there are few Women so Wise as Men should be, and many men as Foolish as Women can be" (1997, 20). This is Cavendish's only use of "masculine women" in *Letters*. Her phrasing implies that masculine women are less common than effeminate men, and thus, less unnatural, but it also demonstrates Quinsee's argument that the continued exploration of the one implies the possibility of the other. Her deliberate use of modals further supports this because she is at once declaring that men "should" be wise while women "can" be foolish: the first denotes a failure, and the second a choice, leaving women empowered and men willful, but more importantly, choice and education are realized in this epistolary utopia. Kate Lilley characterizes Cavendish's use of "the gendered possibilities of chiasmus (mirror inversion)" as her means of rhetorical displacement (2003, 20). Cavendish does indeed displace categorization by discrediting effeminate men for their failure to be "natural" in their activities, but also by celebrating women when they surpass their roles, or the physical or intellectual limitations dictated by gender categories. Moreover, Cavendish is also foregrounding her discussion of the female performers in the Carnival Letter by connecting gender to pretense, or rather, performance.

It is not hard to imagine that Cavendish sensed the association of performance to gender that Judith Butler would come to identify much as she sensed the trouble with genre and fantasy that Gaiman and Ishiguro would discuss. If we privilege individual skill and talent instead of gender categories by focusing on one's "acts" (or actions) as they capture "performance," then gender categories will give way to the more fluid accuracy of natural skills. The doer indeed is fictional as only the deed suggests gender. A proto-Butlerian Cavendish is a hopeful concept, and I am not defending that notion. Yet Cavendish connected performance to gender directly through behavior, and later theatre, by weaving the same thread of gender and the hybrid being into her detailed analysis of the dramatist she emulated most. Cavendish was the first woman to publish a literary analysis of Shakespeare's works,⁷ arguing in letter 123 that he was both

⁷ While Ben Jonson, John Milton, Samuel Pepys, and John Dryden all reference, and comment on, Shakespeare or his works earlier or contemporaneously, Cavendish is the

transformative (“he had been transformed into every one of those persons he hath Described”) and metamorphic (“he had metamorphosed from Man to a Woman”). She also defends him against a “person” who claimed his plays are “made up onely with Clowns, Fools, Watchmen, and the like” (1997, 130) offering a direct response to contemporary criticism and then focusing on his skill at *becoming* a variety of characters. Shakespeare could “express naturally” all sorts of people and their traits to “deliver to posterity” an infinite variety of beings. Importantly, it is Shakespeare himself, not an actor, that Cavendish insists is “metamorphosed” from the Man that he is to the Woman he can become. He is a hybrid being, transformed or metamorphosed, but certainly not an effeminate man. Moreover, Cavendish is responding not to Shakespeare in performance, but to reading his plays. Hers is not a response to a transvestite actor’s performance, but to Shakespeare himself becoming a female character *in the text*, a very different dialogue emerging from her approach to the utopic potential of hybrid beings inhabiting texts. In this, Cavendish emerges as visionary on another point. There is a long tradition of privileging Shakespeare’s characterization over plot, particularly with the Victorians. Coleridge famously described him as “protean” and “myriad-minded” in that he enters sympathetically into all types of human characters. Similarly, Keats called him a “chameleon poet” who “continually filled some other Body” (Sawyer 2003, 20). Shakespeare’s characterization was elevated as a natural skill or, for the Victorians, a preternatural potential for hybridity. Cavendish identified, and indeed naturalized, Shakespeare’s hybridity almost 150 years before the Victorians whose promotion of Shakespeare contributed to his iconic status.

Between the hybrid gender in this text of hybrid genre, where does genus enter? For the early modern, mutability, metamorphosis, hybridity and monstrosity all carried associations with specific

first to discuss Shakespeare critically, rather than in a merely celebratory or condemnatory manner, especially with regard to his characterization. “Cavendish was the first to give a comprehensive assessment of Shakespeare’s work [even though] her attributions of native artistic genius, self-generated creativity, singularity and originality to Shakespeare were not, in themselves, novel. [...] Cavendish’s innovation is instead that she depicts Shakespeare’s gentle wit as one transcending gender, thereby clearing a place for women to lay claim to Shakespeare as a model for their own authorship” (Romack 2000, 26–27).

categories, yet often revolved around the figure of the hermaphrodite. In *The English Parnassus: or, A Helpe to English Poesie* (1657), Joshua Poole defined the hermaphrodite as “ambiguous, promiscuous, mixed, sex-confused, mongrell, neuter, effeminate,” terms that employ suggestions of monstrosity and sexuality more than mutability or metamorphosis (111). Caroline Walker Bynum, on the other hand, argues that in Middle English and Early Modern texts, metamorphosis (which she terms it “replacement-change”) and hybridity (or “visible multiplicity, where something has the parts of more than one creature”) were the two formulations for concepts of “change” (2001, 20–32). While Dana Oswald, following Bynum, argues that the two categories are not “independent of one another, but that hybridity also defines metamorphosis. That is, when a creature transforms from one thing into another, the transformed creature becomes hybrid [...] the metamorphic monster is always in some way hybrid” (2010, 24). Cavendish deliberates upon these forms in letter 195, often called the Carnival Letter, which offers a rare moment of her years in Antwerp as very few letters in either her epistolary collections are autobiographical. In the letter, Cavendish describes a travelling carnival that is at once fluid in its itinerancy, fleeting in its transience, and, in language and spectacle, undeniably foreign. She connects her discussion of beings of hybrid gender to the carnival performers, and from there to her critical discussion of Shakespeare in the same collection. This one letter materializes into an invaluable venue for the three categories.

The language of transformation and metamorphosis may well have suggested monstrosity as well as hybridity, but Cavendish distinguishes between the terms when she connects this thread to gender through her experience with three female performers. The letter begins with a detailed account of the first performer, a woman “who was like a Shagg-dog, not in Shape, but Hair, as Grown all over her Body” (1997, 205). Though she is strange, she is a woman first, *and then* a Shagg-Dog, and so hybrid in gender before genus (see figure 1).⁸ Cavendish sustains ambivalence in her description by reacting

⁸ Several sources identify Cavendish’s “Shagg-Dogg” as Barbara Ursler/Urselin/Urselerin, a well-known woman with hypertrichosis who was exhibited as an oddity while playing the harpsichord. There is little certain about her, but she was likely German or Dutch, was born in 1629, married and reportedly had a child. Samuel Pepys records this experience in his diaries on 21 December 1668. It is perhaps not coincidental



Fig.1. R. Gaywood, *Barbara van Beck, a hirsute woman*. Etching, 1656 Wellcome Library, University College London, no. 1926i from <http://catalogue.wellcomelibrary.org/> (Accessed 21 April 2018).

physically against the memory that remained “not for its pleasantness, but for its strangeness.” She both “kicks it away” and insists she is too “dull and lazy by *nature*” to bother. The image disturbs her, but the wonder so surpasses the disturbance that she worries she may fail to forget it and moves quickly to the more comprehensible scene of the “Mountebank’s Stage”⁹ where two female actors skillfully play men’s parts. She describes their clothing, form, and movement connecting her experience to the English theatrical tradition through which male actors performed women’s roles, returning to the naturalness of her

embodiment of masculinity:

she was of a Neat, Slender Shape; but being in her Dublet and Breeches, and Sword hanging by her side, one would have believed she never had word a Petticoat, and had been more used to Handle a Sword than a Distaff. (1997, 206)

One of the performers plays a man so naturally that Cavendish describes her as if “she had been of that sex” and is so enthralled she hires a private room to extend the presence. While she reacts physically to the memory of the Shagg-dog woman (by kicking it

that Pepys discussed Cavendish and Urselin in much the same way as Cavendish discusses her letter. For Pepys, both women were spectacles that suggested masculinity: Urselin in her body (“with a beard as much as any man” 21 Dec 1668) and Cavendish in her dress (“her dress so antick” 30 May 1667).

⁹ Though a “mountebank” has come to mean *charlatan* or *swindler*, a mountebank sold medicines in public places, like carnivals, adding another category of performance to this carnival.

away) and demands a physical presence to firm up the memory of the two transvestite women (by requesting the private performance), both experiences evoke hybridity in each of the categories – genre (in that it is a letter discussing a performance that is itself both theatre and mountebank presentation), genus (in the spectacle of the dog woman that is monstrous as animal-human, and in her body hair woman-man), and gender in the ambiguity of all three women. Cavendish requires that we focus on the quality of the women’s “natural” acts of masculinity, one in her physical hairiness, the others in their performance; they become men as fluidly as Shakespeare became a woman.

For Sophie Tomlinson, this moment suggests an important “act of suppression” for Cavendish though it is an ambiguous one as she is simultaneously “enthralled and disturbed by the actress’s ambidextrous shifting between sexes.” The female performers, Tomlinson writes, might be “disturbing as well as pleasurable” in that their “performance seals the argument which Cavendish’s texts constantly broach as to whether gender difference is natural or constructed. [...] The female actor embodies a potent fantasy – not just of freedom from natural femininity – but of liveness, aptitude, art and aspiration” (1992, 136). Cavendish appreciated their deeds – their “aptitude” – because if these women can become men yet remain women, then surely skill (gained by education) is more definitive than gender. She may have struggled with their ambiguity, but she includes *both* images while condemning neither for she never directly calls either monstrous. Readers have the choice and can decide if the dog-woman is wondrous rather than monstrous, and from there decide if the transvestites are skilled actors rather than unvirtuous women.

The construction of hybridity and monstrosity in the late seventeenth century were closely connected to the related redefinition of animals, with species and genus coming to the forefront of authoritative categorization in scientific taxonomy. A need to justify and defend anatomical dissection, and even vivisection, which were growing in practice (particularly on the continent) required a more definitive othering of animals. In great part, the work of René Descartes influenced the categorization of animals as distinct from humans. In brief, under a Cartesian philosophy, man could reason while animals could sense and perceive only as automatic mechanical

acts in reaction to pain or stimuli.¹⁰ While Cartesian views were not universally accepted, they endured, and were used to justify the increasingly brutal use of animals in science and industry for centuries to come. Vitalism, one of the leading contemporary approaches within natural philosophy, did not believe vivisection could offer any knowledge of value because it was an intervention that fundamentally distorted the subject being studied or observed, and thus only lead to faulty truth.¹¹ Lisa Walters has outlined Cavendish's consideration and questioning of vitalism writing that:

Cavendish's view of self-moving matter resembles vitalism, which also perceived matter as self-moving. Yet for vitalists matter had an active spirit that permeated and suffused passive inert matter. While mechanism emphasized a more secular worldview where God played a more distant role, both held parallel views upon the state of matter. (Walters 2014, 70–71)

Cavendish departed from vitalism in assigning “much more status and importance to corporeality. In the *Blazing World*, for example, spirits are unable to perceive the material world without the body” (Walters 2014, 70–71). She adamantly opposed forms of experimentation she believed not only failed to reveal, but distorted, the material truth. For one, she had little trust in optics,¹² but she also repeatedly discussed her inability to abide the suffering of animals writing in her autobiography that “I am tender natured for it troubles my Conscience to kill a fly, and the groans of a dying Beast strike my soul” (Cavendish 1886, 313–14). Philosophically and ethically,

¹⁰ Descartes discusses his theory on animals in *Discourse de la Méthode* in 1637, arguing that while the bodies of both man and animal were machines, only man can reason and use speech (1985, 131–41).

¹¹ Vitalism was a philosophical approach proposing the fundamental difference between living and non-living entities, and that both were governed by different principles. Definitions of the “vital” difference could be anything from the *pneuma* of the ancients to the *soul* of Christianity, but the seventeenth century redefined it as an organizing mechanist force that distinguished, with Cartesian dualism of mind and body, this vitalist force as reason, or mind. Animals were unreasoning to exemplify the categorical distinctions. For a thorough reading of the intersections of animal experimentation and vitalism, see Wolfe (2013).

¹² Cavendish's husband owned several telescopes. Along with his brother, Charles Cavendish who studied them and developed their construction, Newcastle invested heavily in the swiftly growing trend and by 1648 owned two telescopes, including one that was over sixteen feet long (Whitaker 2002, 98–99). Cavendish was skeptical about the use of optics and she negotiates her doubts in several texts, including *Blazing World*.

Cavendish championed the notion that animals reasoned and, at some level, were more reasonable because they demonstrated their “nature” more reliably and consistently. In *The World’s Olio* (1655b), an early philosophical text, Cavendish argues that animals show judgement and wit in their choices, enjoy company, show joy in playing and delighting in fancy (such as when birds sing), and clearly demonstrate love and grief. She also rejected the premise that animals have no memory (which was closely associated with reasoning) because, for example, they always know how to return home (Cavendish 1655b, 142–43). Significantly, she was not elevating animals above man. Animals were capable of similar evils, for she notes how they war against, and steal food from, their kind, however if both animals and man could be cruel, so could animals and man both reason:

Again, they say there is no War nor Tyranny, in other Creatures or Animals, but man; Yet certain there are many other Animals more Tyrannical & Creull even to their own kind than man, and will take as heavy a Revenge one upon another, and love Superiority and Power. (Cavendish 1655b, 143)

Against the contemporary epistemological and philosophical movements, Cavendish was proposing that animals were not only reasonable, but had access to knowledge that man did not, so birds would know more of air, and fish of the waters, than man could (Cavendish 1655b, 143). It is from this philosophical premise, and her establishment of the potential of hybridity in her utopias, where Cavendish realizes her most ambitiously hybrid utopia.

In *Blazing World* Cavendish completes the utopic ideals she discusses in *Sociable Letters* and dramatizes in her utopic plays. *Blazing World* follows the abduction of a young maiden whose captor’s ship is caught in a tempest that forces it towards the North Pole. Unprepared for the cold, all the men freeze to death, but she endures by “the light of her beauty” and “the heat of her youth” (Cavendish 2004, 126). Her light and warmth prove sufficient for her to survive the extreme cold. She is then saved by a procession of anthropomorphic beings – Bear-men, Fox-men, and Geese-men – who carry her to safety, but not before she recognizes their exceptional actions:

[She was] extreemly stricken with fear, and could entertain no other Thoughts, but that every moment her life was to be a sacrifice to their

cruelty; but those Bear-like Creatures, how terrible soever they appear'd to her sight, yet were they so far from exercising any cruelty upon her, that rather they shewed her all civility and kindness imaginable; for she being not able to go upon the Ice, by reason of its slipperiness, they took her up in their rough arms, and carried her into their City, where instead of Houses, they had Caves under ground; and as soon as they enter'd the City, both Males and Females, young and old, flockt together to see this Lady, holding up their Paws in admiration; at last having brought her into a certain large and spacious Cave, which they intended for her reception, they left her to the custody of the Females, who entertained her with all kindness and respect. (1992, 127)

Cavendish at once describes their physical “animal” characteristics and natures, in that they wave with “paws” and live in “caves,” but shifts the focus, repeatedly, to their civility or kindness, only to carry it further by noting their intelligence. For instance, they understand her inability to walk on ice, and the danger of her remaining in their harsh environment: “they were resolved to carry her into another Island of a warmer temper; in which were men like Foxes, onely walking in an upright shape, who received their neighbours the Bear-men with great civility and Courtship” (1992, 127). In the interaction between animals of different genus (both predators) they still demonstrate civility in their commonwealth, for they do not war with each other. Their hybridity is not only in their names (bear-men), or in how their bodies move like men (in walking upright or waving paws), but like the hybrid beings of *Sociable Letters*, their actions allow for the realization of the ideality of this utopia. The animals bring her to their Emperor who then immediately makes her his Empress, grants her absolute rule, and then disappears from the narrative. She has free reign over this new world and its peoples that include “wonderful kinds of Creatures” along with the animal beings, people of infinite colors, and fantastical and mythological creatures (1992, 127).

Part I follows her establishment of philosophical and experimental societies each led by the beings whose animal qualities and knowledge best suit them for the subject (for example, bird-men are astronomers, while magpie-men are orators). Their natural skills give them the means to demonstrate their intelligence and reason, though at times it proves faulty. Their nature grants them unique knowledge the animal-alone, or man-alone, could not convey. She instructs them to present their findings and they debate each topic in turn, but

because of the skills their hybridity allows, knowledge is revealed, and the Empress learns. Later, she establishes a religion based on the material and chemical qualities of the new world, debates the nature and meaning of life with “immaterial” genderless beings that are neither angels nor ghosts, and finally, forms a relationship with “The Duchess” (another alter ego for Cavendish) who she communicates with across worlds in spirit form and recruits as a scribe. They join forces, become intimate friends that unite spiritually, and finally join in creating and then traveling through infinite worlds. *Blazing World* is a highly detailed text whose science fiction qualities are revealed through the wealth of debate about several emerging sciences from the celestial to the chemical. These are discussed, experimented, applied, and observed; some experiments fail, others succeed, but all contribute to etching the *Blazing World* as a space of absolute alterity, and Cavendish approaches alterity as a choice—an alternate—that (like the choice offered in *Letters*) is not only feasible, but in some situations preferable—and in utopia, required. This is an alternate world, accessed through an alternate pole that exists in an alternate universe, in which we observe nature through scientific means that do not hinder the nature of the observed. *Blazing World* offers a critique of both contemporary society and experimental philosophy through hybrid forms. These are characteristics of genre we have come to associate with science fiction, with utopia emerging as an alternate space within the many textual worlds. Curiously, the many worlds interpretation of the universe, formally proposed by Erwin Schrödinger in 1952 (who himself named it a “lunatic” idea at the time) had certainly been discussed earlier, but always in terms that kept it squarely in the realm of fantasy (Deutsch 2010, 310). Long before, Cavendish’s most anthologized poem, “Of Many Worlds in This World” (1653) imagined the possibility of worlds within worlds, which she metaphorized as nesting boxes, that might be incomprehensible to “our dull senses.” Discussions of atomic science led her to imagine the potential of alternate worlds nearly 300 years before Schrödinger through poetry:

If atoms four, a world can make, then see
 What several worlds might in an ear-ring be
 For millions of those atoms may be in
 The head of one, small little, single pin.
 And if thus small, then ladies may well wear
 A world of worlds, as pendants in each ear. (Cavendish 2018, 128–29)

On these many scientific and philosophical levels, Cavendish understood the hybridity required to convey such options, or alternatives, and the genre followed suit.

Peopled with beings of hybrid genus with its animal beings, of hybrid gender with its immaterial spirits, the *Blazing World* also includes the familiar monstrous hybrid beasts of mythology (satyrs and mer-people). Yet central to the expression of this hybridity is the Empress, a powerful regent and academic leader because she *becomes* a skillful religious leader, civil administrator, and military general. She does not appear in the text in this perfection of roles; she is not performing but developing into these roles. Likewise, the Duchess, Cavendish's other character-self, wields textual authority as her scribe specifically because of her writing skills. Yet these are not in her nature alone, she becomes a scribe through the development of her writing. She first attempts to write textual worlds similar to those of several famous men, like Plato, Pythagoras, and Epicurus (amongst others) and in that process, she learns that she must write her own worlds. The two women are hybrid in that they *become* authorities through the same transformation and metamorphosis that resulted in hybrid beings. Boundaries of gender and sex are made immaterial, rather than blurred, between them as the women spend most of the narrative communing in spirit form and learning from genderless spirits and animal hybrids. The social categories restricting the Empress are also progressively dismantled because in her entrance into the utopia, her physical and personal qualities render her warmer than the men who kidnap her, and thereby she survives the journey across the poles that pull her into the "other" world. This was a reversal of the Galenic one-sex model that proposed women were the unfortunate result of insufficient heat, and unable to ascend (or progress) spiritually or intellectually because of leaky, overly material bodies. Only in the *Blazing World* the Empress' kidnappers die in the extreme cold and leak noxious gases from the material remnants of their bodies, and are described, in detail, as beasts. She leaves behind the men of her world whose bodies seem human, but whose actions prove bestial, and crosses into a world populated by men whose bodies are bestial, but whose actions prove honorable. If we recall that Cavendish "left" the men whose actions performed femininity in letter 26 with "Beasts," then between *Sociable Letters* and *Blazing World*, men-as-beasts *become* beasts-as-men. In this becoming other, hybrid, alter, utopia is achieved.

Cavendish used hybridization in *Blazing World* much like Donna Haraway appropriated the idea of the hybrid in her creation of a cyborg myth from the blurred boundaries between human, animal, and machine. The cyborg realizes both materiality and fluidity, or opacity, in a hybrid being. One can sense the pleasure that Haraway notes exists in the confusion of boundaries in Cavendish's texts given the materiality of her textual presence, and the spatiality of her texts. For instance, her Empress-self experiences ecstatic pleasure in the presence of the genderless "immaterial" spirits that she communes with who anticipate the post-gender construction of Haraway's cyborg.¹³ Cavendish blurred essentialist boundaries through hybridity, and the result for her, as with Haraway, was a blurring of the boundaries. Cavendish's hybrids manipulated the material *and* ether, like Haraway's cyborg, and both Haraway and Cavendish were confronting the monstrosity of such hybridity in moments of epistemological shifts redefining the animal and human. Both women sought the clarity of whatever was beyond limiting categories, and for Haraway, that would lead to imagining beyond the human towards the posthuman. Though the approaches are distinct, and firmly rooted in their respective contemporalities, both are offering a reconsideration of ideal origins. Haraway's *Manifesto* defines the cyborg as a "creature in the post-gender world" that can be both a creature of lived social reality *and* a creature of fiction. Yet in all its forms the cyborg has no origin story (Haraway 1991, 150). Cavendish was, through the language of her contemporary science, negotiating the same forms through hybrid beings that could be, at once, fictional and real, and thus could exist in the spiritual genderless existence, which required a reconsideration of origins—a trait of utopian literature.

Hybridity, in all the ways Cavendish applies it emerges as transformative, metamorphic and critical to achieving the ideal, unlike the monstrous that was so often disparagingly connected to

¹³ At one point in *Blazing World*, the Empress is deep in discussion with the genderless "immaterial spirits" who teach her about the nature of the universe when they depart unexpectedly at which point she falls into a trance "wherein she lay for some while, at last being come to her self again, she grew very studious" (Cavendish 2004, 174). The OED defines "ecstasy" as synonymous with "trance" for much of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Importantly, this ecstatic moment directly precedes her discussion with the spirits about the nature of their bodies as immaterial and colorless, and therefore, without the "parts" that identify sex.

hybridity. Cavendish mentions monstrosity only three times in a book full of hybrid animal-beings, and each is in direct association with how nature becomes monstrous through failed scientific observation: “the confusion of those Atoms produced such strange and monstrous figures as did more to affright than delight her” (1992, 187) and earlier upon seeing a Louse warped through a microscope “after the Empress had seen the shapes of these monstrous Creatures, she desir’d to know whether their microscopes could hinder their biting” (1992, 144). Cavendish’s text also focuses on the more philosophical deliberation of the privilege of “natural” skills over social gender because the *Blazing World* contains the origin—*genus* in the Latin form, *genesis* in the Christian mythology—of humanity. The immaterial spirits confirm to the Empress that the capital city, named Paradise, is not just like Eden, it *is* Eden. A woman rules the prelapsarian utopic space, and the “real” world is now condemned as eternally fallen. The “corrupt” men of monstrous actions that she left behind now become the beasts left out of “heaven” from *Letters*. Moreover, they cannot enter because they are to blame for its loss. To further establish this connection, the Empress and immaterial spirits discuss the Biblical Fall in detail, but not from a position of regret at Eden’s loss, nor of condemnation of Eve for weakness or disobedience, or even shame at her temptation of Adam (the proof usually cited to support the subjugation of women). Instead, the Empress asks “Whether they were none of those Spirits that frightened Adam out of Paradise, at least caused him not to return thither” (Cavendish 2004, 170–71). On this point, we gain no further insight because their answer confirms nothing but that the Empress left the world Adam fled and was now in Paradise again. Yet the new origin story of the Biblical Fall that emerges is not the fault of Eve’s disobedience, or of women’s weakness to temptation. Instead, the question over Adam’s fear of the spiritual lingers, always unanswered, as the most likely reason. Or rather, the exact state of being by which the Empress and Duchess transcend gender and genus in this text, and Cavendish, through her alter egos, transcends genre. Through this shrewd reversal, God’s requirements that Adam rule over women and name all the beasts are reclaimed by a new hybrid Eve in a new hybrid world. She is hybrid in her presence between material and spiritual, between the genus text she rewrites, and the new genres she imagines with her Duchess-scribe. Lisa Sarasohn’s argument further contributes to this point in that by endowing beasts with humanity, Cavendish is also

recognizing that “beasts and women share the same fate” because “they are both enslaved by masculine tyranny.” Cavendish emphasizes, as Sarasohn writes the “rationality that characterizes stones, beasts, and women” and how these became “both animate and free, and the existence of a female natural philosopher possible” (2003, 53–54).

Such possibility, also imagined as an alternative nativity—an alternate genesis—is essential to *Blazing World* because in its performance of spectacular hybridity, it imagines a space not only where a female natural philosopher is possible, but one in which she has a choice. In that choice to study, she can also learn from her mistakes in practicing what she learns. Perhaps it is not surprising that in the progression between these two texts, Cavendish realizes what Gaiman and Ishiguro name as the “mutation,” rather than the “metamorphosis,” of stories. Through a Cavendishian blurring of genre and genus they grant animal characteristics to stories as they wonder at the emergence of “hybrid stories” now awakening from a “mysterious kind of hibernation” that leaves readers to discover which story-beings are “long-lived creatures,” or “deeply sly and untrustworthy,” or “uplifting,” or even simply “bad.” The critical question they ask is “how would we ever find out” about these “hybrid story-beings if we subject them to such the rigidity” (2015, n.p.). We answer this question every time we read Margaret Cavendish’s hybrid stories, or when we adopt her hybrid characters and inhabit her hybrid texts to experience the choice and learning by which we might achieve utopia.

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The limner's art in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*

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ABSTRACT

Macbeth is a graphic work whose visual rhetoric mirrors the outside atmosphere of the Scottish heath and the inner psyche of the titular characters. This article explores the early modern visual praxis in *Macbeth* in connection with the art of limning to show that, against a dark background symbolizing evil, the playwright uses golden and gaudy hues as a mirror reflecting Macbeth's perturbed mind. Eventually, the colour spots in the play are "diapered over" by the white fog of the Scottish heath. Shakespeare thus resorts to specific colour codes in order to create a visual symphony where "foul" becomes "fair."

KEYWORDS: *Macbeth*; limning; miniature; Nicholas Hilliard; Isaac Oliver.

El arte de los iluminadores en *Macbeth* de Shakespeare*

RESUMEN: *Macbeth* es una obra gráfica cuya retórica visual refleja la atmósfera externa del páramo escocés y la psique interior de los personajes principales. Este artículo explora la praxis visual moderna en *Macbeth* en relación con el arte de la iluminación para demostrar que, contra un trasfondo que simboliza el mal, el dramaturgo utiliza tonos dorados y chillones como un espejo que refleja la mente perturbada de Macbeth. Al final, la niebla blanca del páramo escocés cubre como un velo los puntos de color en la obra. Así, Shakespeare recurre a códigos de color específicos para crear una sinfonía visual en la que lo "desagradable" se convierte en "hermoso."

PALABRAS CLAVE: Shakespeare; *Macbeth*; iluminación; miniatura; Nicholas Hilliard; Isaac Oliver.

O arte dos iluminadores em *Macbeth* de Shakespeare**

RESUMO: *Macbeth* é uma obra gráfica cuja retórica visual reflete a atmosfera exterior da charneca escocesa e a psique interior das personagens. Este artigo explora a práxis visual proto-moderna em *Macbeth* em relação à arte da iluminura, de forma a mostrar que, sobre um fundo escuro simbólico do mal, o dramaturgo usa tons dourados e excessivos para espelhar a mente perturbada de Macbeth. Por fim, as manchas de cor na peça são "ornamentadas" com o nevoeiro branco da charneca escocesa. Shakespeare recorre assim a códigos de cor específicos para criar uma sinfonia visual em que o "feio" se torna "belo".

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Shakespeare; *Macbeth*; iluminura; miniatura; Nicholas Hilliard; Isaac Oliver.

* Translation into Spanish by Tamara Pérez-Fernández.

** Translation into Portuguese by Miguel Ramalhete.



For all its Protestant mistrust of images, Elizabethan and Jacobean England was fascinated by the visual arts and, as Horst Bredekamp puts it, paradoxically “reinforce[d] what it reject[ed]” (2015, 169). While continental treatises like Giovanni Paolo Lomazzo’s *A tracte containing the artes of curious paintinge caruinge buildinge*, translated by Richard Haydock in 1598, “introduced the English-reading public to the theory of linear perspective” (Elam 2017, 9), the first original texts in English on the arts of drawing and painting began to circulate in print. A man of his time, Shakespeare could hardly ignore these new discourses on pictures, as his frequent and expert use of iconographic references and technical terms testifies (*ibid.*, 10). It is with this context in mind that I intend to reassess the style and aesthetics of *Macbeth* in connection with early modern pictorial techniques.

“Why do I yield to that suggestion | Whose horrid *image* doth unfix my hair [?]” (1.3.136–37, my emphasis),¹ Macbeth wonders after he has heard the predictions of the witches. Ghastly, albeit sophisticated, visual images abound in Shakespeare’s Scottish tragedy. Overwhelmed by the evil forces that they have unleashed and that are now crushing them, the Macbeths are ironically reduced to miniatures in the last act of the play. As the plot thickens, they are indeed gradually downsized and seem hopelessly dwarfed in the end: “Now does he feel his title | Hang loose about him, like a giant’s robe | Upon a dwarfish thief” (5.2.20–22), Angus says of the titular character.

How then should we understand the idea of “miniature” in the early modern period? The word was first used by Edward Norgate in connection with “limning” in a treatise written around 1627, *Miniatura or the art of limning*. Yet, limning originally referred to a technique rather than to a small size painting and it designated “the cleanly, discreet art of watercolour” (Coombs 2009, 78), an art that took up “neither undue space nor time” (*ibid.*). Sixteenth- and seventeenth-century painters could rely on a number of treatises to improve their practice. In *The arte of limning*, an anonymous treatise published in 1573² (and, it should be noted, primarily concerned with heraldic texts and ornamental motifs rather than with portrait limning), limners are advised to first “draw [their] worke[s] with a pencell of blacke lead,”

¹ All references to the play refer to Clark and Mason 2015. For other Shakespeare plays, I rely on Taylor, Jowett, Bourus and Egan 2016.

² It went through six editions between 1573 and 1605.

then to “ingrosse” their “gould and silver.” Once that stage is completed, limners can “lay [their] colours” and “purple them about the sides with blacke inke.” Finally, they may “diaper them over with whyte coloure” before “vernish[ing] them over wyth good old glayre” (fol. xjv).

In early modern England, “picturing” could take on different shapes and apply to several arts. Alexander Marr rightfully reminds us that a “picture” could designate a “miniature” as well as a “theatrical event,” and that Inigo Jones saw the masque as “nothing else but pictures with light and motion” (Marr 2016, 375). Similarly, I would like to suggest that *Macbeth* can be defined as a picture with light, colors and motion. In that perspective, the tragedy’s visual rhetoric may be linked to Shakespeare’s palette and the playwright’s method of composition compared to that of the limner.³

Step 1: “Draw thy worke with a pencell of black lead”

Critics who focus on the predominance of obscurity in the play have interpreted the tragedy as an intimist one or as a night piece⁴ which points to the dark inwardness of the Macbeth couple. This reading has led to successful stage productions by such eminent directors as Trevor Nunn (at The Other Place in 1976) and Gregory Doran (at the Swan in 1999), who both re-interpreted *Macbeth* as a chamber play.

In point of fact, as he drew/wrote his own piece, Shakespeare seems to have started by delineating the darkest lines of his plot. Anyone commenting on *Macbeth* unmistakably notes the somber character of his tragic universe and its subtle interplay of light and darkness.⁵ If for early modern painters, black “denot[ed] sadness, griefe” (Peacham 1612, 147), Shakespeare associates it with evil much more than with sadness in his play (“The devil damn thee black,” 5.3.11). “Stars, hide your fires, | Let not light see my black and deep desires” (1.4.50–51), Macbeth exclaims in the opening act. This not only foregrounds the importance of darkness in connection with

³ Critics have already detected borrowings from the limner’s techniques in several of his plays, including *Twelfth Night* and *Hamlet* (Sokol 2018, 239, notes 28 and 29).

⁴ A “night piece” is first and foremost a “painting or picture representing a scene or landscape at night” (*OED*, 1.a).

⁵ On “the effects of darkness” in the play, see A.C. Bradley 2004, 51.

Macbeth's devilish intentions, but also functions as a metatheatrical reference to the Globe where the underside of the roof, which covered part of the stage, was studded with painted stars. Macbeth calls for a starless night in order to hatch his plot and bring about the prophecies of the weird sisters. Doing so, he threatens to darken the theatrical space in which his actions are staged.

This suggests a deliberate use of white and dark hues by the playwright, with particular emphasis on light in darkness. In a number of scenes, daylight is rapidly fading⁶ while, in others, night has already fallen. If/when performed inside, the nocturnal scenes would have looked perfectly suited to the general atmosphere of the playing space. Closed performing areas were lit by candlelight and "candles could be snuffed or removed" (Leggatt 2006, 89).⁷ On the contrary, when performed in full daylight at the Globe, the play's darkness must have been "theatrically conjured rather than literally provided," as John Mullan explains (2016, n.p.). This is corroborated by Macbeth's "Out, out brief candle" speech in which light is openly associated with stage business (5.5.22-24).

As Emma Smith observes, "the play's plot, structural and ethical, is [...] encapsulated in the struggle between night and day" (2013, 144).⁸ The succession, and sometimes confusion, of day and night further suggests the intense internal struggle fought by the protagonists. Significantly, the tragedy begins with a storm ("thunder and lightning"), probably materialized onstage by fireworks generating a fetid smoke that made the audience immediately realize that the Scottish climate as depicted by Shakespeare was a deeply disturbed one.⁹ The three witches' eerie refrain ("Fair is foul, and foul

⁶ See 1.1.5; 1.6 where the use of "torches" suggests that night is falling; or 3.3.5.

⁷ The tragedy, composed around 1606, was obviously not written for the Blackfriars, since the King's Men only acquired it in 1608. However, some critics think that the play was performed at the court of James I.

⁸ In connection with this, it may be worth noting that Shakespeare's contemporaries, including the encyclopedist Stephen Batman, saw black and white as the two main dyes of the color spectrum (1582, fols. 388r and 389r).

⁹ In Raphael Holinshed's *Chronicles* (1577), Shakespeare's main source, the weather becomes dark and cloudy *after* Duncan's murder (1978, 483-84). In Shakespeare's tragedy, the terrible weather plaguing the "unruly" night described by Lennox (2.3.54) is concomitant with the murder, and the "strange screams of death" (2.3.56, my emphasis) he mentions suggest supernatural occurrences not unlike those depicted in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* just before the assassination of the title character.

is fair," 1.1.9)¹⁰ points to an upside down situation which is unwittingly echoed by Macbeth later on as he meets Banquo: "So foul and fair a day I have not seen" (1.3.38). Night and day thus constantly seem to fight against each other, lending cosmic as well as biblical undertones to the tragedy. Armelle Sabatier reminds us that "the conventional opposition between darkness and light stems from the opening lines of [...] Genesis when the world was created thanks to the coming of light over darkness" (2017, 71). Seen in this perspective, *Macbeth* presents us with a reversed Genesis, one in which darkness dims light and foreshadows the tragic events to come.

As a result, light is used as a means of underscoring the pictorial effects of the scenes and gives Shakespeare's playtext a peculiar dramatic intensity. Some limners, at the time, sought to create a contrast between their handling of light and the dark background of their pictures. If Nicholas Hilliard (1547–1619) strongly disapproved of vague, impure lines,¹¹ his pupil Isaac Oliver (1565–1617) did use the *chiaroscuro* technique (an effect borrowed from large scale oil paintings) in some of his works, thereby paving the way for a shift in taste at the turn of the century.¹² In his Jacobean tragedy, Shakespeare appears to be yet another precursor of the *chiaroscuro*, albeit not exactly the one used by Caravaggio.¹³ Later exponents of the Utrecht school such as Gerrit van Honthorst (1590–1656) or Hendrick Terbrugghen (ca. 1588–1629) created night scenes in which artificial sources of light, such as torches or candles, illuminate part of the painting to make it stand out against the dark background. Act 5, scene 5 of *Macbeth*, which includes the "Out, out brief candle" speech and where tapers signal a night-time setting as much as the titular character's extinguishing life, contains similar effects.

¹⁰ The "fair is foul" phrase can be found in an earlier poem by Giles Fletcher entitled "Galatea" (1593, 58). If Shakespeare knew Fletcher's poem, he dramatized and re-contextualized the poetic formula of his predecessor.

¹¹ Rejecting the use of shadows and *chiaroscuro*, he "celebrate[d] the truth of the line as opposed to *sfumato*" (Costa de Beauregard 2015, par. 10).

¹² See for instance Isaac Oliver, "Unknown Woman, known as Frances Howard," ca. 1596–1600. Watercolor on vellum (dia. 130 mm).

¹³ On Shakespeare's "Caravaggesque effect," see for instance Geraldo U. de Sousa's analysis in connection with *Othello* (2016, 96).

Step 2: “Ingrosse [thy gould and silver] with a sharpe knife”

Most early modern treatises devoted to painting techniques point to the importance of gold and silver in the limning practice of the time. Henry Peacham’s *The art of drawing with the pen, and limming in water colours* contains a chapter entitled “Of guilding or the ordering of gold and silver in water colors” (1606, 49). A painter and a jeweler obsessed with glittering light, Hilliard used gold and silver in his paintings, thus following in Holbein’s footsteps (Jones and Stallybrass 2003, 41).¹⁴ Gold was for him a means of highlighting certain parts of the picture as well as of turning it into a jewel-like work.¹⁵ He used it as a metal rather than as a powdered pigment (Fumerton 1991, 78) and he painted gold and silver lines around the edges of his miniatures so as to give them luster, a technique that, in all likelihood, did not go unnoticed to the playwright.¹⁶

Shakespeare himself relies on golden shades to highlight some of his scenes and to aestheticize the violence of his characters. Early on in the play, Lady Macbeth designates the much-coveted crown as a “golden round” (1.5.28) which will unleash the ambitious desires of the Macbeths and cause their downfall; then, during “the show of eight kings” (4.1.110 s.d.), Banquo’s crown “sears [Macbeth’s] eyeballs” (4.1.112). In the long opening scene of the play, Macbeth acknowledges his reluctance to kill Duncan in significant terms:

He hath honoured me of late, and I have bought
Golden opinions from all sorts of people,
Which would be *worn* now in their newest gloss. (1.7.32–34, my
emphasis)

Macbeth values these golden opinions and would be loath to see them lose their luster. It is thus particularly ironical that, in her preparation of the murder, his wife should take up the same clothing imagery and proceed to actualize (or un-metaphor) it.¹⁷ Indeed, as she prepares to smear the servants with blood to have them accused in the place of

¹⁴ On gold and silver as essential to the limner’s art, see Dulac 2015, especially pars. 6 and 7.

¹⁵ One may note, in connection with this, that *Macbeth* includes a cluster of images related to jewelry (2.1.15; 3.4.113; 5.9.22).

¹⁶ See Costa de Beauregard 1991, 185, note 57; Kinney 1983, 85; and, more broadly, on Hilliard’s technique, Dulac 2015.

¹⁷ On the “unmetaphoring” technique, see Colie 1974, 145.

her husband, she announces that she will “gild” their faces during their sleep (2.2.57) with a quibble on “guild” and “guilt”:

[...] If he do bleed,
I'll gild the face of the grooms withal,
For it must seem their guilt. (2.2.56–58)

This passage will later on be echoed by the eerie description of “Duncan’s golden blood” (2.3.113); yet here, gold already seems transmuted into blood, a transformation facilitated by the fact that “old gold was red” (Clark and Mason 2015, note to 2.2.57–58, 182). Indeed, red components “were often ingredients in recipes to produce gold pigment” (Smith 2016, 40) at the time and the “correspondence between blood, red, and gold in the worldview of early modern metalworkers” in the sixteenth century is now well documented (*ibid.*).

We should also remember that limning was narrowly correlated with the technique of blazoning arms (Coombs 2009, 80) where “gules” (the heraldic term for red) was often paired with gold, an association familiar to Elizabethan playgoers.¹⁸ Shakespeare himself took a strong interest in heraldic devices since he probably “devised the coat of arms for the Shakespeare family approved by the Garter King of Arms on 20 October 1596” (Elam 2017, 37).¹⁹ In *Macbeth*, red and gold are paired to become part and parcel of a form of tragic heraldry. Subsequently, the grooms are depicted by Lennox as “badged with blood” (2.3.103, my emphasis) and the image resurfaces when Macbeth hurriedly designates them as Duncan’s murderers: “there, the murderers, | Steeped in the *colours of their trade*, their daggers | Unmannerly breeched with gore” (2.3.115–17, my emphasis). If Holinshed insisted on the bloody sight of the murdered king, he did not allude to heraldic emblems as, in his *Chronicles*, Donwald (the counterpart of Shakespeare’s Macbeth) simply “break[s] into the chamber” and finds “cakes of bloud on the bed, and on the floore

¹⁸ See Goggin 2012, 30. Goggin explains that “in English coats of arms, dating from the fifteenth century though today, red is the most common color used after gold and silver,” occurring in more than half of the arms.

¹⁹ It is worth noting here that Richard Burbage, the lead actor in Shakespeare’s company, was also known for his skill in painting crests. In 1614, Shakespeare collaborated with him “on the design of an *impresa* [...] for the sixth Earl of Rutland, Francis Manners” (Salkeld 2018, 119). They were each paid forty-four shillings in gold by Thomas Screvin, Manners’s steward.

about the sides of it" (1978, 483). In Shakespeare's tragedy, the same gruesome scene is rendered in highly visual terms by Lennox and Macbeth who coin a heraldry of blood strongly reminiscent of *Hamlet* and its description of Pyrrhus's "complexion smeared | With heraldry more dismal" (2.2.360–61).²⁰ In both plays, heraldry lionizes and ritualizes pointless destruction and allows the speakers to describe offstage violence through powerful images.²¹

As already noted, this aestheticization of violence through golden hues resurfaces in the play when, in Macbeth's description, Duncan's "silver skin" and "golden blood" (2.3.113) add a preternatural touch to the scene while suggesting the hallucinations of the murderer:

[...] Here lay Duncan,
His silver skin laced with his golden blood,
And his gashed stabs looked like a breach in nature
For ruin's wasteful entrance [...]. (2.3.112–15)²²

The "liquid gold" (Peacham 1606, 51) generally used by limners is here distilled in Duncan's veins.²³ Farah Karim-Cooper and Lucy Munro suggest that "the candlelight shining in the blood would have created a glistening effect" which could have perfectly rendered Duncan's "golden blood" (2006, 23). Others insist on the narrow links between gold and red to account for this scene: Stephen Deng, for instance, downplays the oddity of the passage and explains that it "partially relies on an early modern perception of gold as 'red' in color" (2011, 233). Yet, there is more to it than that as Macbeth's hypotyposis points both to an extraordinary reality and to a distorted, abnormal perception of this reality. "The killing of Duncan is an erotic event," Ewan Fernie writes. "Silver skin laced with golden blood is seductive, luxurious, perversely iconic" (2015, 188). Given Macbeth's fascination and his lavish, highly poetic description of the king's corpse, there may be a touch of morbid homoeroticism here. An eerie mix of preciousness and refinement paradoxically emanates from the

²⁰ See also *Hamlet* 2.2.362: "Now is he total gules," 2.2.362.

²¹ As the play is about to close, Macduff enters Macbeth's castle and turns the murderer into a circus freak: "We'll have thee, as our rare monsters are, | Painted upon a pole [...]" (5.8.25–26). Once again, the passage is reminiscent of the player's speech in *Hamlet* as the latter compares the vengeful Pyrrhus to "a painted tyrant" (2.2.384).

²² On this passage, see also Lecercle 1987, 83.

²³ Henry Peacham explains how "To make liquid gold or silver" (1606, 51).

depiction of this ghastly scene which can also be interpreted in alchemical terms: death seems to have brought about the transmutation of Duncan's vital fluid into gold and turned the king into a religious icon. If we accept this reading, the blood of the murdered king looks golden because, as W.A. Murray puts it, "it is already in the hand of God. It is part of the perfection of heaven" (1966, 42).

Step 3: "Then lay thy colours"

If perfection belongs to heaven in *Macbeth*, corruption and disease plague Scotland. "Infected minds | To their deaf pillows will discharge their secrets" (5.1.72–73) the doctor says of the sleepwalking Lady Macbeth. Interestingly, the word "infection" derives from the Latin root *inficere*, meaning "to stain" or "to taint," an etymology which Shakespeare must have been aware of.²⁴ The whole play is structured around this sense of infection: the colors of the tragedy contaminate the spiritual world of the protagonists as Macbeth, in particular, is infected by bloody and gaudy hues.

In his paintings, Hilliard used bright and markedly distinct hues which he associated with gems. In *The Arte of Limning*, he explains that, "besides whittes and blacks, there are but five other principall cullors" (Kinney 1983, 32). These pure, or unmixed, pigments are murrey,²⁵ red, blue, green, and yellow, and they happen to correspond to five precious stones, namely amethyst, ruby, sapphire, emerald, and topaz. While I'm not arguing here for a direct or specific influence of Hilliard on the playwright, the general impact of contemporary visual praxis on Shakespeare's playtext should not be overlooked. Admittedly, the playwright makes a limited use of blue, green and yellow shades,²⁶ but murrey and red are given pride of place.

²⁴ See Sonnet 111, where the poet alludes to "the dyer's hand" (l. 7) in close proximity to the word "infection" (l. 10).

²⁵ "Murrey," *OED*, A.1: "Chiefly *Heraldry*. A colour resembling that of the mulberry; a reddish purple or blood red. Also: cloth of this colour."

²⁶ Blue may have been part and parcel of the play's staging, for John Taylor, in *The pennyles pilgrimage* (1618), writes that the Scots were then known to wear "blue flat caps on their heads" (quoted in Braunmuller 2001, 260). Green is associated with the sea (2.2.64) metaphorically reddened by the bloody murders perpetrated by the two Macbeths. Finally, yellow hues are merely suggested when a desperate Macbeth

The word “blood” and its cognates crop up no less than 41 times in the play, stage directions included. Recent studies on the subject have shown that, on the early modern stage, blood had a very realistic aspect, all the more so as animal blood (from calves, pigs or sheep) was used in performance.²⁷ In this regard, the mention of stinking blood in the last act of the play (5.1.50) may well be understood as a metadramatic comment on this particular stage practice, even though it can also be read as a reference to bad-smelling dyes.²⁸ Be that as it may, in such a context, the highly stylized and refined blood imagery analyzed above suggests that, in *Macbeth*, Shakespeare engages in something transcending this crudely realistic dimension by inviting his audience to imagine blood in stylistic and mystical terms.

The playwright thus relies on a camaieu of reds (i.e. on several tints of this single color) which, in terms of bodily humors, underscore the sanguine temperaments of the protagonists, presented as hot and active, heat being then thought to stimulate action. According to Peacham’s *The gentlemen exercise*, red “signifieth a warlike disposition, a haughtie courage, dreadlesse of dangers” (1612, 151). Although this “warlike” disposition is emphasized at the beginning of the play (1.2), the martial values associated with red are gradually perverted by the Macbeths and, as the plot unfolds, Shakespeare’s red strokes are less used to highlight the characters’ “warlike dispositions” than as a means to depict ritualized scenes of horror in a play where the obscene (in the etymological sense of “off-scene”) gradually comes to the fore and becomes the norm. Duncan’s murder is not shown while Banquo’s murder is performed onstage (3.11.16 s.d.). Paradoxically, the evocative power of the description of the “sleepy grooms” (2.2.51) smeared with blood makes the unseen murder a more horrifying scene than Banquo’s visible death at the hands of his executioners, and it is Duncan’s murder which gives rise to Macbeth’s lyrical descriptions:

Will all great Neptune’s ocean wash this blood
Clean from my hand? No, this my hand will rather

reaches the end of his life and in the “yellow leaf” soliloquy (5.3.19-29) evokes his barren life thanks to a seasonal imagery.

²⁷ See from instance Karim-Cooper and Nelson 2006, 3.

²⁸ On Nicholas Hilliard’s undesirable “ill smelling coullers” for example, see Kinney 1983, 79. These colors, such as “orpament, verdigres, verditer, pinck, lapgrene, litmousy,” were often toxic.

The multitudinous seas incarnadine,
Making the green, one red. (2.2.61–64)

The hallucinatory quality of the speech, fraught with abstract, polysyllabic words on the one hand, and concrete, monosyllabic terms on the other, aptly conveys Macbeth's deranged mind and suggests that his own evil is about to contaminate the natural world.²⁹ According to Murray, the image of the reddened sea "rests upon a common alchemical concept, that of tincture." The critic points out that, "after the murder, [...] the audience would instantly take the point that Duncan's blood has become an alchemical tincture, [a] [...] strong colouring agent made of perfected matter, which has the power of transmuting substances" (1966, 41). While this interpretation certainly needs to be qualified, especially if we regard Duncan's blood more as an agent of pollution than of perfection, it deserves to be quoted because it underscores the special treatment of blood which, as a major visual object in *Macbeth*, can be said to perform "picture acts" and "interact[s] with and even substitute[s] the human subject" (Elam 2017, 31). Sometimes fluid, sometimes coagulated, sometimes sticky, blood saturates the play and belongs to "this poetic compulsion to repetition" analyzed by David L. Kranz (2003, 351): the same colors are bound to appear from one scene to another and, as a result, stage blood catches the spectator's eye at the risk of making us voyeuristic, if not complicit.³⁰

Step 4: "Then purple them about the sides with blacke inke"

If limners mainly painted in watercolor, they also resorted to ink, black ink in general—even though "inkes of sundry colours" could actually be obtained (Peacham 1606, 61)—in their miniatures. In *The arte of limming*, ink serves to highlight the colors already laid on the canvas and to delineate the lines.

Ink, in *Macbeth*, is discreetly used to characterize Lady Macbeth's line of action. As she sleepwalks, she is seen "tak[ing] forth paper,

²⁹ François Laroque sees in the reddening of the green ocean a process which is gradually inverted in the last two acts, where "green begins again to prevail over red" (1993, 155).

³⁰ In the early modern period, glasses of pig's blood were concealed onstage in order to imitate human blood (Gurr and Ichikawa 2002, 61).

fold[ing] it, writ[ing] upon't it" (5.1.6–7). According to Sandra Clark and Pamela Mason, "the Lady's mind may be reverting to the letter she received from Macbeth in 1.5" (2015, 270, n. to 5.1.7). Yet she does not simply reread an already written text as the playtext makes it clear that she jots down something, obsessed as she is with the power of ink and, ultimately, with the idea of writing one's own destiny.

One should remember here that she initially asks spirits to "take [her] milk for gall" (1.5.48)³¹ before calling for "the blanket of the dark" (1.5.53) "to blot out her action" (Jacobson 2015, 118). The proximity of "gall" and darkness in act 1, scene 5 turns night into an inky substance as "caustic and bitter galls" were then not only used in dyes but also in "the darkest printing and manuscript inks" (Jacobson 2015, 118).³² Therefore, in metaphorical terms, Lady Macbeth uses the inky, poisonous night to rewrite the nightmare of history.³³ Her husband's face is "as a book" (1.5.62), she says. Yet, rather than Macbeth himself, she is the one who is holding the pen: she will realize all too late that she has written a foul story which has stained her hands with red and black ink ("Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood | Clean from my hand?" 2.2.61–62).

Realizing that his sleepless wife has broken down, Macbeth asks the doctor to "find her disease | And purge it to a sound and pristine health" (5.3.51–52). If "purgation" is first and foremost a medical term, it can also be applied to writing, especially in the early modern context which promoted the links between physicians and poets: the latter anatomized the soul while the former dissected the body.³⁴ In 1570, Roger Ascham wrote of the writer that he is "alwaies the best English Physition, that best can geue a purgation, that is, [...] to cut all ouer

³¹ A different kind of gall ("gall of goat") is used by the weird sisters who put it in their cauldron (4.1.26).

³² Generally imported from Eastern Europe, oak gall was quite expensive at the time. Recipes for black ink generally included oak galls, iron sulphate and gum arabic (Beal 2008, 202).

³³ In the Nestor episode of James Joyce's *Ulysses*, Stephen Dedalus exclaims: "History is a nightmare from which I am trying to awake" (Joyce 1986, 28).

³⁴ In *The Arte of English Poesie* (1598), George Puttenham explains that the poet must "play also the Phisitian, and not onely applying a medicine to the ordinary sickness of mankind, but by making the very greef it selfe (in part) cure of the disease." As to Thomas Heywood, he asserts in *An Apology for Actors* (1612) that plays had a curative power and could "recreate such as of themselves are wholly devoted to Melancholly, which corrupts the bloud" (quoted in Pollard 2005, 15).

much away" (1570, fol. 45). By contrast, Lady Macbeth is a poor writer using too much ink – and, of course, too much blood – to put her story into words.

Her famous ejaculation "Out, damned spot!" (5.1.33) refers to the inky blood (or bloody ink)³⁵ that she sees on her hands: having first railed against the "milk of human kindness" (1.5.17) which presumably weakened her husband's virility, she now feels disgusted by her own impurity (Chiari 2018, pars. 4 and 26). She is thus overwhelmed by the power of (blind) spots, or *macchie* (i.e. undetermined color patches).³⁶ The ghost scene (3.4) in which Macbeth sees what the others cannot see reinforces the impact of the invisible or the indistinct – Leonardo's *cose infusate* (Pedretti 1964, 52, note 53) – in the play.³⁷ Macbeth's "quit my sight!" (3.4.91) actually prefigures his wife's "Out, damned spot!": husband and wife are both victims of visual hallucinations triggered by their lavish use of red/blood. Their deadly work has proved poisonous and, instead of poisoning the viewers, it has intoxicated them³⁸: in *Macbeth*, it is therefore "th'inventor" who is "plague[d]" (1.7.10).

Step 5: "Then mayst thou diaper them over with whyte coloure"

In *The arte of limning*, the addition of white hues is not compulsory ("if thou wilt") but it clearly gives the painting its finishing touch. In

³⁵ Peacham explains that, to get "the best red inke," you must use "grind vermilion with the glaire of an egge, or stiffe gumme Arabeck water, putting hereto a little saffron, and so write with it out of a shell, if it be drie, you may soften it by adding a little more water" (1606, 61). Interestingly, he also gives advice on how to make "Sanguine Inke" (*ibid.*, 62).

³⁶ The word *macchia* was indeed "used by the Italian writers of the sixteenth century to indicate the blocking-out of the masses of light and shade." On *macchie*, see Da Vinci's "On Flesh Tones and Figures Distant from the Eye" in Pedretti 1964, 52. The quote is drawn from note 53 on the same page.

³⁷ If we are to believe Simon Forman's testimony, the ghost was probably "visible from the earliest performances, but when Kemble reopened Drury Lane on 21 April 1794 with the young Edmund Kean, according to the legend, as one of the many goblins, Kemble omitted a visible Ghost of Banquo and thus initiated a long theatrical and critical debate" (Braunmuller 2001, 67).

³⁸ Many miniatures of the time were potentially dangerous for man's health because the pigments used were often toxic ones. See Osborne and Tanner 2007, 128.

Norgate's *Miniatura or the art of limning*, touches of white serve to render the lower part of the sky in an accurate way: "The lowest part of your skie nearest the earth is exprest by masticot and white with a little fine yellow oker" (1919, 48–49). In Shakespeare's play, this finishing touch is present but, instead of beautifying the play, it emphasizes its dismal aspect.

Gemma Bodinetz's 2011 production of the play at Liverpool's Everyman playhouse featured a drifting, whitish smoke hanging over the stage. Shakespeare's alfresco scenes are indeed "diapered over" by the white fog of the Scottish heath, itself associated with the foul air of the place. In *The art of drawing with the pen, and limning in water colours*, Peacham complained of the frequent "mistes" or "vapours" which, in the early seventeenth century, prevented painters from observing the landscape and which, he feared, would soon grow "so thicke" that no one would be able to see correctly the details of the surrounding landscape (1606, 31).

In an ironical twist, Shakespeare depicts mist rather than landscape in his play. As already remarked before, tropes of infection permeate a play whose Scottish climate "evokes miasmatic associations that make atmospheric, moral, and political corruption seem mutually constitutive" (Cole 2016, 37). In this context, Duncan's repeated allusions to the pleasant atmosphere of Macbeth's castle in Inverness (1.6.1–3) sound cruelly ironic and betray his lack of perceptivity. A similar blindness and inability to look beyond appearances causes Banquo to think that the air is "delicate" (1.6.10) there.

Yet right from start, the foggy air (1.1.10) of the heath gives the play a fearful visual frame (Hobgood 2014, 42): "Fair is foul, and foul is fair, | Hover through the fog and filthy air" (1.1.9–10), the witches chant. For the spectators, this smoky landscape suggests potential horror (before being actualized) while making the staged events slightly unreal. More importantly, it conveys the characters' limitations in their apprehension and understanding of the world around them. Indeed, in early modern plays and pageants, putrid exhalations were traditionally associated with error.³⁹

³⁹ See for instance Thomas Middleton's pageant *The Triumphs of Truth* (1613), in which London, symbolized by the "Mount Triumphant" (C2r), is overspread with the mist of error. This infectious fog must "vanish" (C2v) so that spectators may discover the power of Truth.

Shakespeare's misty landscapes thus point to the erring actions of the titular characters. Macbeth's ultimate remark about "th'equivocation of the fiend" (5.5.42) encapsulates the whole atmosphere of the play while reminding us that it was probably composed after the discovery of the Gunpowder plot of 5 November 1605.⁴⁰ Focusing on the importance of smell rather than on the power of sight, Jonathan Gil Harris convincingly argues that the stinking smell of the stage fog, caused by sulphurous explosive squibs, offered the early modern playgoers an indirect parallel with the Gunpowder Plot (2009, 126).⁴¹ During the Globe performances, the references to fog could also work as extra-textual clues pointing to London's polluted atmosphere.⁴²

When Lady Macbeth realizes at the end that "hell" is "murky" (5.1.36), she acknowledges her own damnation. If "murky" is to be understood as obscure, dim and foggy,⁴³ it then describes hell on earth, an infernal locus which corresponds to the misty Scottish heath she inhabits. Her husband's final moments are similarly colorless: whereas a dense red characterizes the murders he has committed with his wife, he is now doomed to a "dusty death" (5.5.22) without panache.

In light of these observations, I would thus like to argue that fog, in the tragedy, works as the dramatic equivalent of artistic grisaille. A "method of decorative painting in grey monochrome" (*OED* a), it was sometimes employed as a neutral, preliminary underpainting for a work that was subsequently overpainted with layers of color glaze, but it could also be used in a very controlled way for a finished painting (Judge and Toyne 1990, 194). Some early modern limners

⁴⁰ For further details, see Drakakis 2013, 4.

⁴¹ Harris notes that, in a sermon evoking the Gunpowder Plot and pronounced on November 5, 1605 before James I, Lancelot Andrewes thus described the plotters' failure: "Be they *fair or foul*, glad or sad [...] the great *Diespater*, 'the Father of days' hath made them both" (my emphasis). He deduces that Shakespeare may have lifted the witches' incantatory formula from this sermon (2009, 126).

⁴² In the formulaic speeches of the three sisters, fog even becomes a linguistic clue for contamination as it is part and parcel of the fricatives in the "Fair is foul" couplet. See Clark and Mason 2015, 48.

⁴³ See "Murky," *OED*, 2.a. "Of air, the atmosphere, etc.: obscured by mist or vapour; foggy, cloudy." The first example noted by the *OED* dates back to 1667. Yet in the fifteenth century, the word "murk" already applied to foggy air ("murk," *OED*, 1.†c.).

resorted to this technique in order to emphasize the sculptural shape of their subjects.⁴⁴ This attention to statue-like sitters is worth noting here, all the more so as sculptures can be contrasted with alive and kicking subjects. As Rosalie Colie explains, “in paintings, [...] statues are generally distinguished from living people [...] by their grisaille, as opposed to the flesh-colored tints of those depicted as living” (1974, 280).

In *Macbeth*, Shakespeare repeatedly calls attention to the petrification of his characters. They are either turned into stone when aghast with horror (“Approach the chamber, and destroy your sight | With a new Gorgon,” Macduff tells Lennox in 2.3.71–72) or compared to architectural monuments once they’re dead (Duncan’s body is compared to the “Lord’s anointed temple,” 2.3.68). This emphasis on material artifacts soon gives way to the play’s insistent concern with the insubstantial. Unable to purge her soul, the queen herself becomes a “walking shadow” (5.5.23), both “a poor actor” and a living dead.

If Lady Macbeth only loses her vigor at the end of the play, the unnatural lack of color in her husband’s face betrays his emotional distress and morbid state early on in the tragedy. In the first act, Lady Macbeth associates him with a personified Hope, drunk, dejected, and thereby turned “green and pale” (1.7.37). Clark and Mason contend that this image may ironically feminize Macbeth by associating him with the green sickness then affecting young girls,⁴⁵ even though the pallor mentioned by Lady Macbeth may also be seen as a sign of cowardice. Indeed, in his 1582 *Batman vponn Bartholome*, Batman affirmed that

when hot humours doth cool, then red colour doth change to white
or pale, and so of others it is to be understood. Also changing in the
skin cometh of passions of the soul. The red waxeth pale for anguish
or for dread. (1582, 390r)

⁴⁴ See Isaac Oliver, “St. Jerome Reading” (<https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/365453>; date accessed: 8 February 2019) or “Madonna and Child” (<https://lapada.org/2018/01/object-week-isaac-oliver-madonna-child/>; accessed 7 September 2019).

⁴⁵ See Garrison 2009, 17. Girls then often “failed to get enough iron to keep up with the dual demands of growth and iron loss through menstruation.” So, their “pale faces [...] often had a greenish-yellow tint, leading to the popular term ‘green sickness’.”

Lady Macbeth knows full well that her husband's monochrome complexion is indicative of his weakness. Her initial remark on Macbeth's pallor ties in with her rebuke for his cowardice (incidentally, "coward" is an anagram of "Cawdor," the first title acquired by the hero of the battle against the Norwegians) in the following act: "My hands are your colour, but I shame | To wear a heart so white" (2.2.65–66). Later on in the banquet scene, Macbeth will once again turn "blanched with fear" (3.4.114). This imagery develops the red/white color code borrowed from the Petrarchan idiom of love which is here applied to the language of horror and terror. Whether real or metaphorical, colors in the play function as markers of emotions and they provide an insight into the character's changing and complex feelings. As Allison P. Hobgood remarks, "pallor renders Macbeth's fear visible," all the more so as his countenance was "probably stark white in performance," showing his "body's predictable humoral response to fear" and "precipitat[ing] fear's risky contagiousness" (2013, 39). When, at the end, Macbeth upbraids a "cream-faced loon" (5.3.11) or "lily-livered boy" (5.3.15) — whose livid hue effeminizes him and corresponds to a specific pigment then used by limners, namely Venice ceruse⁴⁶ — for being a coward, he resorts to the same color imagery as the one Lady Macbeth uses to his detriment. Faced with the reflection of his own dismay, he refuses to admit his dejection and tries in vain to "forg[et] the taste of fears" (5.5.9).

Conclusion: A "gentle" aesthetics of terror⁴⁷

By borrowing so much from the limner's sophisticated art, Shakespeare puts forward a dazzling technique that foregrounds the artifice of his play and, generally speaking, a high degree of stylization. Yet, at the same time, the playwright also makes his audience "behold, in what order Art match[es] with nature, and how the limning painter ha[s] almost exceeded nature" (Lodge 1596, n.p.): he possesses a gift for expressing the intimate desires of his characters

⁴⁶ See Peacham 1606, 55: "Your principall white is Ceruse [...]: it hath beene much used (as it is also now adaies) by women in painting their faces." A less pure white called "white Lead" (ibid.) was also used by limners.

⁴⁷ I refer here to Nicholas Hilliard's definition of limning as "a kind of gentle painting," quoted and analyzed by Coombs 2009, 77–84 (esp. 77).

through small, delicate touches of light. This tension between “expressiveness” and “verisimilitude” (Sokol 2018, 43) was characteristic of Hilliard’s miniatures, and Shakespeare certainly makes the most of it in *Macbeth*. In other words, limning techniques allow him to probe the private self: through artifice, he reveals the deepest feelings of the Macbeth couple. However, whereas Hilliard promoted the use of a “line without shadow” to conceal the “aging features” of Queen Elizabeth (Fumerton 1991, 80), Shakespeare never yields to idealization: in its pictorial manner, *Macbeth* illustrates the way the private self gets tainted and crushed by the *libido dominandi*.

In Shakespeare’s Scottish tragedy, our vision is simultaneously stimulated and clouded, illuminated and obfuscated. Fashioned by the expression of the invisible, the play can be seen as an early example of expressionism.⁴⁸ If its garish colors are markers of excess and serve to underscore the cruelty of its title characters, the enveloping fog appears as a paralyzing presence that highlights the force of the preternatural and that threatens to erase the chromatic contrast created by the use of gaudy tints. Blurring Shakespeare’s restricted yet sophisticated palette, it calls attention to the general blindness of the characters, whether it be Duncan’s, who fails to notice the approaching evil, or Macbeth’s, whose unbridled ambition, encouraged by his wife, can only lead to his spectacular and bloody downfall.

The various hues emphasized by Shakespeare are thus employed as catalysts for extreme and morbid emotions as much as vectors of pure beauty. In other words, through the limner’s art, the playwright manages to ennoble the ignoble and to make his audience stare at unbearable acts of violence which, once polished and aestheticized, become the objects of voyeuristic fascination. The tension which gradually transforms “foul” into “fair” on page and stage produces a chromatic tragedy of evil which reconciles the precious and the repulsive. As a result, the play’s color spectrum underpins an uncanny aesthetics of terror which, up to a point, may be regarded as foreshadowing Antonin Artaud’s *théâtre de la cruauté* as, in *Macbeth*, Shakespeare already promoted “a theatre where violent physical

⁴⁸ On expressionism as the artistic expression of “primary emotion[s]” and as a means of foregrounding “something visible, an inner meaning,” see Wilde 1987, 33.

images pulverise, mesmerise the audience's sensibilities" (Artaud 1993, 63).

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Ovid's urban metamorphosis*

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ABSTRACT

In Book XV of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Pythagoras meditates on the rise and fall of cities and foresees that the survival of Rome requires turning from war to the "arts of peace." Once ancient Rome has fallen, its urban imagery hybridizes with a Biblical counter-imagery in which God wills the ruination of Rome and other centers of wickedness. Through this Ovidian/Pythagorean lens, this essay then examines how Spenser confronts the fall and rise and possible fall again of early modern London, with glances also at Shakespeare and Dryden. This Ovidian model creates challenges of identity, belief, and ethical obligation that result in an "outward turn" of the theme of metamorphosis toward its social boundary.

KEYWORDS: Ovid; Spenser; Shakespeare; Dryden; Metamorphosis; City; Rome; London.

La metamorfosis urbana de Ovidio**

RESUMEN: En el Libro XV de las *Metamorfosis* de Ovidio, Pitágoras medita sobre el ascenso y caída de ciudades, y predice que la supervivencia de Roma requiere un alejamiento de la guerra y un acercamiento a las "artes de la paz". Una vez que la antigua Roma cae, su imaginaria urbana se mezcla con una contra-imaginaria bíblica en la que Dios desea la ruina de Roma y de otros centros de maldad. A través de esta lente ovidiana/pitagórica, este artículo examina cómo Spenser confronta la caída, el ascenso y la posible futura caída del Londres de principios de la era moderna, con miradas a Shakespeare y Dryden. Este modelo ovidiano crea retos de identidad, creencia y obligación

A metamorfose urbana de Ovídio***

RESUMO: No livro XV das *Metamorfoses* de Ovídio, Pitágoras medita sobre a ascensão e queda de cidades e prevê que a sobrevivência de Roma implicará passar da guerra para as "artes da paz". Após a queda da Roma antiga, a sua imagética urbana hibridiza-se com uma contra-imagética bíblica em que Deus determina a ruína de Roma e de outros centros de iniquidade. Através desta lente ovidiana/pitagórica, este ensaio examina de que modo Spenser confronta a queda e ascensão, e possível nova queda, de Londres proto-moderna, com incursões também em Shakespeare e Dryden. Este modelo ovidiano cria desafios de identidade, crença e obrigação ética que resultam

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*** Translation into Portuguese by Miguel Ramalheite.

ética que resultan en un “giro al exterior” del tema de la metamorfosis hacia su límite social.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Ovidio, Spenser, Shakespeare, Dryden, Metamorfosis, Ciudad, Roma, Londres

numa “viragem exterior” do tema da metamorfose para a sua fronteira social.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Ovídio; Spenser; Shakespeare; Dryden; metamorfose; cidade; Roma; Londres.

Cities, like nations and selves, are works of art. As they grow, they become city-states, then the capitals of nation-states and sometimes empires, and then they fall.¹ Along the way, they invent things: origin stories, self-images, inhabitable identities for their citizens, and visions of their futures, all of which we may call their urban imaginaries. Central to these stories is a debate between the arts of war and the arts of peace. And when city-states decline, they leave these stories as ruins that become the material for the imaginary of the next city-state or city empire. Repeat.

Early modern Europe found twinned classical poets of the urban imaginary in Virgil and Ovid. Virgil focuses on a Rome born out of piety, desire and anger. Ovid, in reaction, imagines Rome through a prism of skepticism, cosmopolitanism, and empathy. In this essay, I trace the Ovidian line of descent in some very broad strokes, focusing on three moments: Ovid as he completed the *Metamorphoses* and was exiled from Rome; Spenser (and briefly, Shakespeare) in the 1590s; and John Dryden in 1666.

The *Metamorphoses* is foremost a vehicle for exploring personal identity, both for Ovid himself and for the Renaissance. As Lynn Enterline puts it in *The Rhetoric of the Body*, “In Elizabethan England, the habit of allegorizing Ovid’s poem gave way to another, transpersonal mode of reading, [...] ‘psychological and metaphorical instead of physical and literal.’ [...] [that] led to an ‘implicit internalizing’ of Ovidian narrative” (2000, 22–23). Complementing this internal zone, this essay re-externalizes metamorphosis within its urban context, in order to frame a less familiar social zone of identity. Internal transformation, no matter how private, still exists

¹ Though we often think of cities as continually expanding, Robert Bruegmann has demonstrated that cities throughout history have grown and shrunk with economic cycles, as well as external events such as wars (2005). In his wake, urbanists have extensively explored the cyclicity of post-industrial cities. See for example, the “Shrinking Cities” project (Burdett, 2006, I, 316–23) and John Gallagher on Detroit (2010).

within societal flux. While this is an exploration of Ovidian literature, at another level it is a thematic reflection on metamorphosis as a broader cultural phenomenon.

We often think of the *Metamorphoses* as a rural poem, filled with rocks, trees, and wild animals. But if we look at its beginning and end, we can see that its framing is urban. The poem begins with the creation of the world out of chaos and moves through the four ages of Gold, Silver, Bronze and Iron. This is a descent from peace and pleasure to violence and pain, from fruits on trees to agriculture and then to walled cities.

When we reach the Age of Iron, the poem takes a sudden turn: Jove is offended when his nostrils twitch with the smoke of human sacrifice rising from the altars of the wolf-man Lycaon. So he summons the gods to a council:

On high there is a road that can be seen
when heaven is serene: the Milky Way
is named – and famed – for its bright white array;
to reach the regal halls of mighty Jove,
the Thunderer, the gods must take this road.
On either side there range the homes of those
who are the noblest of the gods, the most
illustrious and powerful: their doors
are open wide; their halls are always thronged
(the lesser gods have homes in other zones).
And if this not be too audacious, I
Should call this site high heaven's Palatine. (*Met.* I.168–76;
Mandelbaum 1993, 10–11)²

In contrast to an Iron Age city of envy and violence, this evokes a Rome of luxury and pleasure, a city divided into quarters, and marked by exclusion according to wealth and rank. Olympus is no more than a mirror for the gated communities of early Imperial Rome. Humanity has moved in a few hundred lines from the cave and the bower to the world-striding imperial city-state, and is ready

² There is a good argument for using the 1567 Arthur Golding translation of the *Metamorphoses*, since Shakespeare frequently cribbed from it. However, it over-modernizes Ovid's Latin at key moments, and belongs poetically to the era prior to the English "golden" style inaugurated by Spenser and Sidney – and, for that matter, Shakespeare. I have defaulted instead to a translation that emphasizes fidelity to the Latin while providing distant echoes of Ovid's dactylic hexameter verse.

to purge itself of the Lycaons who embody its foundational barbarism.

The equivocal urbanism at the beginning of the poem is balanced by the famous Speech of Pythagoras at the end, which Shakespeare's favorite translator Arthur Golding called "the sum of the whole work." Numa Pompilius, the king of Rome after Romulus, travels to Magna Graecia to sit at the feet of Pythagoras, the first philosopher, who tells Numa about the mutability of all things, including famous city-states:

[...] We see
That eras change: for here some nations gain
and grow in strength, there others lose the day.
So, Troy had might and men and wealth: she could
afford for ten long years to shed her blood;
now, razed, all she can show are ancient ruins –
her only riches are ancestral tombs.
Sparta was famed, and great Mycenae claimed
much might; so did Amphion's citadel
and Cecrops', too [...]. And what is left
to Cecrops' Athens other than her fame?
And now the rumor runs that Rome, the town
that sons of Dardanus had founded, grows;
[...] that city lays
the base of a great state. There, too, is change:
for as she grows, Rome is reshaped; one day
she will hold all the world beneath its sway. (*Met.* XV.420–35;
Mandelbaum 1993, 529–30)

This passage comes toward the end of a long speech in which Pythagoras argues three main philosophic points: *first*, the continuous mutability of all things in the universe; *second*, a belief in the immortality of the soul through transmigration and metempsychosis; and *third*, an ethical injunction to sympathy with other animals, taking the specific form of vegetarianism. Each of these determines the next: Pythagoras has amassed knowledge through multiple re-incarnations, which allow him to observe transformations, which allow him to understand that human souls may reside in animal bodies, which means you shouldn't eat them. These three philosophical elements are a bit at odds with each other. The mutability part sounds a lot like Lucretius and Epicurus. Metempsychosis, or reincarnation, however, is distinctly anti-Lucretian, and no one is quite sure where the vegetarian stuff comes

from, though it fits some of the yarns about the historical Pythagoras.³

Recently, classicists have argued that we should think about this in poetic terms and not worry about philosophical consistency. They argue that Ovid is doing a mash up of Lucretius with Virgil: didactic epic with visionary epic (Hardie 2002; Segal 1969). This makes sense of the complex and allusive *voice* of the passage, but it still doesn't take the *content* seriously. Here, I think it helps if we pay attention to the poem's urban framework. Ovid stages this as a philosophic session between Pythagoras and the Roman king Numa, even though, decades earlier, Livy has completely debunked the possibility of their meeting (1971, 52–53) and Ovid knows this, and knows that his audience knows it, but insists on going there anyway.

By turning the ethical instruction of Pythagoras into a fable about Roman *history*, Ovid insists that this is what *should* have happened. He is more interested in the legend of Pythagoras as the founder of philosophy and guide to an ethical way of life. Numa takes this wisdom back to Rome as the basis for his law-giving. His task is to civilize Rome, a society founded on the murder of Remus by his own brother, perpetuated by the rape of Sabine women, and habituated to the plunder and murder of its neighbors. Numa, a Sabine by ancestry, has the task of making the descendants of Romulus capable of city life and citizenship, by teaching them the arts of peace, grounded in religion:

They say that Numa, when his soul had learned
from these and others' teachings, then returned
to his own city; and when he was urged
to take the reins, he ruled the Latin state.
There, with the nymph Egeria, the wife
he'd wedded happily, and guided by
the Muses, Numa trained in sacred rites
the Latins; and to them he taught the arts
of peace [*artes pacis*]—for until then, they were warlike. (*Met.* XV.
711–20; Mandelbaum 1993, 532)

In this way, the dialogue between Pythagoras and Numa mirrors the council on Olympus that Jove has called at the beginning of the

³ Despite the logical tension, these three ideas are conjoined fairly early in the Pythagorean tradition. Walter Burkert notes their conjunction in the account of Pythagoras by Dicaearchus, as later recorded by Porphyry (1972, 97).

poem: just as Jove called on the council of gods to expel the wolf-like Lycaon from human society, so Numa rises from the councils of Pythagoras to expel the wolves in togas from Rome. His laws are aimed at bringing civility to life in an Age of Iron and putting an end to the warfare and bloodshed that has given rise in the first place to the *imperium* of Rome and its savage social hierarchy.

This urban framework forms the content basis of Ovid's relationship to his epic predecessors: a more clearly defined ethical demand than Lucretius has provided, and a more pacifistic way forward than Virgil. The specific mechanism of government is a female-gendered "sacred song," by which Numa, conspiring with the Muses and the nymph Egeria, institutes cultic religion among the Romans. This has a special resonance in the wake of Lucretius' *De rerum natura*, since Ovid's great predecessor has declared that religion is a sham by which elites keep the lower classes in awe. But Ovid reflexively and persistently has a more complex view: while personal religions *may* have subversive tendencies, this state religion is imposed as an implement of control over the hyper-masculinized savagery of the Roman race (*Met.* XV.483). Its power is based on what you *practice*, not on what you *believe* (Galinsky 2007, 73; Davies 2004, 81; Liebeschuetz 1979, 29–39). Indeed, Ovid frequently expresses his own lack of belief in the gods, or his Euhemeristic belief that they are nothing more than fables about powerful or notable people in the past.

However cynical this is at the personal level, Ovid underscores its social benefits, especially for a poet leading a privileged life at the center of Roman society. Ritual practice and a certain pretense of belief in the state religion contain the war of all against all and provide the social order in which his art can flourish. "If those of old did not attest | the tale I tell you now, who would accept | its truth?" he asks rhetorically after one story dealing with obedience to the gods (*Met.* I.400; Mandelbaum 1993, 18). Indeed, Numa carries out his task by claiming, with no verification, that he has visions of the gods, who tell him to establish a calendar of religious observances for Rome. These feigned visions are, essentially, Numa's governmental analogue to Ovid's poetic (that is, feigned and visionary) project in the *Fasti* and the *Metamorphoses*. Ovid's own songs *about* the sacred—whether they are exactly sacred songs or not—are his own contributions to the arts of peace.

Ovid's poems do the work of empire, at least temporarily, by gathering in the stories that underlie the cultic geography of the Mediterranean rim. Ovid foresees the rise of the new city to compensate for the decline of old ones, and sees Rome as the destination for their migratory religions. Especially in the *Fasti*, Ovid's calendaring of the rites of the various gods translates their cults and temples into a map of the landmarks of the city. In the *Metamorphoses*, following the speech of Pythagoras, Ovid tells the legend of the migration of the god Aesculapius from Epidaurus to the new site of his temple and cult on Tiber Island.

Ovid's aspiration here is to gather the known universe into Rome, corresponding to the transformation of Rome from a set of hill forts to city-state to imperial capital city to cosmopolis. Rome within its walls was a breathtakingly compact city, with a million or more inhabitants crammed into an area of about 15 square kilometers. But Rome was unusual among ancient city-states in continually expanding rights of citizenship to include, and coopt, first the Italians in general, and then a wider scope of peoples, including even the British. So beyond the physical city, the "urbs," stretched a vast "civitas," a city of the collective imagination, with which distant people might identify. Tacitus put this bluntly, saying that when the Britons put on togas and took up Roman culture, including the liberal arts, "They called it, in their ignorance, 'civilisation', but it was really part of their enslavement" [*Humanitas vocabatur, cum pars servitutis esset*] (Beard 2015, 494–95).

This process is arguably more complex emotionally and culturally than the one-sided enslavement that Tacitus portrays. By extending citizenship, rather than naked subjection or simple extermination, the colonizers agree to globalize their culture, accepting hybridization, while the colonized agree to advance themselves according to the rules of the game set by the center, all the while covertly practicing re-appropriation. Stephen Dyson points out that military conquest transforms and destabilizes even the lowest levels of an imperial society, given the role of

large-scale military recruitment or conscription [...] in forging more cohesive ties in a scattered rural population. Soldiers not only acquire a larger sense of national identity but also bring back to their isolated communities a range of outside influences from diseases to ideas of political and social change. (Dyson 1992, 53)

Before the empire, in 181 B.C.E., the supposed tomb of Numa Pompilius was discovered, containing both Latin books and Greek texts of Pythagoras. The latter were publicly burned as dangerous and foreign (Livy 40.29; Dyson 2010, 46). A mere century later, a temple of the goddess Isis stood in the Campus Martius, and one remained there despite the antipathy of Augustus to the Egyptian religions associated with his great rival Marc Antony and, more generally, to the many ecstatic cults that filled the emotional void left by the Roman state religion (Zanker 1988, 109).

It's reasonable to think that this process of cross-assimilation, however lop-sided, involved the creation of a proto-civil-society as one of its layers, though without the technological apparatus of communication of the eighteenth or twenty-first centuries. Ovid himself is an example: his own Romanization came through some such bargain by his ancestors. Living in Sulmo to the east of Rome, they would have become citizens early in the second century BCE. And yet we do not question his essential Romanness, nor that of Virgil, born in the north of Italy, or of the Iberian Marcus Aurelius. Cultural identity follows language, law, and cultic practice, opening a spectrum of social identities, from native Roman to fully acculturated, to provincial hybrid to outcast. Indeed, the quintessential Republican Cicero, himself a native of provincial Arpinum, postulated that a Roman carries an intrinsic dual identity, one derived from the *patria* of one's birth, and the other from the *civitas* of Rome (Dyson 1992, 64).

A curiously refracted image of the civil bargain of acculturation appears in a famous passage where Pythagoras imagines the thoughts of a bull as it is led to the sacrificial altar, not comprehending what he is about to suffer at the hands of the farmer-turned-priest beside whom he has labored in the fields. The metempsychotic entry of the narrator into animal consciousness makes the ritual butchery simultaneously vivid and unintelligible, as the bull sees the flash of the knife followed by the first gush of his own blood. The moral that Pythagoras draws from this is *empathy*.⁴ He invokes a trans-species brotherhood of the plow that widens from a

⁴ Empathy is a nineteenth and twentieth-century term, translating the word "Einfühlung," meaning "the aesthetic activity of transferring one's own feelings into the forms and shapes of objects" (Lanzoni 2018, 2, 21–67) and so seems appropriate to Ovid's metempsychotic poetry.

“mere” dietary restriction against the feast of the bull, into a demand for empathy across human borders. Ritual slaughter is *not* demanded by the gods, is *not* a part of the civilizing devotion brought by Numa. It is an invention of man’s blood-lust, falsely justified through religion. Rather than dine on our friends and neighbors (“vos vestros *colonos*,” is the exact phrase), Ovid imagines a broader “civility” that extends beyond one’s narrow, walled city-state.

Hence Ovid has intensely identified his poetic project with the project of Roman civilization, as defined not by Romulus, descendent of Mars, but by its second founder, Numa, as rendered by his poetic avatar, Ovid himself. His yearning for poetic immortality depends, in his own mind, on greater Rome’s survival. The *Metamorphoses* conclude:

And everywhere that Roman power has sway
 In all domains the Latins gain, my lines
 Will be on people’s lips; and through all time –
 If poets’ prophecies are ever right –
 My name and fame are sure: I shall have life. (*Met.* XV.877–90;
 Mandelbaum 1993, 549)

We might in this light reconsider Ovid’s effusive praise of Augustus that concludes the *Metamorphoses* and suffuses the poems of exile. It is Augustus, after all, who has carried out at least half of Ovid’s own cultural program, putting an end to civil war, and further embellishing the Roman cityscape by restoring temples (82 in one year, by his own claim) and crowning the achievement with the Altar of Peace, or *Ara Pacis*, whose name echoes the *artes pacis*, or arts of peace (Zanker 1988, 175–83). Standing on the Capitoline, one could gaze along the Via Flaminia past various temples including the Ara Pacis and toward the Mausoleum Augustus built for himself (Dyson 1992, 136; Zanker 1988, 72–77). Ovid addresses tyranny by over-voicing his praise and under-voicing his skepticism, in the process finding myths of origin for the ideological spaces of the city through which he walks.

But Augustan peace comes with a conservative cultural program into which Ovid’s poetry ultimately does not fit. Paul Zanker describes an Augustan preference for a “hieratic archaizing style,” in contrast to the Hellenizing baroque of the Antonine opposition – or of the *Metamorphoses* itself:

Up to this time, the various centers of Hellenistic art had each exerted its varied influence on the Romans, but now Rome itself became the home of a uniform culture gradually evolving and emanating outward. ... The fusion of myth and history was realized in the creation of a timeless present. A concept of the future, in the sense of a further development, did not exist in this system. The *saeculum aureum* had dawned, and it was only a question of maintaining and repeating it. After a period of rapid and drastic change, Rome had arrived at a state of equilibrium, a timeless and mythically defined present. Internal harmony and external strength, fertility and prosperity, would all continue unabated, at least so long as the Julii ruled and both princeps and people made sure to worship the gods as was proper and live according to the ways of their forefathers. (Zanker 1988, 215, 355).

Ovid's art is in every way antithetical to this ideology, both aesthetically and morally. He is of Rome, but Rome is no longer of him. Once he is relegated from Rome to Pontus on the Black Sea, the poems of exile make clear that Ovid's need for Rome itself and for Romanity is one-sided. He habitually despises the Pontic peoples as *rustics*—not as the inhabitants of some golden age, but as the barbarian antithesis of *civilized*, or city people. (Ramage 1973; Richter 1979, 58). This is "Ovid among the goats," or "among the Goths," as Touchtone puts it in *As You Like it* (3.3.6). As the Pontic people lie beyond his empathy, so he freezes his imaginary Rome as his object of desire, as he remembered it on the verge of his personal catastrophe.

But Ovid's ultimate dilemma lies in metamorphosis itself. The rise of Rome and the gathering of Mediterranean cultures into a Roman civilization requires the devouring of those prior city states. If Rome has risen, then the obvious implication is that Rome too will fall, whatever the Augustan political myth might proclaim. The thought is not original to Ovid: Cicero built his political career on warnings about the decline of Rome, and Scipio Africanus reportedly wept over the destruction of Carthage, since in it he saw the shadow of the fall of Troy, and the prospect of the fall of Rome. An eternal Rome negates the metamorphosis that is at the core of his philosophy and his art; Rome falling removes the foundation to his poetic immortality. Rebeca Helfer (2012) has powerfully demonstrated how, post-Ovid, Augustine makes use of the ruination of Rome in his *City of God*, casting his long shadow over Spenser, as we shall see. Indeed, Ovid's description of Troy's broken walls is an

early hint at an aesthetic of ruins that evokes the eventual fate of both Rome and Ovid himself.

In the long passage from Augustan Rome to the English Renaissance, Ovid's urban imaginary is assimilated to post-medieval Christian cultures in a process of restoration comparable to the rebuilding of ruined monuments (Hui 2016; Eisendrath 2018). Emblematic of that adaptation is the persistent conflation of Ovid's account of the emergence of the world out of Chaos with the Biblical account of the Creation. The more complex assimilation of the Speech of Pythagoras at the end of Ovid's poem must be examined under our three headings: the mutability of all things, the transmigration of the soul, and the ethical demand for participation in a wider empathy.

Ovidian/Pythagorean metamorphosis is generally assimilated to Christian notions of mutability. The purest Pythagoreanism is probably in Shakespeare's *Sonnets*, where Gordon Braden hears the Speech of Pythagoras in every invocation of yellow leaves or time's withering hand. There is little sense of *natural* renewal in the *Sonnets*. Only the artifice of poetry provides immortality in the face of natural decay (Braden 2000, 105–10). Indeed, in Sonnet 55, Shakespeare does the Roman one better: Ovid merely claimed that his *carmen* would last as long as Rome; Shakespeare claims that his "powerful rhyme" will last at least as long, or indeed longer than "marble," "gilded monuments | Of princes," "statues," "the work of masonry," or "unswept stone besmeared with sluttish time,"—indeed, all urbanized civilization itself (55. 1–6).

Likewise, metempsychosis in the Renaissance, when not redeemed as a garbled theology of resurrection, is recast as a trope for poetic imagination. Francis Meres says in his *Palladis Tamia* that "as the soule of [the Trojan warrior] *Euphorbus* was thought to live in *Pythagoras*: so the sweete wittie soule of *Ovid* lives in mellifluous & hony-tongued *Shakespeare*" (1598, 281). Meres layers the Pythagorean rebirth of Ovid's soul in Shakespeare onto the translation of culture from Rome to England, all carried out through the literary faculty of imagination, or "wit."

Shakespeare himself connects metempsychosis to the imagination in *Twelfth Night*, when Feste disguised as Sir Topas the curate, catechizes the imprisoned Malvolio:

FESTE What is the opinion of Pythagoras concerning wild fowl?

MALVOLIO That the soul of our grandam might haply inhabit a bird.

FESTE What thinkest thou of his opinion?

MALVOLIO I think nobly of the soul, and no way approve of his opinion.

FESTE Fare thee well. Remain thou still in darkness: Thou shalt hold th'opinion of Pythagoras ere I will allow of thy wits, and fear to kill a woodcock lest thou dispossess the soul of thy grandam. (4.2.44-53)

Malvolio's theology is good, but in "Sir Topas" he is up against a fool masquerading as a fantastical character out of Chaucer, who insists that the Pythagorean notion of reincarnation is the sign of true wit, and anything else, including Christian resurrection of the soul, is clearly crazy.

A more Christian, *and* philosophical rendering of mutability and metempsychosis is of course in Spenser's Garden of Adonis in Book III of the 1590 *Faerie Queene*. There Spenser distinguishes between matter, which is the stuff of chaos, and soul, which is eternal. Between them stands Form, the true medium of mutability, both in God's created universe and in the poet's second world of invention and wit. Form grows and decays, suffering the cycle of life and death, the ceaseless change of Pythagorean-Ovidian-Shakespearean-Spenserian mutability. Here we have in full the vision of a ceaseless change that involves renewal as well as decay, a vision in which order derives from the forms of sacred song.

But this is still a vision of *individual* beings decayed and renewed. Where in this vision is society, as embodied in the city? Pauline Parker remarked many years ago that "no poet has less to say about great cities" than Spenser (1960, 270). Faeryland is a "plaine" dotted by shady hills, grottos, bowers, and occasional castles. The closest thing to a capital city is Cleopolis, always offstage, as an image of a perfected London (Murrin 1990, 169-70). But Parker is, I would argue, looking for the wrong sort of city in all the wrong places.

However scarce the material city may be, an urban undercurrent runs through Spenser's language, even in the Garden of Adonis. Spenser asks how Belpheobe could be raised there and still comprise all perfections:

Sith that in *saluage* forests she did dwell,
 So farre from *court* and royall *Citadell*,
 The great schoolmistresse of all *curtesy*:
 Seemeth that such wild woods should far expel,
 All *ciuill* vsage and *gentility*,
 And gentle sprite *deforme* with rude *rusticity*. (FQ III.vi.i.4–9)

Spenser, like Ovid, is a denizen of the capital, relegated in later life to a “*salvage*” and “*rustic*” zone of the empire that lacks the *form* of culture. Unlike Ovid, he pictures a landscape of courts and citadels rather than compact cities, and sees these courts, in circular fashion, as the source of courtesy. Yet the city as seat of civility resurfaces within the word “citadel” (“little city”), and more openly in the invocation of “*civill usage*” which is threatened to be “deformed” by the rustic. So Spenser’s language points to a philological approach for detecting the presence of the late-medieval or proto-modern city in the apparently un-urban landscape of the *Faerie Queene*, whenever we see the cluster of words whose root lies in the Latin *civis*: “city,” “citadel,” “citizen,” “civil,” etc.

The social geography of the poem, with its rural surface and urbanizing substrate, is inflected first of all by the shifting forms of late-medieval cities themselves. London’s trading partners among the Hanseatic and imperial free cities of Germany had created around themselves a new urban imaginary in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, where the city was spatially composed of three urban zones: the cathedral, the citadel, and the merchant zone, often itself focused around a town hall or guild hall. This urban form in turn reflects the tripartite conceptual form by which European societies were divided into those who prayed, those who fought, and those who worked. The great urban historian Wolfgang Braunfels showed long ago how the shifting relationship among those elements in the built environment reflected the relative power of the three estates (Braunfels 1988). In Krakow, for instance, the Polish Royal Castle and Cathedral were grouped together on the hill, where they can defend the river approaches and dominate the town. Below lies the rectilinear merchant quarter, clustered around its guildhall and Marienkirche, with a monastic and university district mediating between the zones. By contrast in Lübeck, the principal city of the Hanseatic League, the cathedral was pushed all the way to the opposite end from the castle, and the entire center was dominated by the merchants.

England remained largely a country of farms, manors and towns. The population of London was perhaps 50,000 when Spenser was born—a mid-sized city by the meager standards of Europe—but soared to perhaps 200,000 by the time of his death, putting London on a par with Venice, Seville, or Paris, but still dwarfed by the non-Christian imperial capitals of Istanbul or Beijing. London shared, in its disjointed way, the tripartite spatial organization, though it was late, compared to Continental cities, in knitting these pieces together. The citadel stood at the east end, in the form of the Tower. The cathedral stood up-river at St. Paul's, surrounded by the guild and merchant quarter of the capital-C City, but a rival center stood to the west at Westminster as the seat of the Court with its Royal Abbey. Spenser's personal London likewise progressed from east to west, from East Smithfield, where he probably grew up, to the Merchant Taylor's School, to Leicester House, which features in *Prothalamium*, to Westminster where he died (Hadfield 2012, especially 22–25, 140–43, 359–60, 390–93).

As London was slow to knit together physically, likewise it was slow to create a distinctive urban imaginary. London under the Tudors and Stuarts, “was not an independent power but a late feudal dependency of the Crown,” as Lawrence Manley pointedly puts it (1995, 168). With Spenser himself playing a key role, an imaginary London emerged to mirror the physical London tightly within a larger Renaissance urban imaginary, whereby Ovid's fallen cities merged with Biblical cities, specifically with the Jerusalem of *Jeremiah* and *Lamentations* and the Rome of *Revelations*.

This Judeo-Christian city is a place of sin, its fall a divine punishment. Jerusalem is where Yahweh looses his anger on his wicked people. Jeremiah in *Lamentations* (1:12) envisions the city as a woman bewailing her loss:

Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger.

Rome is absorbed into this complaint paradigm. A place of paganism and persecution for Christians, it falls under God's curse, only to rise again as the capital of the western church under the Papacy. So Rome fulfills the Pythagorean paradigm in a way that Ovid dared not imagine. When Martin V returned the papacy from Avignon, he found it “so dilapidated and deserted that it bore hardly any

resemblance to a city. Houses were abandoned and the town was neglected and oppressed by famine and poverty” (Hui, 54). Rome’s ruins became a battleground between conservationists, who tried to preserve the monuments of pagan Rome, and revivalists who raided the Colosseum and other sites to build a newly rising Christian capital (Karmon 2011).

There is a direct line from this conservationist debate to Joachim Du Bellay’s *Les antiques de Rome* (1558), translated by Spenser as *The Ruins of Rome* in his *Complaints* volume of 1591. Du Bellay/Spenser laments the impossibility of finding old Rome amidst its present ruins.

Thou stranger, which for *Rome* in *Rome* here seekest,
And nought of *Rome* in *Rome* perceiv’st at all,
These same olde walls, olde arches, which thou seest,
Olde Palaces, is that which *Rome* men call. (Spenser *Rome* 3.1–7)

Why, when “*Rome* was th’whole world, and al the world was *Rome*” (*Rome* 26.9) should Rome have fallen? Du Bellay and Spenser find the cause in Rome’s ethical character: the Romans were a warlike people, their city founded on fratricide. The world became theirs in the Augustan moment, when civil war was ended by the victory of Octavian. But Romans couldn’t live on a diet of peace and pleasure (much less of religion and the arts), and fell again into civil war. With no second Augustus to impose order through a monopoly on violence, they opened the door to the equally warlike Gothic peoples, who finished off what Rome itself had begun.

So Rome became a part of the larger pattern of mutability which has already swallowed the empires of Egypt, Babylon, Persia and Greece, encompassing the whole of Biblical history, at the end of which “The bands of th’elements shall backe reverse | To their first discord, and [...] all things [...] Shall in great Chaos wombe againe be hid” (22.11–14). Du Bellay/Spenser’s vision of the beginning and end of time is really closer to Ovid than to Virgil, much less Genesis. Indeed, within this long cycle of metamorphosis, smaller cycles keep occurring. Rome may rise again, but only alongside other Romes: “By *Nyle*, or *Gange*, or *Tygre*, or *Euphrate*, | [in] *Afrike* [...] [or in] *Spaine*, | [...] [or among] the bolde people by the *Thamis* brinks” (31.3–6). Rebeca Helfer (2012, 61–66) has given us a subtle analysis of how Du Bellay, rooting for the French team, and Spenser, rooting for

England, both ultimately side with the reconstructionists, who pillage the stones of Rome for their new riverside capitals.

Spenser embraces this complex imagery of Rome fallen and renewed on many shores with his own Book of Lamentations, namely, *The Ruines of Time*, which opens the *Complaints* volume. Walking on the banks of the Thames, the poet encounters the spirit of the Brito-Roman city Verulamen, lamenting her destruction. As the “pride” of Roman Britain, Verulam had:

High towers, faire temples, goodly theaters,
Strong walls, rich porches, princelie pallaces,
Large streetes, brave houses, sacred sepulchers,
Sure gates, sweete gardens, stately galleries,
Wrought with faire pillours, and fine imageries [...]. (Spenser *Time*,
ll. 92-96)

With her “elder sister” Troynovaunt (London), Verulam has become one in the series of little Romes that has already fallen. In the *Faerie Queene*, Spenser’s scattered cities, citadels, and ruins becomes the Brito-Roman material for nation-re-building, out of the disintegrated elements of previous city-states. Amongst its monuments and ruins wander the knights of the *Faerie Queene*, members of a “gentle” class with their assorted attendants, born in rusticity but in search of civility. The grail they seek, beyond the slaying of dragons and Saracens, is a new gathering of myths to act as foundation for their imagined citadels.

That myth appears through an urban cycle of rise and fall as articulated in the chronicles of Britain and of Faeryland, preserved in the House of Alma, at the end of Book II of the *Faerie Queene*. What Prince Arthur reads there is a cyclical sequence of state-formation through warfare, city-building, law-giving, and state-dissolution, caused by civil strife, that is repeated three times.

The first cycle begins with the Trojan Brutus, founder of Troynovaunt and of an “imperiall state.” There are hints at a civilizing process when, eight or so generations later, King Bladud travels to Athens and discovers its laws, “From whence he brought them to these saluage parts | And with sweet science mollified their stubborne harts” (II.X.25.8-9). But the disastrous decisions of King Lear then set off generations of civil strife, until the line of Brutus is extinguished.

The second pre-Roman cycle more explicitly recalls Ovid's vision of the rise and fall of civilizations. It begins with the obscure British king Mulmutius Dunwallo, who brings the realm to "ciuill gouernaunce":

Then made he sacred laws, which some men say
Were vnto him reueald in vision,
By which he freed the Traueilers high way,
The Churches part, and Ploughmans portion,
Restraining stealth, and strong extortion;
The gracious Numa of great Britainie. (FQ II.x.39.1-6)

Most of this passage comes from Geoffrey of Monmouth (1958, 44-45). But where Geoffrey said that Malmutius was chosen king because he was handsome, Spenser insists that it was because of "wisdom," and throws in the concluding comparison to Numa.

Malmutius Dunwallo is pretty obscure even by Spenserian standards, but he had fans among the Elizabethans. Philip Henslowe loaned the Admiral's Men £3 in 1598 to acquire a blissfully lost play about him by William Rankins (2002, 99). Dunwallo appears in Holinshed and the *Mirror for Magistrates* as the first king of a unified Britain. Shakespeare's *Cymbeline* refuses to pay tribute to Augustus on the grounds that the laws set down by Dunwallo freed Britain from Roman imperium (3.1.52-53). Not least, John Stow in his *Chronicles* (1566, fol. 13v) says that Dunwallo built a great temple, "which some suppose to be S. Paules, some Blackwell Halle, which was called *Templum pacis*." So the Ovidian-Numasian "arts of peace" are again memorialized in the capital city by an "ara pacis."

And so the realm of Britain was civilized, and Dunwallo's successor King Lud re-founded the ruined city of Troynovaunt as Lud's-Town, until fraternal jealousy yielded once again to civil strife, leaving the kingdom open to invasion by Julius Caesar, who starts the third cycle, bringing Roman law, and embellishing London with its Tower. With Uther Pendragon, the chronicle breaks off—leaving it to Prince Arthur to establish a fourth cycle through a Welsh house that will bring in the Tudors and their peerless Queene, a virgin without an heir.

For Prince Arthur, the episode at the House of Alma traces a complex path toward his ultimate destination, the city of Cleopolis. For Arthur, the path is winding, through the countryside toward

Lud's-town, though nowhere can he find the direct way. Spenser's imaginary cities, governed by the arts of peace, are always in the past or in the future—always fallen or yet to rise. Whenever he tries to confront the material city of his birth, he struggles to match it to his ideal. The crisis is faced when Spenser carries his book of the *Faerie Queene* to the Queen herself in 1589, as fictionalized in *Colin Clouts Come Home Again*. The court at Westminster, it turns out, is filled with back-biting, jealous rivalries, and dissemblings worthy of Archimago himself. And so Colin must come back to his second home in “salvage” Ireland, where he is far more comfortable than Ovid ever was in Pontus.

He tries again in *Prothalamium* in 1596, focusing this time on the river as urban backbone and on the area between Court and City, to the west of Ludgate. The poem opens with his disappointment with the princely court. He wanders down to the Thames, as if starting a poem of Lamentation, but the mood switches as he thinks on his native city of “Merry London” with its “bricky towers.” Urban violence has been displaced by the order of law at the Middle Temple, where the over-proud Crusaders have been supplanted by barristers. Nearby stands Leicester House, the well of patronage for Spenser's own early verse. But over this urban idyl hangs an ominous pall: the nymphs dallying at bankside evoke the rapes of Europa, Prosperina and Leda. The Earl of Leicester is dead and his successor, the Earl of Essex, has embarked on warfare, however glorious. The nearby ruins of Verulam foretell the future of the city. Even the refrain: “Sweet Thames, run softly, till I end my song,” notes the frailty of the ordering power of poetic imagination. What unruly waters will rise when he ends?

Hence Spenser's urban imaginary is complex and divided, even more than Ovid's. That division is expressed as early as the ending of Book I of the *Faerie Queene*, with the challenge to Una's father, emperor of the East (or Eden), from Fidessa, empress of the West (or Rome). Ovid never had to deal with more than one Rome at a time. Spenser is caught within a post-Reformation vision of the City that is doubly divided. Rome is the site of absolute corruption and simultaneously a model for a divine *imperium* foreshadowing the heavenly city of Jerusalem. There are also those multiple new Romes on other shores, some allied with Rome-upon-Tiber, some opposed. Unlike the sterile gods of the Roman state religion, who demanded

only observance without belief and winked at their eastern rivals, the gods of these new Romes will tolerate others neither in public nor in the heart. Spenser is stranded among multiple societies, and fully a part of none. He cannot destroy Rome nor uncorrupt the Court (whether citadel *or* City). He must simultaneously believe in the divinely-blessed translation of empire to Britain, and in the damnation of previous empires. And he must simultaneously *believe* in the reformed British religion and *un-believe* in Rome: hold that the former is based on revelation and the latter is a Lucretian scam engineered by priests. Too often, it is difficult to maintain the dialectic and keep the two terms apart, just as Red Cross Knight cannot at any moment tell Una from Duessa. Even when Spenser invokes the fabled Dunwallo, the British Numa, he must acknowledge that the British king's sacred laws and heavenly visions are merely what "some men say" (FQ II.x.39.1), a wobbly tradition about rules for civilized behavior, invented like those of Numa, and passed off as divine.

The difficulty is simultaneously material and cognitive-emotional. The material difficulty is that Spenser, like du Bellay but unlike Ovid, is dependent on a developing city-state that is not fully cosmopolitan. London was still knitting together its heterogeneous political, artistic, religious and economic powers to create a cultural hegemony and a monopoly of force, and had only fitful forms of civil society to act as the source not only of civility, but also of hybridity, amalgamation, and reconciliation. These are the conditions by which the inhabitants of the city are confronted by strangers and others at continuous close range, creating the possibilities of conflict, but more hopefully, of imaginative identification and empathy. This is urban *negotium*, in dialectic with pastoral *otium*. In short, the socially-reinforced emotions of an aggressively ascendant empire may be even less generous than those of one at its "serene" and "timeless" apogee. The confused emotions of the inhabitants of a declining imperial state may be a third thing entirely.

The cognitive-emotional difficulty is reflected through the need to maintain a multiple or refracted social identity, complicated by the cosmopolitan challenge to empathy. Like Ovid, who defined himself as being from Sulmo and from Rome, Spenser can maintain a double social identity, born of ancient country stock and nursed by London.

Like Ovid in Pontus, and despite his demonstrable understanding of Irish culture, he feels little human empathy with the uncivilized “rustics” of his exile. But unlike Ovid, for whom there is Rome and little else, Spenser sees the dia-dialectic world of multiple Romes. Worse yet, it is the actual Rome that is allied with the “rustic” world that fascinates and repels him. Entranced in his dialectical imagination, Spenser throws in with the new British Rome, and with his civilizing mission, as summarized by his fellow planter Sir Thomas Smith, who recognized the need “to augment our tongue, our laws, and our religion” — that is, Ovid’s “arts of peace” — “which three be the true bands of the commonwealth whereby the Romans conquered and kept long time a great part of the world” (Manley 1995, 169). What seemed to *enrage* Ovid, Augustus, Smith, Spenser and his Faerie knights the most was when the rustic peoples at the margin drew on the force of their own tongues, laws, and religions to resist, rather than join, that civilizing process.

This essay began with broad strokes, so fittingly it should end with three of them. *First*, my Ovidian-urban line of analysis intersects the line of literary research on the formation of British nationhood (Helgerson 1992; Schwyzer 2004; Maley 2003). Scholars on all sides of its debates have focused on Spenser as a Virgilian poet with the nation-state as his goal. In contrast, Syrithe Pugh has critiqued this focus on Virgil as Spenser’s precursor, noting the integral nature of his Ovidianism—and its subversiveness—in exploring the relationship between poetic form and political power (Pugh 2005, 1–9; cf. Hulse 1981, 242–54; Hulse 1988). Set into an urban context, the Ovidian perspective highlights the possibility of social identifications across a broad spectrum, from local to *nearly* global, at times eliding the nation state.

Second, this simultaneously offers a challenge to analyses of the literature of London that draw an arrow through Spenser toward the unrelenting rise of the bourgeoisie. Such accounts over-identify the city with one class. The development of cities is more complex, with intervening stages and forms. Once we jump forward to Dryden, the merchant class has indeed risen, and the relationship between city and nation is reversed. Whereas Spenser’s London was a feudal dependency of the British crown, by the time of Dryden’s *Annus Mirabilis* in 1668, Britain has become a subsidiary of London, a fully cosmopolitan city at the core of an imperialist state.

For the clergyman Samuel Rolle (1667), the Great Fire of London in 1666 was a divine judgment falling on the British Jerusalem. For Dryden, the destruction of medieval/renaissance London marked the start of a new historical cycle. He specifically invokes both the beginning and end of the *Metamorphoses* in *Annus Mirabilis*, and then heralds the creation of an Augustan London that nonetheless appropriates and re-presents the ruined memory of the London of the Virgin Queen. Dryden imagines this new city according to Christopher Wren's plan, with straight, wide streets and strategically placed monuments, and with Charles II as its improbable Augustus. This vision of urban order would go belly-up in the helter-skelter rebuilding of the city, but Dryden was more prophetic in imagining a new *imperium* that reaches from the London docklands to the coasts of India:

Thus to the eastern wealth through storms we go,
But now, the Cape once doubled, fear no more;
A constant trade-wind will securely blow,
And gently lay us on the spicy shore. (*Annus* ll. 1213–16; Dryden 1995, 201)

The constancy, security and gentleness of the last lines evoke a new moment of imagined timelessness at the impending imperial apogee. But *in time* that empire too did fall, as will the one that follows.

Third, jump with me forward to *us*, with our present confusions of social identification. We, and our Western societies, are torn amongst regionalism, nationalism and globalism, between the physical comfort and moral discomfort of hegemonic societies, between semi-belief in our civic and national myths and imperfect empathy for the Others on our doorsteps. Ovid and Spenser do not give us solutions, much less Dryden as he celebrates colonial imperialism. But they test our lines of thought and feeling, as we struggle with an identifiably shared dilemma.

Increasingly I am drawn by Czeslaw Milosz's insistence that each of us has two histories, an individual history, and a collective history as part of a society: city-state, nation or larger human culture (1953, 211). We can't just resolve this by saying, "Render therefore unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's; and unto myself the things that are mine." If I do that, then I rebel against one of my selves, whichever self that may be.

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Suffocated mothers, stabbed sisters, drowned daughters: when women choose death on Shakespeare's stage*

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ABSTRACT

Women who choose death on Shakespeare's stage often overturn ideas about tragedy as well as challenge the politics which establish which lives are worth sacrificing and which ones are not. Radically altering the relation between *bios* and *zoe*, female suicides collapse the divisions between things that grow, breathe, and love, and those things that block such living. In this essay, I draw on thinking about biopolitics along with feminist readings of Shakespeare in order to explore how characters like Goneril, Gertrude, and Juliet refuse the rules which determine how women's blood must flow or be shed.

KEYWORDS: *bios* and *zoe*; female suicides; Shakespeare; tragic heroines; Goneril, Gertrude, Juliet, Ophelia, Cleopatra; Antigone.

**Madres asfixiadas, hermanas
apuñaladas, hijas ahogadas: cuando las
mujeres eligen la muerte en el escenario
shakesperiano****

RESUMEN: Las mujeres que eligen la muerte en el escenario shakesperiano dan la vuelta a las ideas sobre la tragedia a la vez que desafían la política que establece qué vidas merecen ser sacrificadas y cuáles no. Alterando radicalmente la relación entre *bios* y *zoe*, los suicidios femeninos dismantelan las divisiones entre las cosas que crecen, respiran y aman, y aquellas que impiden esa forma de vivir. En este artículo, a partir de lecturas biopolíticas y feministas de Shakespeare, se analiza como algunos personajes, como Goneril, Gertrudis y Julieta rechazan las normas que

**Mães sufocadas, irmãs esfaqueadas,
filhas afogadas: quando as mulheres
escolhem a morte no palco
shakespeariano*****

RESUMO: Las mulheres que escolhem morrer no palco shakespeariano derrubam ideias sobre a tragédia e desafiam a política que estabelece quais as vidas que vale a pena e quais não vale a pena sacrificar. Ao alterarem radicalmente a relação entre *bios* e *zoe*, os suicídios femininos fazem colapsar as divisões entre coisas que crescem, respiram e amam, e as coisas que bloqueiam essa vida. A partir de leituras biopolíticas e feministas de Shakespeare, este ensaio analisa personagens como Goneril, Gertrudes e Julieta e a forma como recusam as regras que determinam de que

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*** Translation into Portuguese by Miguel Ramalheite.

determinan cómo debe fluir o derramarse modo o sangue de mulheres deve fluir ou
la sangre de las mujeres. ser derramado.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Shakespeare; *bios* y *zoe*; PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Shakespeare; *bios* e *zoe*,
suicidios femeninos; heroínas trágicas; suicídios femininos, heroínas trágicas;
Goneril; Gertrudis; Julieta; Ofelia; Goneril, Gertrudes, Julieta, Ofélia;
Cleópatra; Antígona. Cleópatra; Antígona.

“If all else fail, myself have power to die.”
(*Romeo and Juliet* 3.5.242)

“Ah, women, come we have no friend
But Resolution, and the briefest end.”
(*Antony and Cleopatra* 4.15.84–85)

Introduction

Female deaths on Shakespeare’s stage can shut down whatever tragedy aims to elevate, even though our ideas about this genre not only emphasize the agonies of men but also preclude or minimize the suffering of women. Leaves yellow and borrowed robes hang when the great man is brought low, but—to the extent they register in our calibrations of catastrophe—women are typically suffocating, not suffocated, diminished well before the hero totters and falls, and often as not another problem with which he must contend.¹

In this essay I view female characters’ deaths as forms of agency, rebuke, and subtraction, making use of work by philosophers like Giorgio Agamben, Roberto Esposito, and Alain Badiou. Although Shakespeare seems to sequester female suffering and pain, encouraging audiences to view women’s agonies as private, smaller, or merely redundant, the deaths of female characters reshape his plays, withdrawing chances for rebirth, redirecting *zoe* or the life force, and invoking instead what Esposito calls “a right not to be” (2004, 3). The order of things or what these thinkers term *bios* continues to operate afterwards, but opportunities for heroism are collapsed, and the stage from which authority imagines itself emptied out or condemned. A classical pairing sharpens my premise. In *Oedipus Rex* and *Antigone*, Sophocles puts a story of female effacement alongside an affirmation of male identity, Antigone’s brave choices repeatedly underscored as desperate and

¹ References to Shakespeare’s plays employ the Norton Shakespeare.

unseen, whereas Oedipus's impulsive actions are depicted as honorable and willed, despite their ignorance, even in their futility. Oedipus exerts his limited powers to challenge a fate which spells inevitable failure; but in seeking to bury the body of another fallen hero, Antigone "destabilizes [this] tragic paradigm," as Dymphna Callaghan puts it (1989, 68). If Antigone's fate seems a by-product of her father's misery, a kind of tragic spray, her story takes apart the values and scales Oedipus uses to judge himself guilty and correspondingly punishable. With such tools he counts on the state to protect his children, but Antigone realizes this confidence is misplaced.

Peter Krafft's painting (Figure 1) highlights the contrast between father and daughter, although it also mistakes the pain Antigone feels for Oedipus's. The woman Krafft paints covers her face but holds Oedipus's hand, her physical gesture matching the way Antigone insists on some larger history that will absorb the hero's deeds and explain their meanings—even while reminding us that ultimately everything falls within the state's purview, because ultimately everything rots. The cloud that covers the hero spares her, for although Oedipus learns who he is and why this knowledge doesn't matter, Antigone proposes that his fate is a political rather than personal one. The deaths of other tragic women similarly highlight what power expends and wastes. Misbegotten over and over, Oedipus's story unravels history and humanity, its conclusion not simply a refutation of the circumstances the hero endures, but a rejection of the larger tangle of possibility, consequence,



Fig. 1. *Oedipe et Antigone* Johann Peter Krafft [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Oedipe_et_Antigone,_Johann_Peter_Krafft_\(1809\).png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Oedipe_et_Antigone,_Johann_Peter_Krafft_(1809).png)

and desire—what we might call culture—that makes every decision a wrong one. Oedipus discovers he’s become “abhorrent to the gods” (Fagles, ed. l. 1772), but limits the failing to his own case; convinced of her innocence, Antigone faults instead the laws that condemn and reward her with “death before [her] time” (l. 732). Heroism becomes less desirable when Antigone exposes the farce, unveiling history as an unsafe location where people only go to die. And yet, in continuing to care for her dead brother, she also holds out the prospect of some larger cosmos where people we have lost are waiting for us to join them, where blood, even when spilled, keeps flowing. She kills herself with this belief, her hanging an apt way to remind us that the air she breathes is polluted, her body also ruined by what has kept her alive.²

Like Sophocles, Shakespeare encourages us to see his female characters’ deaths as more radical than men’s, as political acts which reject the rules by which power works, laws order things, and lives make sense. Whether suicide, homicide, or accidents explain their ends, we can therefore group together many women who die on Shakespeare’s stage as entering the realm of *bios* exactly when they stop living, formally indicting the world when they finally leave it behind. Suicide is the most obvious methodology, and my examination of Cleopatra, Juliet, and Goneril is the central focus, but the departures of Lady Macbeth, Ophelia, Gertrude, Hermione, Desdemona, and Regan are related gestures, and I explore them briefly as well.

Antigone comes to our notice by noticing a dead body, and Shakespeare’s female suicides likewise summon our attention to the deaths of the men as signs of a world which evicts what it values. Maybe for this reason many feminist readers of Shakespeare continue to privilege male over female suffering, even when their pain is as closely linked as Sophocles and Shakespeare suggest. According to Mary Beth Rose, women “are excluded from the kind of behavior and event that both forms the heroic subject and characterizes his actions” (1982, 1).³ When they do work up the

² Making use of the myth of the virgin killed—like Iphigenia—to save her city, Sophocles is the first playwright to present Antigone as hanging herself; in other versions of the story, she is rescued by Creon, and in some retellings, she marries Haemon. See Johnston (2006, 179).

³ More recently Rose analyzes whether suicide involves “submissive willingness to endure death” or “aggressive self-ownership” (2016, 79).

nerve, characters like Juliet display what Julia Reinhard Lupton describes as a “more secretive form of courage” “whose immediate consequence is not to expand her capacities for action but rather to sink her into a sleep like death” (2016, 287). Such readings strangely imply that what causes women pain exempts them from tragedy. Although she argues that tragedy “reveals the precarious status of phallic power,” Callaghan finally averts her gaze, proposing that comedy remains “the preferred genre for feminist criticism” (1989, 1–4, 383).

Other critics point to the wholesale revision of genre which female deaths can generate, but nonetheless cling to old patterns of grasping how patriarchal order is sustained or stale reasons for why this epistemological framework needs to stay put. Linda Bamber notes that women’s deaths “rearrange the stories,” but at the same time maintains that “women do not change in Shakespearean tragedy; they do not respond to the events of the play, to the suffering, with new capabilities” (1982, 24, 8). We might speculate that it is precisely by leaving this world behind that female characters foist change on male characters, however. Discussing women’s “borderline suicides” in Shakespeare’s plays, Carol Thomas Neely suggests that female characters deliberately rewrite their stories when they choose to die. Were it not for Goneril’s suicide, Neely observes, we’d have a very different world than the all-male society at the end of *King Lear* (1985, 103–4). Shakespeare’s survivors have struck substantial compromises: their ongoing lives make us wonder whether the human subject ends up a deformed or disabled one, something an unrepentant Goneril already seems to know.

Determining to be or not to be therefore means something different when Shakespeare’s female characters do the choosing. “She should have died hereafter,” Macbeth laments after learning of his wife’s sudden death (5.5.17), faulting both the order of the cosmos and Lady Macbeth’s handling of her story when he complains about the timing of her ending. Her steady decline and eventual trance-like state suggest her death was involuntary and unplanned, as Macbeth implies, the result of sapping strength rather than evidence of newfound resolve. “What’s done cannot be undone,” Lady Macbeth says, stuck in sleep (5.1.46–47), possibly confirming this reading. But becoming human for the women

Shakespeare describes involves *seeking* death and *undoing* the rules which stipulate how power should work. Agamben (2005) argues that the state fashions itself by determining which people can be left outside its laws or walls or even killed with impunity, the *homo sacer* a designation for those who deserve no formal protection or any official sanction of their lives (2). If Shakespeare's women often seem to occupy the empty civil space Agamben describes, their deaths are a rejection of the rules by which history, politics, and biology endow things with a vitality that ensures they will go on. For this reason Macbeth's grief at his wife's death is experienced alongside his surprise that Birnam Wood can move, his realization that the world has a map and a history outside his grasp, although the laws which give it shape can be stretched or broken by other hands. Women's suicides are simply the most radical kind of ruptures to the stories which nations and heroes tell about strength, violence, and belonging.

More explicitly than Lady Macbeth, Shakespeare's Juliet and Cleopatra reject the private realm as too narrow for the protests they want to lodge and affections they continue to cherish. Neither death disturbs a belief in a larger force that sustains things, and in her own sense of blood's magical powers Lady Macbeth shares this idea of *zoe*, the life force circulating outside of custom, law, and tradition. Just as the murdered Duncan's body seems to hold limitless supplies even after his death (5.1.33–34), her own ambitions can be advanced, she says, by managing blood's flow, stopping up its access, or making it thicker (1.5.40).

Lady Macbeth's discovery is a political one as well as a biological one, indicating that the differences between *zoe* and *bios*—the contrast between the energies that give things life and the force which arranges these living things into separate columns or countries or camps—can depend on whether the shedding of women's blood is something they oversee, no longer governed by natural cycles, but mobilized or militarized. In showing us female characters who approach their endings with purpose and optimism, Shakespeare thus rewrites tragedy. Laying waste to an inhospitable world and exposing the polis as a bad dream or existential cul-de-sac, women's speeding up of their own lives forces civilization to unravel in slow motion. Judith Butler links Antigone's challenge with a "traumatic dislocation of the polis," and we might view

Shakespeare's female suicides as similarly pulling awry the mechanisms which hold the universe in place while also unveiling these forces as empty, false, and temporary. The next section looks for other patterns in Shakespeare's female suicides.

Female versus male endgames

Historian Michael MacDonald notes that Shakespeare's plays were produced at a time when suicides were starting to be seen as "familiar" "literary types" (1986a, 309-10).⁴ Previously, MacDonald adds, "there were no terms with which to describe self-destruction that did not brand its perpetrators as criminals or mad men." This finding is all the more striking because, as MacDonald also observes, most suicides were poor or female—a detail which probably accounts for the deficiency in language. Although Shakespeare doesn't glorify suicide, like other Elizabethan playwrights he also doesn't make it odious or offensive, and its occurrences on his stage after Juliet's early and repeated experiments in *Romeo and Juliet* emphasize a growing clarity about how and why suicidal women handle their fates. The religious picture of despair condemned suicide and limited its sorry consequences to the soul of the victim, but Shakespeare—often by allowing other characters to report the circumstances surrounding women's deaths, repositioning them as coroners at inquests—shifts his emphasis onto survivors' efforts to rationalize suicide (MacDonald 1977, 356). Although Gertrude's presence at Ophelia's drowning doesn't save Ophelia, for instance, it helps explain her. In later plays, Shakespeare represents female suicide as a deliberate act of rebellion rather than evidence of despair or depression.

It then becomes harder to fold women's ends into men's deaths, even when there are likenesses in the ways Shakespeare's male and female characters destroy themselves. Certainly, female suicides are often inspired by male examples and follow immediately after, making it tempting to construe women's deaths as offshoots or imitations—rather than deviations from those models or forms of protest which repudiate the actions of the men before them. Yet

⁴ Elsewhere, MacDonald focuses on the early modern community's reaction to self-murder (1986b, see esp. 53, 58).

inspection reveals that Shakespeare regularly locates women who choose death close to the centers of powers that try to thwart them, representing the sad facts of diminished lives as signs of injustice and the women wounded by these conditions as not entirely defeated. Although Shakespeare's Juliet seems to join her beloved finally, for instance, any conclusion about a comic resolution makes sense only if we ignore how her death removes the last agent of renewal from Shakespeare's stage, shutting down her society's machinery for reproduction. Now at peace, Verona has room for a gorgeous statue of teenaged lovers, not because the world has been cured of its evils but instead because it's now depleted of victims; indeed, the deaths of most of the members of its younger generation suggest that this world is coming to an end. Juliet's suicide is less a gesture that mirrors Romeo's and more of a guerilla attack on the way things are, a version of the act of "subtraction" Badiou outlines. "The affirmative part of negation," Juliet's "subtraction" not only unhinges the lovers from a cruel world that insists on their separation, but also permanently rewrites the codes which made them mortal enemies in the first place.

Shakespeare presents Juliet as a kind of cosmically disturbing figure from the outset of the play, and her example supplies a blueprint for later characters who also take their lives and undo the universes they uneasily inhabit in the process. Her subtractions are introduced early on. Marriage, Juliet tells her mother, "is an honor I dream not of" (1.3.68), a statement which leaves her inner life vacant but real, with potential for something else, affirmation quickly supplanting negation, dream replacing ordinary honor. According to Badiou, "subtraction" alters the ways we are persuaded about reality, fantasy, hope, and renewal. Just as Antigone overturns her society's machinery for memory and history when she insists upon her enemy brother's rights of burial, Juliet gauges the value of living things from the perspective of the vivid dreamscape she inhabits. If Juliet not only hates her life without Romeo but despises the world, she not only kills herself because Romeo is dead, but also to avoid being "disposed," as Friar Lawrence puts it, "among a sisterhood of holy nuns." Her suicide allows her to flee yet another place of "unnatural sleep" (5.3.156) in a world where hidden places of inertia are multiple. Interestingly, Romeo has no such fears: "world-wearyed," he seeks "everlasting rest" (5.3.110, 112). In contrast, Juliet's taking herself out of this life has the effect of reversing its

course and changing the map, with the result that Juliet finds her dead lover's lips still warm (5.3.167).

The significance of Juliet's suicide operates according to two principles which organize the suicides of Shakespeare's later female characters. The first rule requires us to *contrast* male and female deaths whenever Shakespeare links them together so closely, the way Romeo seeks rest while Juliet recreates agency. The second rule underpins what this opposition means, proposing that Shakespeare imagines a series of women *opting out* of damaged worlds in stories which simultaneously illustrate their insistence on a right to belong there.

Perhaps Cleopatra, the most famous of Shakespeare's suicidal heroines, challenges this reading. Little blood is involved in Cleopatra's dying, after all, and the imperial politics remain unchanged afterwards. But Egypt's queen crafts exactly when her end should happen, tapering time like one of her royal garments, "shackl[ing] accidents and bolt[ing] change" (5.2.6-7). Moreover, Cleopatra has an audience, a set of attendants, and a number of chances to make a strong finish according to her physician, "pursui[ng] conclusions infinite | Of easy ways to die" (5.2.353-54). There are other differences between Cleopatra's death and Antony's. In death, his figure is mangled, hers goddess-like, his efforts clumsy, hers expert. And Cleopatra's elaborately theatricalized exit concludes with her asking her audience to imagine her entrance elsewhere: "Husband, I come," she says (5.2.287), extracting comedy from thin Roman air and envisioning the afterlife as a place where the rites of marriage permit her union with Antony and ignore or override his bond with Octavia. Cleopatra can simply abandon the old world and her children and their future, neatly absenting herself from a limited place instead of repairing or enlarging it. No wonder Caesar celebrates the way her death cements his authority, concluding that Antony and Cleopatra's story is "No less in pity than his glory which | Brought them to be lamented" (5.2.359-61).

In contrast with Cleopatra's rejection of Caesar's universe is Badiou's idea of negation, which imagines the "complete disintegration of an old world," making possible in turn "something which exists absolutely apart from what exists under the laws of what negation negates." Cleopatra's ambitions also pale next to Juliet's. The Egyptian queen chooses myth-making over politics,

escape over war, and happiness over protest. Juliet's vision, instead, is consistently morbid. Even on a good day, she sees Romeo as a corpse (3.2.22), and her habits routinely subvert the steps Shakespeare takes to present his tragic heroes—with the notable exception of Antony—as vital, athletic, healthy, ready to wage war, not to lie down. Hamlet's death first involves a crowd-pleasing duel with Laertes, and Romeo's death follows a similar display with Paris. When female deaths happen alongside these heroic male examples, they also rudely marginalize them. Finding that Romeo has drained the cup of poison, for instance, Juliet appropriates his sword, suggesting his purchase from the apothecary was unnecessary and her own experiments with Friar Lawrence's potions emboldening. She parts company from Romeo when she commits suicide right after he does, highlighting his despair, foregrounding her frustration. He is disheartened, she is impulsive, he thinks she's dead, she *knows* he is.⁵ Heath's engraving (Figure 2) suggests that it is this knowledge in fact which awakens Juliet.



Fig. 2. Juliet awakes, and finds Romeo dead. Engraving by James Heath (1757–1834) after painting by James Northcote (1746–1831). [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons. <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Northcote-JulietAwakes.jpg>

⁵ Recent readings of *Romeo and Juliet* examine the lovers' preference for heteronormative sameness and staleness; see, for instance, Schwarz (2016). But such readings still link Romeo and Juliet together, even when death—like banishment or sleep—divides them, even when Shakespeare puts Paris in the grave with them. See Freccero, who highlights the play's "driving negativity" and "formal and thematic investments in failure" (2011, 304, 302); and Stockton (2016, esp. 298–301).

Other female suicides on Shakespeare's stage follow Juliet's subversive example. Marion Wynne Davies contrasts the ugly picture of rotting skulls in *Hamlet* with the appealing image of the drowned Ophelia, her flesh not only undefiled but preserved and exposed, "fair and unpolluted" (5.1.222). Women's bodies appear to withstand death (Wynne-Davies 2012, 155, 160), a disparity which Juliet highlights when she drinks the potion and anticipates the "chapless skulls" in a "charnel-house" she will soon encounter, even as she decorously outfits herself in sleep (4.1.83). We hear that the dead Cleopatra is still entrancing enough to catch another Antony (5.2.336-37). Gertrude, a witness to Ophelia's drowning, later reports to Laertes a painless process of extraction which only increases Ophelia's resemblance to "a creature native and endued | Unto that element" (5.1.15051). Yet Gertrude also makes clear that Ophelia's death—which Gertrude nowhere describes as a suicide—was anything but accidental. The circumstances are muddy, but Gertrude orients us with a detailed picture of a protracted descent. Had she saved Ophelia's life—a possibility other scholars float in noting Gertrude's presence at the "glassy stream" and proximity to the victim—Gertrude would've stolen Ophelia's crowning achievement, a self-murder that puts the blame for Ophelia's losses on a corrupted state ruled over by a failed king.⁶ Gertrude later approaches her own death with similar calm and precision, drinking from the cup her husband warns her not to touch, finishing off its contents while letting Hamlet see the extent of Claudius's lethal ambitions. "The drink, the drink—I am poisoned," she makes sure Hamlet knows (5.2.254). Hamlet's father accused Claudius of murder, but Gertrude insists Hamlet *witness* it. Taking for herself the drink set out for a reluctant hero, Gertrude also rewrites the end of Romeo and Juliet's sad story, parting company with Hamlet when she finishes the poison before he can, neatly tearing a hole in the revenge plot by revealing the ruthlessness of Claudius and Hamlet as comparatively messy.

Desdemona takes advantage of a similar opportunity to rewrite history and release Othello from his tortured positioning there when she absolves him of her death and claims her murderer was "Nobody, I myself" (5.2.133). Representing her end as a suicide and simultaneously giving herself power in a world that takes it away

⁶ Gallagher (1995) and Ratcliffe (1998) explore Gertrude's possible complicity.

from its guardians and warriors, Desdemona directs violence at Othello's ethos when she aims it at herself. Hermione's feigned death in *The Winter's Tale*—another faux suicide?—works the same way.⁷ She withdraws from Sicilia at the news of Mamillius's death and eventually returns as a statue, showing anyone who cares to look that what preserves her embalms her, what sustains the world cuts breath and transforms her to stone.⁸ Her "warm life," which now "coldly stands," reappears to "rebuk[e]" her husband (5.3.34–36). The "small wars" which Shakespeare's women seemingly wage against themselves are undertaken in order to challenge the cosmic order.⁹ They are battles which unsettle the lines between the living and the dead, disrupt the practices of slippage or *catechesis*, and enlarge the conditions under which people can count.

Is this the promised end? or image of that horror?

The standard reading of tragedy which centers on the death of the noble male figure contributes little to our reading of female deaths, and perhaps explains why we view so many female suicides as "botched," the rites surrounding women's passing and burial similarly "maimed." Ophelia's exit might seem particularly incoherent, the workings of bad luck dampening her motives. Ophelia slips and falls from a riverbank, her costume too heavy, her lunacy a drag, so that even though she fashions garlands from Denmark's "unweeded garden," her misery gets caught on psychological symptoms which undercut her agency. How different appears the death of *Lear's* evil Edmund, who makes his exit publicly announcing he was loved, with Shakespeare's audiences registering this fact. Edmund's epiphany has value, such that the world is made whole again, its intactness verified. But women's deaths instead underscore how little is assured about their fates—their control of their bodies, their security or habitation of private spaces, their opportunity to explain themselves to others. Perhaps women's stories are those of *incipient* beings, *partial persons*, potential

⁷ Neely not only refers to Hermione's "strategic mock death" (1985, 5) but also suggests Desdemona's actual death resembles other "mock deaths" (125).

⁸ Waldron explores these frustrated gestures to categorize women "as dead or alive" (2012, 205–6).

⁹ I borrow the phrase from the title of Scheper-Hughes and Sargent's 1998 collection.

people whose self-murders provide ways to live and to die at the same time.¹⁰ Certainly the anguish surrounding Lady Macbeth's death is deepened by confusion over her status as a living thing, as Macbeth's strained eulogy also reminds us. Her unusual powers of vitality have always been located alongside remissions of feeling, her pledge to love her husband made against the specter of her murdering their unborn baby, her tenderness a prelude to dashing out its brains (1.7.58). Not everyone gets to survive or flourish, Lady Macbeth tells us, loving something not a guarantee of its worth or permanence or existence on any solid ground.

Like a riot or act of terror or the image of infanticide which Lady Macbeth lovingly shares with Macbeth, female suicides outline a subtraction which Shakespeare refines over time, allowing him to outline other ways female deaths are different from men's, more important or revolutionary, and more public and political in their aims, methods, and consequences. In *Romeo and Juliet* an abandoned woman decides to embrace her detachment from the rest of the world, and Shakespeare continues to reimagine female self-murder in *Hamlet* and in *King Lear*, both plays charting this expanded perspective. Although a hostile world provides the background in these plays, too, our sympathies with the female suicide change, for instance, the longer a female character lives with the ignoble awareness that in some ways she is already dead. There are some constants. Like Juliet, Gertrude and Goneril take their societies prisoner at their deaths: their suicides are political and public rejections of energy, love and *bios*. Like Antigone, too, all three women reject grief. Yet the differences in their examples are equally interesting. Juliet refuses the state, its promises of belonging; Gertrude rejects its habits of renewal and rites of memory; but Goneril overturns its tools for identification, habitation, devotion, revenge, and euthanasia.

Juliet, Gertrude, and Goneril also speed up chronology, making the conclusions of their stories something they consciously confront, easy to see. Rather than taking up arms against a sea of troubles, they collapse the moral and logical structures which consign women to the roles of mourner, witness, and mother. Butler describes

¹⁰ The phrase partial person characterizes another category in the spectrum of what comprises the human, roughly applicable to the fetus or to the comatose patient. See Morgan (Scheper-Hughes and Sargent 1998, 68–72).

Antigone as someone for whom “symbolic roles have become incoherent” (2000, 22), and Goneril similarly wishes to revise the codes which explain her life, not only rejecting her husband’s love but also faulting his ethos when she tells him his “text is foolish” (4.2.38). Juliet rejects such scripts, too. All of the time she spends sleeping, feigning death, or concealing herself among corpses likewise underscores how little women are supported by the frameworks that order their existence and regulate their place. Although classical historian David Daube describes this imperiled condition as one that isolates Oedipus, for whom death is less of a solution than never having been born in the first place, Antigone’s example undercuts Daube’s observation, because she views survivors and the dead as analogously victimized. The world seems smaller in the wake of such discoveries. Yet if we wonder what sustains female lives in an environment which appears not to need them, we still might ask what finally pushes them out, when nothing is really beckoning them beyond? In the next section I examine how Juliet, Gertrude, and Goneril plan their escapes.

Little stars

Juliet never overlooks a chance to do battle with the rules that would keep her and the things she loves hidden or unfree. Even when she says farewell to Romeo, she pries the darkness that surrounds them open: “Methinks I see thee, now that art so low, | As one dead in the bottom of a tomb” (3.5.55-56). She is prepared to kill herself in Act 4, long before the friar gives her a potion: what happens in the interval between brandishing a knife in his cell and plunging it into her heart a few scenes later only affords Juliet more time to imitate death or pretend to sleep. Her suicide is of a piece with the rest of her ethos, her framework for life wide enough to make self-destruction something viable. Friar Lawrence gives her the sleeping potion after seeing Juliet’s resolve: “If, rather than to marry county Paris, | Thou has the strength of will to slay thyself, | Then it is likely thou wilt undertake | A thing like death to chide away this shame” (4.1.71-74), he says.

That Juliet knows how tenuous her own status might be is part of her charm for Romeo, but it also suggests we reconsider her many decisions to take her life, or at least view her rebellion as

philosophical rather than hormonal. “Bondage is hoarse,” she admits, “and may not speak aloud” (2.1.205–6), but Juliet is determined to flee the custody of her parents and nurse, lover, and confessor. Agamben (1993) claims the overthrow of such hard conditions is something heroic, joyful, exhilarating. Yet running away would leave the conditions of the world unchanged, so Juliet stays in Verona instead of fleeing with Romeo to Mantua. Playing with the powers that keep her alive—which weaponize the young and turn Verona’s streets into war-zones—ultimately furnishes a better way to expose and disarm a totalizing system.

Maybe then Juliet is being coy in calling the death she seeks a “restorative” (5.3.166). Flirting with the poisoned cup and unsheathed sword, she uses them (the way she’s used Romeo?) to avoid a fate sealed for her by “a greater power than [she] can contradict” (5.3.153). She rejects the hard limits of her life as well as the arbitrary rules dividing living things from dead things, separating Juliet from her lover as well as from everyone else. Indeed, Juliet has been working on repairing ontology when we first encounter her. If she exclaims upon meeting Romeo that her “grave is like to be my wedding bed” (2.1.132) and then faults him for “kissing by the book” (1.5.107), she also subverts taxonomies when she substitutes a lark for the nightingale (3.5.2) to exchange night for day. In her slow but steady progress to the Capulet tomb, Juliet becomes proficient in techniques for extinction, burial, and reclassification. The reordering she performs is neat and clean, *zoe* put to use rather than pushed outside: “My only love sprung from my only hate” (2.1.135) she calls Romeo, and later she says he is a “Beautiful tyrant, fiend angelical” (3.2.75).

Because the lines distinguishing *bios* and *zoe* get redrawn by Juliet’s perceptions, she can also reconfigure the difference between adulthood and burial, wisdom and imperturbability, unconsciousness and immolation. “Bid me go into a new-made grave | And hide me with a dead man in his tomb,” she proposes at another point, detailing a vision that links her with her beloved but permanently severs her from him, too. In the same way, Juliet’s blazon for Romeo also drastically dissects the landscape: “Give me my Romeo, and when I shall die | Take him and cut him out in little stars, | And he will make the face of heaven so fine | That all the world will be in love with night | And pay no worship to the garish

sun" (3.2.21–25). Cleopatra sees Antony as a god, superhuman and dolphin-like (5.2.98), an emperor whose huge size is the best way to convey his power, his sway. But Juliet mixes Romeo up with everything else, a cosmic upset that transforms the universe rather than hogs up space. Antony casts a big shadow; Romeo makes all shadows disappear. In a world in love with night, no one else need be lost or find herself excluded. If suicide supplies another way to make *bios* equal to *zoe*—ordering things a way to illuminate them—it also gives women an opportunity to reject their place on the Great Chain of Being along with the chance to take it down.

This goal encourages Shakespeare to play with generic boundaries in *Romeo and Juliet*, shifting between tragedy and comedy, making escape as necessary and as irresponsible as falling in, staying home, or growing old. Lee Edelman likens this project to the death drive Derrida describes, "conjured" to "conjure away the norm" (2011, 149, 53n4), although such activities are undertaken regularly nowadays through organ donations and stem cell transplants which redraw the lines marking off who lives from who can die. Suicide assumes its place as another way to re-engineer the polis, the person who undertakes it an irritant or exception "without which the polis could not be" (Butler 2000, 4), but also the person with whom a new polis might arise.

Maimed rites and disabled selves

In his catalog of conjurings, Edelman points to Hamlet as a queer subject, an example of those who are abjected, "non-reproductive, anti-social, opposed to viability" (2011, 148). But Edelman curiously neglects the examples of Ophelia and Gertrude, even though they both refuse the cycles of renewal which Hamlet also disowns. Emily Bartels investigates this elision, describing how women in Shakespeare's plays guarantee male identity but lack identity themselves, Ophelia's burial less a tribute to her memory than an excuse for two displaced noblemen to identify themselves in mourning her. Yet *Hamlet's* reworking of *Antigone's* plot, in which the heroine balances the claims of two of the polis's enemies, makes these male characters' status dependent on Ophelia's rebellion.

Moreover, Ophelia's multiple affiliations challenge Hamlet's assumptions that identity is bestowed, not forged, and that there can

only be one lawful memory or set of loyalties. Although Bartels emphasizes how women are merely conduits for genealogy in *Hamlet*, just as important is the play's insistence that access to power is restricted to a single contender in a contest that punishes other claimants (2016, 198–99, 203). Ophelia prefers to keep these channels open and competing histories alive, telling her brother “you must wear your rue with a difference” (4.5.179), remembering and mourning in new ways. The audience thus helps with Hamlet's obsessive housekeeping when it pushes Ophelia's plight away out of view, turning it into a private grief, restricting it to something the state can safely ignore. Ophelia's death uncovers fissures in being that Hamlet's philosophy thinks it can negotiate, her life a tangle of precepts, her affections deadly, her place in the larger world untenable, shaky—or, maybe, as Gertrude puts it, “Mermaid-like” (4.7.174). No wonder the creature represented in Burthe's painting (Figure 3) holds onto a branch for support so needlessly, the water uplifting, her body in no real danger.



Figure 3. Ophélie. By Léopold Burthe (1823–1860). [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Oph%C3%A9lie_de_L%C3%A9opold_Burthe1.jpg (<http://leilaamat.com/ophelia-de-leopold-burthe>

Contemporary sociologists exploring the motives of female suicide bombers uncover a similarly dense and contradictory web of ties and motives. One study quotes the “mission” of a “fervent nationalist” who states: “I have witnessed the calamity of my people

under occupation. With total calmness I shall carry out an attack of my choice [...]. I hope my soul will join the souls of other martyrs [...] I am now planted in the earth of the South irrigating and quenching her with my blood and my love for her.”¹¹ This statement combines the language of maternity with a rhetoric of sacrifice, despair, and hate in the same way Lady Macbeth’s speech does, her florid discourse competing with her wish to decimate reality. There is no new place created by such upheaval, no new homeland awaiting the terrorist’s return. The female terrorist’s private pain stems from and recreates wider deprivations, just as Lady Macbeth’s dreams of power first require her to see her body as poisonous.

Under similar conditions, Ophelia becomes “incapable of her distress” (5.1.148), stuck in infancy and deprived of history. András Kiséry recently describes Ophelia as “a body spoken for and by the male agents of political change,” rightly noting that Laertes is fomenting rebellion well before he reunites with his sister at Claudius’s court (78). Ophelia’s violation is represented by readers like Kiséry as a personal rather than a political crime, a secret which cannot be shared even when it is known. According to Kiséry, Ophelia’s “suffering and death seem to be gesturing at a partisan agenda but end up strongly refusing to align with it” (2017, 79). The suicide bomber’s destructive impulses similarly frustrate us, but this confusion might be another intended effect, the result of a political agenda.

Gertrude’s act of witness guarantees that Ophelia’s death is a public act, successfully pushing male agents of change to destroy each other while offering a model for Gertrude to follow later. When the clowns report that Ophelia “drowned herself wittingly” “in her own defense” (5.1.12, 5–6), they duplicate Gertrude’s representation of self-murder as the rejection of a criminal world. Gertrude will adhere to this script in draining the cup meant for her son. As Neely puts it, Ophelia’s “borderline suicide” “prefigures Gertrude’s later death” when she disobeys Claudius’s command, drinks from the poisoned cup, and “withdraw[s] from the wifely role she has

¹¹ Jacques and Taylor maintain that women terrorists “hold more complex, dualistic reasons for their involvement, combining collective motivations such as a desire for national independence with individualistic motivations such as the desire for equality between the sexes” (2008, 305). Badiou points to the martyr’s hope for changing the world supplied within “the religious context of terrorism.”

acquiesced in throughout" (1985, 103–4).¹² A larger social failure connects these events, just as the senseless deaths of Romeo and Juliet signal corruption in Verona. Indeed, when Laertes sees Gertrude's corpse he places himself alongside it with the announcement: "Lo, here I lie, | Never to rise again | Thy mother's poisoned. | I can no more. The King, the King's to blame" (5.2.261–63). Duplicating the image of an aggrieved woman taking her life offers a way for Shakespeare to elevate Laertes' and Hamlet's ambition and misery and thereby radicalize their despair.

Yours in the ranks of death

Goneril's suicide has generated less attention than the deaths of Ophelia and Juliet, for they are treasured daughters whose marriageability is construed as a tool to guarantee the future of their worlds. In contrast, Goneril scandalizes the home and its promises of renewal, placing the distaff in her husband's hands and treating her position as daughter and wife as roles to exploit or abandon. At the same time, however, Goneril grounds her identity in repeated claims that she is a *partial person*, as we see in her strict surveillance of her staff and in her competition with Regan. Her profession of love for Lear disables her too, saying her affection is "Dearer than eye-sight, space, and liberty" (1.1.54). Goneril finds community in suffering, and even intimacy in "the ranks of death" (4.2.24). Regan merely copies Goneril's degradations. "Prize me at her worth" (1.1.69), Regan tells Lear, but unlike Goneril, Regan seems "incapable of her distress" or of doing without the supports Goneril ranges against each other. Goneril entrusts Oswald with her letters and her secrets, for instance, while Regan merely tries to pry him open; Regan desires Edmund, Goneril actually kisses him; Goneril insists on order, Regan only sees imbalance. "One side will mock another" (3.7.72), Regan tells Cornwall, demanding he gouge out both of Gloucester's eyes, her sense of justice verified by agony. As Edwin Abbey's painting uncovers (Figure 4), Regan is only *part* of a *partial person*, filling the leftover space where her "sister comes too short" (1.1.71). Goneril shows compassion for her sister's plight, however. Although Antigone abandons Ismene in killing herself, Goneril

¹² For similar readings, see Ratcliffe (1998, 125–26); and Gallagher (1995, 526, 534). Rose claims Ophelia's death, like that of Lady Macbeth, may be a suicide (2016, 75).

ensures that Regan dies with her. The sympathy Goneril extends Regan relinquishes one vision of the future for another, where eye-sight, space and liberty might be somehow rendered more dear.



Figure 4. *Goneril and Regan from King Lear*. Edwin Austin Abbey [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Goneril_and_Regan_from_King_Lear.jpg

Goneril extends other kindnesses. She uses the poisoned cup featured both in *Romeo and Juliet* and in *Hamlet* against her sister rather than stabs Regan—the other method employed in both of these plays—because Goneril wants Regan to see what isn't there, what Lear's love test and Cordelia's harsh refusal have put into relief, that promises of belonging and connection in this play are premised on weakness and imprisonment. We might even imagine Goneril as providing a moral and ontological rescue similar to Edgar's pulling Gloucester from the brink of the cliff, forcing him to see what's not there. Goneril gives Regan's paltry desires weight by blocking them entirely. Her own death immediately afterwards then shuts down the private realm as dreary and unsafe.

Conclusion

There are more recent examples of such deadly agents in the profiles of female soldiers collected in Svetlana Alexievich's extraordinary oral history *The Unwomanly Face of War* (2017), where women put themselves under similar pressures to change the stories of their lives. These female soldiers head to the front with the unshakable

idea of a utopia worthy of their efforts, believing they are the equals of their fathers, husbands, and brothers, just as capable of driving tanks, lobbing grenades, and firing unerringly at their enemies. But these female soldiers also share the radical idea that the horrors of battle and shedding of blood can remake the world, not destroy it. Even the terrible loss of people whom these women love does little to diminish the feeling that there are other generative powers in the universe, other ways to keep life going, other ways to set things right. One woman reports how she “felt like buying pair of shoes” while her unit was retreating, “elegant little shoes” along with some perfume (53); pain brings second chances, another female soldier confirms, telling Alexievich how she “like[d] herself so much” in a “wedding dress” fashioned from bandages she and her fellow soldiers had spent a month collecting (238). In both of these examples, renewal has nothing to do with signing up for the same but is bound up, instead, with killing. The impulse these women describe is a *queer* one, sidestepping reproduction but also tampering with the economy which spells out the worth of female lives and the uses to which they can be put. In this economy, self-effacement serves as a way to be in charge, a way to deploy authority if not to have it.

Like the figures of Antigone and Shakespeare’s female suicides, the lives of these soldiers can make the most sense when they die. Callaghan points out a similar irony in proposing that “[w]oman has a unique and crucial relation to tragedy. Her death undermines notions of transcendence so beloved of humanist criticism [...] [her] transgression does not bring the downfall of humanity but [...] discloses the limitations of moral and social codes” (1989, 96–97). In such a constrained universe, choosing is *always* a punishing activity, something another one of Alexievich’s subjects underscores in a story of beginnings and endings which, ultimately, confounds them. At one point during the war, this woman, a radio operator who had recently given birth, was hiding from the enemy with her baby and other members of her unit. Concealed in a swamp, they find themselves surrounded by “punitive forces” when the baby begins to cry. As the enemy approaches, “no one can give the order,” but this woman “figures it out herself” and “lowers the baby and holds it there for a long time,” until the child’s crying stops. In a world where only death ensures life, acts of love are hallowed by acts of

hate. Turning one's face from the gaze of the child provides another way to have a future, to keep life going.

Lady Macbeth likewise refuses her nursing child, but Gertrude takes the cup from her son and chooses death for herself alone, rewriting the future as a place without her. Possessed by the same "feral thoughts" which Robert Burton enumerates in his *Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621), other women on Shakespeare's stage assert themselves in worlds whose rationales they reject (qtd. MacDonald 1977, 366). "Feral thoughts" overturn feral worlds. Long before Agamben (1998) argues that modern man is an "animal whose politics call his existence as a living being into question" (3), Antigone reminds us that the need to join the political sphere is undercut by the discovery that nothing worthwhile happens there. Shakespeare's dying women share this understanding that redemption is impossible unless the body politic disappears and renewal is banished, at least from inside the home. Refusing to be grounded there, such female figures trade their small place in history for some wider cosmic expanse.

In this way Shakespeare also proposes that the face of the future is not the innocent unborn child but the strong woman tough enough to let it go, who insists that there is more to life than its reproduction. In contrast with the deaths of Antony, Romeo, and Hamlet, whose departures gracefully make room for other heroes and other histories, the lives and deaths of such women are finally pitiless. "Cover their faces," Albany commands at the end of *King Lear* (5.3.255), concerned that the mortifying bodies of Regan and Goneril be concealed from us. Blocked from view, we cannot be sure of who these women are, even in their deaths. But it's possible that — more than the fates of the little star Romeo or sweet prince Hamlet or Emperor Antony — the influence of female characters who find ways to end their stories remains magical and poisonous, unvanquished and kindling, still transformative, still alive.

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Uneasy lies the heart that wears a badge: James Gray's *We Own the Night* as a Gen-X Henriad*

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ABSTRACT

This article analyses James Gray's *We Own the Night* (2007) as a cinematic retelling of Shakespeare's *Henriad* that presents Hal's story not as the chivalric redemption of a national hero but as a tragic fall from happiness. Through close comparative reading of these texts, I explore how *We Own the Night* rewrites Hal's story as a (post)modern tragedy which addresses the concerns of the so-called Generation X. Hal's liminal position – caught between opposing social worlds of crime and law – presents the narrative's major conflict, which itself echoes Jan Kott's tragic vision of Shakespeare's play.

KEYWORDS: James Gray, *Henriad*, Prince Hal, Generation X, Filmic Shakespeare

Inquieto está el corazón que lleva una insignia: *We Own the Night* de James Gray como adaptación de *Enrique IV* para la Generación X

RESUMEN: Este artículo analiza *We Own the Night* (dir. James Gray, 2007) como una adaptación cinematográfica del drama de *Enrique IV* que presenta la historia de Hal no como la redención caballeresca de un héroe nacional sino como una caída trágica. A través del análisis comparativo de estos textos, el presente artículo indaga en la forma en que *We Own the Night* reescribe la historia de Hal como una tragedia (post)moderna que se relaciona con la problemática de la Generación X.

Inquieto o coração que usa um distintivo: *We Own the Night*, de James Gray, como uma adaptação de *Henrique IV* para a Geração X

RESUMO: Este artigo analisa *We Own the Night* (2007), de James Gray, como uma adaptação cinematográfica do drama de *Henrique IV*, que apresenta a história de Hal não como uma redenção de cavalaria de um herói nacional, mas como uma queda trágica a partir de um estado de felicidade. Por via de uma leitura comparativa atenta destes textos, exploro de que forma *We Own the Night* reescreve a história de Hal como uma tragédia (pós) moderna que chama a atenção para as

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* Translation into Portuguese by Miguel Ramalhete.

La posición liminal de Hal — sometido a fuerzas opuestas de las esferas del crimen y de la ley — representa el conflicto narrativo central, que a su vez se correlaciona con la visión trágica de Jan Kott sobre la obra de Shakespeare.

PALABRAS CLAVE: : James Gray; Enrique IV; Príncipe Hal; Generación X; Shakespeare en el cine.

preocupações da chamada Geração X. A posição liminar de Hal — preso entre forças opostas da esfera social do crime e da lei — representa o conflito narrativo central, que por sua vez ecoa a visão trágica de Jan Kott da peça de Shakespeare.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: James Gray; *Henrique IV*; Príncipe Hal; Geração X; Shakespeare no cinema.

The *New York Times* film critic A. O. Scott describes *We Own the Night* (dir. James Gray, 2007) as “a bloody, passionate melodrama, self-consciously Shakespearean,” to which he adds, “or Biblical, or Greek, take your pick of atavisms” (2007, E18). His remark suggests that, by drawing on these canonical precedents, the film aspires to the status of a modern version of a grand, epic narrative. Similarly, the director and screenwriter James Gray hints that evoking an established, “classical” authority may have been on his mind when he considered making a film indebted to Shakespeare’s *Henry IV* plays: “I had read *Henry IV Parts I and II*, and I thought, what if I told a Shakespearean story, a classicist story, in the context of the world of the police?”¹ A. O. Scott may be willing to dismiss the Shakespearean connection as a nostalgic appeal to venerable but outdated patterns, as illustrated by his ironic use of the word “atavism.” However, this article proposes that *We Own the Night* uses Shakespeare in much more productive and meaningful ways. A careful analysis of its Shakespearean echoes sheds light on the ways in which the film relates to the anxieties of the so-called Generation X. By assembling and mobilizing parts of the plot and themes of the *Henriad*, particularly *1 Henry IV*, the makers of *We Own the Night* partake in a long tradition of creative practitioners who see Shakespeare as “compendia of traces of the past, available to be recycled according to present needs and desires rather than as objects of veneration and nostalgia” (Cartelli and Rowe 2007, 34). This active engagement with the past helps them to achieve their artistic and ideological aims of conducting an examination of current socio-

¹ As Gray remarked when interviewed by Andrew Tracy, which is a paratextual acknowledgement that can also be found in other press articles (Lim 2007; Kaganski 2013; and O’Hehir 2011). For a discussion of James Gray as an *auteur* see Alpert (2012) and Mintzer (2012).

political issues, particularly the tension between individual happiness and social conformity.

Before discussing these issues, it is worth pausing to consider what *We Own the Night* tells us about adaptation as a scholarly discipline. It may seem surprising that a widely screened and distributed film, featuring major Hollywood stars, such as Eva Mendes, Mark Wahlberg, Joaquin Phoenix, and Robert Duvall, has been largely ignored by Shakespeare scholars until Douglas Lanier's recent and remarkable contribution in *Shakespeare Bulletin* on December 2016.² Lanier proposes that Gray's film is an important Shakespearean adaptation which merits further attention from Shakespeare scholars, a suggestion that this article takes up and develops. But if a Cannes-premiered, independent box-office hit, such as *We Own the Night*, is an easily demonstrable re-telling of a major Shakespeare play, why has it passed unnoticed for almost a decade? The answer may lie in the persistence of the notion of fidelity in evaluating adaptations, despite well documented theoretical challenges to that notion.³ Most likely, the film has been neglected by adaptation studies for so long because its engagement with *Henry IV* is indirect and highly imaginative, as evidenced by the lack of any direct reference to Shakespeare's play and extensive changes to its plot, setting, and characterization. This invites reflection, since in our allegedly "post-fidelity" era we should be ready to study the "increasingly heterogeneous and fragmentary presence of 'Shakespeare,'" simultaneously visible and invisible (Calbi 2013, 2).⁴ Saviour Catania points out that "spectrality is the soul of adaptation," since every text originates "not only from a source text but, just as crucially, from a myriad of influences" (2017, n.p.). Such an understanding of

² *We Own the Night* premiered in Cannes and was a commercial success in the United States, both at the cinemas and later when it was released in DVD format, as the financial information of the film shows. It was distributed by Columbia Pictures and Universal.

³ The emergence of intertextuality and poststructuralism in the eighties challenged fidelity criticism (Naremore 2000, 7–12; Stam 2015, 8; Ray 2000, 45; Aragay 2015, 20–28), with for example the Barthesian notion of text as tissue, which contributed to the move away from an essentialist paradigm where an Author-God instills the text with *his* so-called "genius."

⁴ As for example, *Strange Illusion*, *The Bad Sleep Well* or *Tron: Legacy*. See, respectively, Douglas Lanier (2014), Mark Thornton Burnett (2013) and Laura Campillo (2015) for a discussion of each film in relation to Shakespeare.

adaptation echoes the notion of intertextuality, which has played a major role in the discipline for a long time, with a critical turn “from a discourse of ‘fidelity’ [...] towards a discourse of intertextuality” (Stam 2017, n.p.). In 2008, Thomas Leitch observed that the longing for faithful adaptations remained unchallenged in critical practice, despite the theoretical pronouncements against it. Leitch argues that we still need “to wrestle with the un-dead spirits that continue to haunt [the field] however often they are repudiated” (2008, 64). The re-launch of the *Literature/Film Quarterly* as *LFQ* in the spring of 2017 demonstrates that these spirits keep coming back, as fidelity features in numerous articles in the issue, despite the new directions the scholarly discipline is taking in an increasingly mediatized world.

Since fidelity refuses to disappear from discussions of film adaptation, we may need a new perspective from which we can address this issue, and *We Own the Night* can assist us in this task. Instead of trying to liberate adaptations from the limiting discourse of fidelity, we can shift the focus by applying Jack Halberstam’s concept of “the queer art of failure” to adaptation studies and thus embrace “failure” as part of adaptation. Halberstam’s theorization of failure calls for “ways of being and knowing that stand outside of conventional understandings of success” (2011, 2). One can argue that every adaptation is doomed to fail from the start since, in the words of Thomas Leitch,

most citizens [...] think along eminently predictable lines: the book is better; they never should have done the movie; it’s nothing but commercial exploitation of (take your pick) either a work of literary art too inimitably fine to adapt or a piece of sub-literary trash that should have been left to die unadapted. (2017, n.p.)

According to conventional understandings of film adaptation, such as those stated above, it is hardly possible for any cinematic retelling of a text to be satisfactory, or in other words, to be a success. Therefore, why not accept “failure” from a queer perspective? Namely, failure as a liberating force that offers us new methods for evaluating cinematic adaptations and disrupts normative binaries of failure and success. As Halberstam explains, re-evaluating the notion of failure can serve “as a way of refusing to acquiesce to dominant logics of power and discipline and as a form of critique” of normative discourses that encourage success (2017, 88). Interpreting adaptations through Halberstam’s approach to failure would help us to dispense with

privileging one, unified, self-centered reading and to shift critical focus to alterity and an understanding of a text as open to multiple interpretations, editions, and alteration.

We Own the Night can be seen as a good test case for theorizing adaptation as failure not only because it is a box-office hit that passed unnoticed in adaptation studies for a decade, but especially because it *queers* conventional understandings of failure and success. As I will explain, the film avoids a clear-cut ending and the protagonist simultaneously fails and succeeds. The film transgresses these paradigms by presenting a narrative in which the protagonist fails by succeeding in becoming a policeman. I propose an alternative interpretation to Lanier's reading of *We Own the Night* as a reworking of *Henry IV* "in which the prince willingly chooses family love and civic duty over personal pleasure and independence" (2016, 465–66). Instead, I read the film as a postmodern retelling of Hal's story with an ideologically constrained protagonist, who has limited freedom and struggles to navigate a system that does not satisfy the promises set by the so-called American Dream. Accordingly, instead of interpreting the film as going "against prevailing critical accounts of Shakespeare's play" (Lanier 2017, 466), this article argues that Gray's adaptation of *Henry IV* reflects Jan Kott's influential analysis of the play. Kott's bleak interpretation of the History plays maintains that human agency is limited by what he calls the Grand Mechanism of History, which is the social structure in which the protagonists are immersed. This article offers an exploration of *We Own the Night* in light of Althusser's notion of ideology, hereby situating the adaptation within established critical accounts of the *Henriad*. Similarly, considering how most of the twentieth century adaptations of *Henry IV* focus on Hal instead of Falstaff (Kastan 2002, 96), James Gray's update of Hal's story partakes of this trend too, adding to the list of these latest adaptations. Bobby Green functions as a twenty-first century Hal, whose reformation takes center-stage. Therefore, the first part of the article explores Bobby-as-Hal's centrality in the film, while the second part focuses on Bobby's identity struggle in relation to its socio-cultural context as well as to Althusser's ideas and Kott's reading of the *Henriad*.

A prince in El Caribe: From reveler to policeman

Set in late 1980s New York at the climax of the drug war, *We Own the Night* tells the prodigal story of Bobby Green (Joaquin Phoenix). Bobby is estranged from his family, managing a nightclub owned by Russian émigré Marat Burzhayev (Moni Moshonov), while Bobby's father and brother (Robert Duvall and Mark Wahlberg) lead the narcotics squad of the New York Police Department, and attempt to find Vadim Nesinsky (Alex Veadov), a drug-trafficker and exclusive customer of Bobby's nightclub. This situation poses the two main conflicts developed throughout the film: a private one, as Bobby attempts to assert his individuality in opposition to his family ties, and a public one, through confrontation between the drug-dealers and the police. The clash between these two factions is traced in martial terms and metaphorically referred to as a civil war that is besieging New York. This correlates to *Henry IV* and the uneasy reign of the first Lancastrian king, with its insurrections in Scotland and Wales and the subsequent war conflicts. The headquarters of the NYPD evokes the English Court of Shakespeare's plays, whilst the nightclub echoes the rebel/criminal underworlds.

The collision of those two domains, and therefore the film's conflict, translates into Bobby's inner anguish: *We Own the Night* focuses on Bobby and his transformation from wayward son to respectable policeman, inheritor of his father's badge, which is a transition overtly reminiscent of Prince Hal's movement from his "wild years" to his reformation as Henry V. Joaquin Phoenix plays the part of a modernized Prince Hal in his role as Bobby Green, wandering across the margins of New York in the company of his Italian sidekick, Jumbo Falsetti (Danny Hoch), his Puerto Rican girlfriend, Amada Juarez (Eva Mendes), and assorted partygoers and outlaws. The initial thirty minutes of the film provide an eloquent portrayal of Bobby-as-Hal, showing Phoenix's character as a jesting, affectionate and free-wheeling youngster. The opening shot shows him in a bright red shirt while erotically caressing his girlfriend, which is followed by a tracking shot of the protagonist heading to the nightclub's dance floor, where a festive and roaring crowd bids him warm welcome. He is depicted as a Dionysian character inhabiting a world of earthly pleasures, much in consonance with Hal's ale-fueled jesting with Falstaff.

The introductory sequence of Bobby in the nightclub cuts to a presentation of Burzhayev's clan and Bobby's part in it, where he seems to function as a surrogate son despite the patriarch, Marat Burzhayev, being his employer. These two settings to which Bobby belongs find a counterpoint with Bobby's biological family. Through crosscutting, the film juxtaposes these two sequences in the nightclub and at Burzhayev's home with those of a police celebration in appraisal of the professional achievements of Joseph Grusinsky, Bobby's brother, which functions as a foil to the gleaming club and the affectionate Russian family. Both El Caribe and the police gathering are celebratory events, but while the festivity held at Bobby's club is depicted as one of unrestrained revelry, the latter is infused with a somber hue, as a certain stiffness and restraint permeate the event held, significantly, in a church. The *mise-en-scène* is revelatory here through the chromatic palette and the set: El Caribe indulges in displaying warm and golden bright colors, together with an intricately carved and ornamented rococo architecture. Conspicuously, the police's party stands out for its functional brutalist architecture with dull colors such as brown and grey that convey the funeral mood of the party. The restraint of Grusinsky's drab celebration echoes the initial words of the king in the Shakespearean text: "So shaken as we are, so wan with care" (1*HIV* 1.1.1) and the presentation of the domains of order in both play and film act as an indication of their own latent instability at a public and domestic level.

The paradoxical blend of a wan merriment with which *Henry IV* starts is overtly exposed in the speech given by Joseph Grusinsky, who, in a moment of celebration dutifully asks for a minute's silence to mourn a fallen policeman, with a subsequent doleful toll of the bells highlighting it in the score of the film. The chiming of the bells is supplemented with a series of shots that display Bobby's passionate kissing of his Hispanic girlfriend, furthering the rebellious dimension of the protagonist. It is also significant to note how Joseph addresses the police officers in familial terms: "one of our brothers was killed in the line of duty last night," recalling again the opening speech in 1 *Henry IV* and its family imagery that functions to assert the unity of the realm after the civil war that deposed Richard II (1*HIV* 1.1.5–24). Opening with two celebrations that pivot around notions of family and kinship, the two mutually constructive domains with which the film opens give meaning to Bobby/Hal and problematize notions of unity and of the family, as far as he is shown blissfully on the "wrong"

side, feeling at home away from the bosom of his biological family. In addition, the film's editing technique introduces the two main settings and the narrative conflict through cross-cutting, which echoes its Shakespearean source text and the acute disparity found between the comic and the political scenes, linguistically contrasted through the combination of different registers on the page, alternating verse and prose with Hal pivoting in-between.

The rebels of Shakespeare's text are transported from the Scottish and Welsh courts to the nightclub, where they mingle with migrants and partygoers, subsequently standing closer to Bobby/Hal. This maneuver is a converging movement that not only poses the thieves, revelers and drunkards of the Eastcheap tavern juxtaposed with the rebels, but also foregrounds the rebellious nature of the protagonist and his centrality in the adaptation. Hal owes his nickname as Wild Prince to his teasing mood and his taste for ale but also to his dissolute and riotous behavior. Shakespeare's text portrays a Prince Hal lacking duty and responsibility, a man whose own father describes him as stained by "riot and dishonour" (1HIV 1.1.84). Equally, Bobby is characterized as indulging in an epicurean lifestyle, while also being impetuous, disruptive and freewheeling, eventually behind bars. During a riot in his nightclub, Bobby resists cooperation with the police, confronts the officers and is taken to prison, which is a confrontation with the law reminiscent of the one recalled in 2HIV (1.2.193–95), as it narrates how Hal assaults the Lord Chief Justice and is subsequently incarcerated.

Neither Bobby nor Hal are morally clear-cut characters, showing an ambiguity epitomized in the famous monologue "I know you all" (1HIV 1.2.185–207). Although Hal certainly shows a chilling, calculating and dubiously moral behavior, his famous monologue implies that he actually assumes his duty as heir to the throne. A similar ambivalence is evident in Bobby: he gives no restraint to his passions, but he is a loving boyfriend; he takes drugs, but he is not a drug-dealer; he gleefully wanders through his nightclub while ignoring his family, but he is totally committed to his job as manager of the club. However, *We Own the Night* does not have a cinematic equivalent for the dramatic function covered by the "I know you all" monologue, which constitutes a major and eloquent difference between film and play. Hal acts as a Machiavellian figure and a man self-fashioning himself, aware of his place in the world, while Bobby

is more of a vexed postmodern character attempting to assert his own identity but ultimately fooled and constrained by external and/or social forces.

Despite Bobby being the central figure and the major borrowing from Shakespeare's play, the secondary characters resonate against the *Henriad* and contribute to the story by building on the protagonist. Burt Grusinsky, Joseph Grusinsky, Jumbo Falsetti, Amada Juarez, Marat Buzhayev and Vadim Nezhinski are these secondary characters, who in a reciprocal interaction define Bobby and are defined by him. Robert Duvall features as Burt Grusinsky, the police chief of the NYPD, and functions as a Henry IV figure. At a political level, the transposition established from court to police headquarters echoes Henry's deposition of King Richard II, which prompted a movement from a *de jure* King to a *de facto* ruler, and located regal legitimacy in terms of coercive power. At a private or domestic level, both Henry IV and Burt Grusinsky are suffering fathers worrying for their rebellious, and almost absent, sons. In *Richard II*, the troublesome relationship between father and son is introduced by the end of the play: "Can no man tell of my unthrifty son? | 'Tis full three months since I did see him last" (5.3.1–2). These lines bring attention to a filial absence that is also explicitly noted in the film, as Burt Grusinsky tells Joseph: "It's almost 11. Where's your brother?" to which he adds, once Bobby has arrived: "Been a long time since we've seen you. Your brother says you don't answer the phone anymore [...] What's going on with you?" In the play(s), the king shows his distress by calling his son a "young, wanton and effeminate boy" (*RII* 5.3.10) and makes even more explicit how he sees his son as stained with "riot and dishonour" (*1HIV* 1.1.84). At another point, Henry IV compares Hal to Harry Hotspur and wishes "that some night-tripping fairy had exchanged [them]" (*1HIV* 1.1.86), so that his son were the desired gallant knight. This contrast between the two young Henries in the eyes of the father resurfaces in the film, with Joseph and Bobby as brothers and doppelgangers, although the exemplary warrior, or cop, is already one of Burt's sons, making this interaction yet more evident.

Characterized as a worrying and caring father then, and much committed to his duty as chief and as head of a family, it is duty indeed that leads Burt to the grave, echoing the cause of Henry IV's death:

PRINCE HAL

Why doth the crown lie there upon his pillow
 Being so troublesome a bedfellow?
 O polished perturbation! Golden care!

 Like a rich armour worn in heat of day,
 That scald'st with safety. (*2HIV* 4.5.20–30)

In these lines, Hal blames the crown as the cause of his father's death, an accusation also made by the King himself during his sleepless night soliloquy that ends with: "uneasy lies the head that wears a crown" (*2HIV* 3.1.31). This is a line that in the film could be rephrased replacing the monarchic signifier with the updated one – "uneasy lies the heart that wears a badge" –, given how crown and badge function in similar ways: as signs of duty, order and distress that are finally inherited by the offspring.

Henry Hotspur, "the king of honour" (*1HIV* 4.1.43–52), embodies the code of chivalry and is adapted by Shakespeare departing from the Chronicles to make him of the same age as Hal, a departure that locates them as virtual brothers (Weil and Weil 2007, 24). The two Henries stand as kin but polar characters: while one embodies honor the other endorses its opposite. In Gray's film, this symbolic brotherhood is made literal with Joseph Grusinsky being the doppelganger of Bobby at the same time that he is his biological brother. While Shakespeare's play presents a Hotspur that moves from being a chivalric warrior loyal to Henry IV to being a rebel siding with the Scottish uprising, the film presents a fluid Hotspur figure, shifting from Joseph Grusinsky, a police officer of great distinction, to Vadim Nezinsky, the foremost Russian drug-dealer.

As Herbert and Judith Weil argue, Hotspur is a "sober, loyal and hard-working supporter of the rebellion against Richard II" (2007, 24), resembling Joseph in his role as laureate police officer. The affection Henry IV shows towards Hotspur in the opening scenes of *1Henry IV* is analogous to the fondness Burt Grusinsky, the Henry's parallel authority figure, conveys in his brief speech at the celebration of Joseph's virtues as a police officer. Joseph's warrior-like quality is enforced when he literally fights against his brother Bobby at the headquarters of the NYPD, as Joseph reacts impetuously to Bobby's infantile provocations. Hal's parody of Hotspur (*1HIV* 2.4.99–108) in the play exaggerates the martial nature of Henry Percy and reinforces his characterization as a committed follower of the chivalric code.

Joseph's devotion to the police force functions to the detriment of his role as husband and father, exemplified in the spectral presence of his worrying wife in the film. Just brief glimpses of his wife are given (indeed, we do not even know her name) as she is literally marginalized, echoing the relationship between Hotspur and Kate, who is almost nonexistent to him.⁵

Once Joseph is shot by Vadim, and passes from the battlefield to paper-work administration, Vadim takes over Hotspur's role as the exemplary warrior. Being the chief drug-dealer sought by the police, Vadim mirrors Hotspur insofar as he impersonates the rebellious side of the knight, and a non-hegemonic national identity; while Vadim is a Russian migrant and drug dealer in the US, Hotspur joins the Scottish faction in the war launched against the English status quo. In addition, Vadim is Bobby's scapegoat to achieve redemption: "Harry to Harry shall, hot horse to hot horse, | Meet and ne'er part till one drop one a corpse" (1HIV 4.1.121-22), which is visually rendered in the final battle-like gun exchange and the prostrate corpse of Vadim.

Departing from traditional and straightforward forms of adaptation, *We Own the Night* provides a triad of Falstaffs. As Douglas Lanier notes, Gray's "characters are often better understood as Shakespearean composites than simple updates" (2016, 463), although for him Falstaff is split in two – Amada, and Falsetti, but not Marat. I argue that Falstaff is a composite of all three characters. Each one assumes one of the three features that Simon Callow ascribes to Falstaff, who is an embodiment "of playfulness, of anarchy, of desire" (qtd. in Melchiori 2007, 68). Jumbo is linked to playfulness, Marat to anarchy and Amada to desire. All of them are migrants and thus outsiders, being part of peripheral nationalities in the US – Italian, Russian and Hispanic, respectively – and eventually rejected by the American police officer after his reformation and alignment with the side of order.

Standing for the jocose side of Falstaff, Jumbo Falsetti is parallel to Jack Falstaff – with his name, "jumbo" meaning huge and bulky mass, and his surname and initials pointing towards the Shakespearean character. Jumbo is Bobby's best friend, surrogate brother, and the

⁵ Joseph and his father Burt are photographed at the celebration held in honor of Joseph's achievements, who calls his (male) child to appear in the photo, but not his wife, who remains seated apart.

source of jokes and laughter, as well as of beer and weed. However, Jumbo's disclosure of information to the drug dealers provokes the transformation of Hal's words at the moment of his coronation (2HIV 5.5.47–63) into kicks and blows. Bobby assaults his friend in an alley because Jumbo has betrayed him, after which Bobby's sidekick is not going to appear on screen again—being, thus, banished from the frame.

Amada, whose name in Spanish means “beloved,” is the most important individual in the protagonist's life in the underworld and the film's embodiment of desire. Bobby's girlfriend stands for the Falstaffian quality of desire not only in relation to Bobby, but also in her role as a good-bad girl type, which is a derivative of the femme fatale. Just as Falstaff is rejected for the sake of good government, the subtext of the film tells us how a Puerto Rican woman that dazzles in a hard-boiled masculine environment is not an adequate partner for a respected policeman. Her unsuitability to that sphere is made explicit in the words of Bobby's father: “That Puerto Rican you brought, she been hooking you up?” Burt swiftly deems her as the cause of Bobby's behavior, or, to quote Hal in the *play extempore*, as a “misleader of youth” (1HIV 2.4.450). She is an inadequate companion for Bobby, as Falstaff is for Hal, because she belongs to a different sphere, marked by differences in race and class. Being part of the underworld, she is not welcome in a higher stratum of society. Amada is also the character that most clearly marks the sacrifice Bobby has to make to cope with his filial duty. The rejection of Amada happens gradually throughout the film, and Hal's premonitory



Fig. 1, 2 and 3: Amada's double framing and sustained close-up as a visual counterpart of Hal's “I will, I do.”

words, “I do; I will” (1HIV 2.4.468), find its way visually in the cinematography and mise-en-scène: the framing composition and the camerawork foresee the consequences, as the lens zooms on Amada and a close-up of her figure trapped in a double-frame is arranged, meaningfully, at a point when the narrative would demand attention either on Bobby or on the couple’s embrace, considering how the scene corresponds to Bobby’s reaction after being informed of the violent assault on his brother. Together with the visual vocabulary, the film narrative shows how Amada is persistently left alone, and Bobby’s banishment of Amada coincides with his carefully paced transformation: as the narrative unfolds and he is more and more on the side of the police, consequently she figures less and less in his life.

Falstaff functions also as Hal’s surrogate father at Eastcheap, where the commoners in the tavern constitute a warmer family than the one Hal has at court. This is mirrored in the film’s opening montage, which unveils how the relationship between Bobby and his father is dysfunctional in comparison to his relationship with Marat. Bobby, welcomed as an adoptive son of the caring Russian family, kisses and addresses Marat with the affectionate “Pop,” who listens to him and, unlike Burt Grusinsky, expresses his affection. Marat and Bobby have a reciprocal and healthy father-and-son relationship despite the fact they are employer and employee. Thus, if Falstaff stands as Hal’s surrogate father, Marat is the surrogate father to Bobby.

Marat, however, belongs to the drug dealers’ sphere and hence is on the rebels’ side, with a name pointing towards a famous historical rebel—the leading Jacobine that overthrew the Girondist faction during the French Revolution. Marat sports overt dishonorable attitudes when the film discloses how he has used his grandchildren as a cover for his drug business, in resemblance to the abuse perpetrated by Falstaff in his recruitment of soldiers to gain money (1HIV 4.2.11–47 and 2HIV 3.2.81–293). Eventually, police officers surround the former surrogate father of Bobby, who arrives and commands Marat to kneel down, handing to a fellow officer his biological father’s gun—on which the camera focuses with a close-up. Possibly to be read as off-screen assassination, this implied murder resonates towards Falstaff’s off-stage death in *Henry V*, where we learn that “the king hath killed his heart” (HV 2.1.88) posing thus king Henry V as a vicarious murderer of his no longer surrogate father.

In regard to the development of the narrative arc, *We Own the Night* structures the story in two parts. The first extends over forty minutes and serves as an introduction to the conflict. The second covers the subsequent seventy minutes, within which the story provides four climactic moments that develop the main movement and concern of the film: the transformation of Bobby Green into Robert Grusinsky. Consequently, the film mirrors the main trajectory established in *1 Henry IV*, which corresponds to “Hal’s transformation from the truant prince of the tavern scenes to the chivalric hero on the battlefield at Shrewsbury” (Kastan 2002, 7).

The first climactic moment is the spark that ignites the transformation of the protagonist. Once Bobby’s brother, Joseph Grusinsky, is shot by Marat and lies on the verge of death, the jesting and frolicking disposition of the prodigal son gives way to his more serious and troubled self. This family-based scene at the hospital, with Bobby accompanying his father and brother while being protected by police officers, significantly *without* Amada/Falstaff, functions as a cinematic correlative to *1 Henry IV*’s father-and-son dialogue in act 3, scene 2 (1–161). Both the film and the play show at this point the protracted transition from a formerly rebellious son to a model one: “I shall hereafter [...] be more myself” (*1HIV* 3.2.109–10) and from that moment Bobby begins to side with the police, decides to act as an undercover agent, and to play a “heroic part” during a police infiltration in the base of the drug-dealers.

The second climactic moment corresponds to Bobby’s infiltration of the base of the drug-dealers. Shot with a lengthy tracking shot, white aseptic colors, and a score featuring a perturbing white noise, the scene situates Bobby in an alien world. The violent gunfire exchange conveying Bobby’s attempt at redemption is rendered as a battle-like epic moment and can be placed as a modern parallel of Shrewsbury. However, as the redemption has not yet ended with the death of Vadim/Hotspur, the film features a second part of Shrewsbury to conclude the narrative.

The third climactic moment corresponds to the death of Burt Grusinsky, which occurs during a car chase in the rain. The dark, confusing, and gloomy environment with which the scene is charged echoes the general climate of unrest, disorder and death that pervades *2 Henry IV*. It is an unrest ultimately embodied in the badge-like symbol of the crown, figuratively blamed as the cause of King Henry’s

death. While King Henry IV's death signaled Prince Hal's transformation into King Henry V, Burt's death gives way to Bobby's definitive siding with his family and the police: the official side of order, after enrolling unofficially and illegally with the police. Bobby is issued with a gun and temporary recognition as a policeman, swearing oath to the Constitution, before attending the police academy.



Fig. 4 and 5. Bobby “breaking through the foul and ugly mists” (1HIV 1.2.187–92) created by his fellow police officers.

The fourth and final climax occurs during the final gun battle between the two warring sides at Floyd Bennett Field, a cinematic second equivalent of Shrewsbury. Although Bobby (unofficially) enrolled with the police after his father's death, this scene marks his definitive “reformation” and the flimsy line dividing order and disorder: Bobby does not have to kill Vadim (“Bobby, what are you doing? Bobby! Don't go in there. We have Vadim surrounded”) and yet he crosses the line and takes revenge by shooting him to death. Breaking through actual mists after having killed Vadim, he is finally redeemed and performs his part of a prodigal son, to be “wondered at | By breaking through the foul and ugly mists | Of vapours that did seem to strangle him” (1HIV 1.2.191–203). Notably, these “vapours” are artificially created by the police as they throw smoke bombs in the field, an event that together with Bobby/Hal's morally dubious reformation, point towards a subversion/containment mechanism and a certain ethical myopia in the side of (dis)order. The association between mists and the police force also contribute to blur the distinction between the two opposing spheres of order/cops/royals and disorder/drug-dealers/rebels. After the gun battle, the film concludes with a scene showing a celebration of Bobby's graduation as policeman, which functions as the equivalent to Henry V's coronation, both signaling the son's siding with the sphere of order.

Thus, the film conflates the two final scenes of *1 Henry IV* and *2 Henry IV* into two consecutive sequences with the figure of Hal/Bobby at their core.

Bobby's dilemma: Seeking identity in the Grand Mechanism

We Own the Night locates Hal's struggle to choose a side as the key event: both he and Bobby are *sons* meant to occupy a specific position within a given system or society, aligned with the side of order. As argued above, Hal's reformation, unlike Bobby's, is self-consciously staged—famously conveyed through the “I know you all” soliloquy that is absent in the film. While Hal's perambulations with Falstaff are part of a wider political strategy, Bobby's love affair with Amada and his parties with Falsetti make him genuinely happy. This difference in the level of agency between the play and the film is symptomatic of a movement from a modern Cartesian subject, centered on the human self, to a postmodern, decentered one.⁶

The film does not present the (anti)hero's reformation as a narrative of unproblematic achievement. Even though Bobby redeems himself through Vadim in an epic scene, this event is not presented as an unequivocal victory. By focusing on the protagonist's inner struggle to make sense of his place in the world, the film departs from traditional readings of the play that view Hal's transformation as the chivalric redemption of a young, courageous Prince that eventually becomes an ideal monarch and symbol of a nation.⁷ Instead, *We Own the Night* tells the story of a fall from happiness, freedom and self-assertion, more akin to the conventions of tragedy than those of a history play. Eloquently in this respect, the film concludes with Bobby's graduation being portrayed *not* as a cheerful celebration, but with mournful tones conveying grief and sorrow. The film's ending contrasts starkly with its beginning, which encapsulates the overall trajectory triggered since the first climactic moment.

⁶ Although the modern subject was not fully formed yet, but emerging during Elizabethan times; hence, the difference resides in the dominance of certain philosophical discourses at each historical period. For more on the early modern subject see Greenblatt (1980) and Grady (2000).

⁷ As for example Laurence Olivier's cinematic interpretation of *Henry V*.

It is worth comparing the opening and the closing scenes to demonstrate how the film registers the emotional cost of Bobby's siding with his family and with the police. As shown in a subjective shot from the perspective of Bobby during his graduation from the police academy, the protagonist remembers Amada and, by extension, his former "band of brothers" and joyful self. This brief glimpse of Bobby's thoughts and memories not only conveys the character's state of mind but shapes the structure of the film in a circular fashion, bringing us back with the protagonist to the film's opening scene, when an affectionate Bobby appeared with his (banished) girlfriend openly and directly stating his bliss: "I am the luckiest man on the planet [...] if I die now I'd be happy." The cinematography of the opening scene reaffirms Bobby's words as the *mise-en-scène* shows him caressing his girlfriend in a vibrant lovemaking sequence infused with warm colors. Color functions here in an expressive manner, since the bright palette of red and golden tones conveys Bobby's interiority—his joy and desire. Simultaneously, the characters' movements, with their bodies coalescing, and the fast pace of the editing, register the effervescence of the moment and of Bobby's bliss. This opening scene of love and joy contrasts with Bobby's graduation, which culminates with the protagonist saying to his brother Joseph "I love you too," without looking at him. Not even exchanging glances, they both stand still in a scene colored in cold and somber hues. Grey and dark tones predominate in a scene that visually convey restraint and reflect the general cold and distanced mood of the "celebration." Therefore, this ending scene directly contrasts with the one that opens the film, and substitutes the vibrancy of Blondie's "Heart of Glass" opening soundtrack with a somber graduation speech that ends in "amen" — the last word uttered in the film.



Figures 6 and 7. Color palette conveying Bobby's interiority

The tragic cost is foregrounded aesthetically throughout the film, by such formal devices as slow-motion cinematography during Bobby's father's death to underscore the subjective perspective of the distressed protagonist; compositional framing and double-framing denoting entrapment and isolation; and stark chiaroscuros suggesting the inner anguish of the leading character, provoked by the dark reality surrounding him.⁸ These cinematic techniques convey Bobby's dilemma of choosing a side and the tragic cost of having to protect his family, which stage the tension between self-assertion and social determination. Film noir has long presented alienated individuals and an overall cynicism and pessimism regarding social change "not simply as personal flaws," as Shaun Anne Tangney notes, "but as evidence of a systemic or ideological failure, the failure of the American dream" (2012, 202). *We Own the Night* partakes of this trend of (neo)noir cinema, which can be explained not (just) by looking at the conventions of the genre and how Grey adapts them to his personal style, but also by considering the director's socio-cultural background, as part of what has become known as Generation X.

Born in the 1960s and 1970s, Generation X is the generation that followed the so-called Baby Boomers and that came into age at the time when, as Peter Hanson notes, the idealism of the sixties had vanished, after a failed war in Vietnam, the Watergate scandal, and various conflicts that marked a "darkening of modern society" (2002, 10). Hanson includes James Gray among Gen X filmmakers, arguing that "their collective body of work" functions "as a reaction to the forces that shaped their generation as a whole" (2002, 5). According to Hanson, their major preoccupation is the self, and the questions they ask are "Who am I, and where do I belong?" (2002, 6). He also points out that many of their films deal with the "difficult transition from childhood to maturity" (2002, 2). In this context, Bobby can be seen as one of the "disaffected characters in Gen-X movies," his role as madcap Hal making him akin to the "quintessential Gen-X archetype: the slacker" (Hanson 2002, 7-11). Moreover, aesthetically and ideologically, *We Own the Night* is analogous to Gray's previous film, *The Yards* (2000), and both form part of his crime tragedy alongside

⁸ Edward Hopper, a key influence in film noir, is one of the most notable visual referents denoting isolation and entrapment in Gray's cinematic oeuvre, together with the poetical realism of Helen Levitt's photography.

his first feature film, *Little Odessa* (1994). According to Christophe Gelly, *The Yards* “reproduces a discourse of social victimization that was at the basis of the noir tradition, dealing mainly with underdogs who fail to escape their own condition” (2011, 460). This reading of the film corresponds to Hanson’s, who notes how the protagonist is impelled to betray his humanity when confronted with a moral catch 22, which in this case is having to choose between his family and the law (2002, 125). Interestingly, *The Yards* concludes similarly to *We Own the Night*: with a circular narrative movement that denotes entrapment. While the film opens with the protagonist at the moment when he is released from jail, it closes with him dolefully still, reflexive, and in silence, just after testifying in court against the criminal acts certain members of his family had committed. In both cases he is travelling by train, which is the key site of corruption in *The Yards*.

If gangsters are fated to remain in the world of crime according to film noir conventions, Bobby is determined by the class structure, which is the middle-class sphere of his police family. It could be argued that the protagonist voluntarily decides to side with his family, but the film does register the cost and tragic coerciveness of that “choice.” By presenting the final celebratory event in a tragic manner, the film disrupts the normative binary structure of failure and success. Bobby simultaneously fails his girlfriend and friends and succeeds in avenging his family. Since choosing a side is fraught with loss, Bobby’s dilemma underscores the societal obstacles imposed on the self and the limits of individual freedom. The film distances itself from the police procedural film genre and focuses on the subjectivity of the leading character, showing his development and registering his angst and pain, instead of the minutiae of police-work. This focus on the family is a variation on the noir genre that Gray has introduced, as Christophe Gelly argues, also in relation to *The Yards* (2011, 461).⁹ The family is an underlying concern of Generation X, whose filmmakers “generally starved for a sense of family” (Ortner 2013, 134). Their cinematic output focuses on “families that are deeply dysfunctional” and stresses “the importance of surrogate families” (2013, 131–34). Gray’s cinematic output shows a constant

⁹ As Chopra-Gant notes, the family is a “largely absent entity” (2005, 161) in film noir, despite the importance of the surrogate families in works such as *The Godfather*.

preoccupation with the family, a motif present from his first feature film, *Little Odessa*, to the last one to date, *The Lost City of Z* (2016).

We Own the Night transposes the (neo)noir tension between self-assertion and over-determination to the domestic sphere and moves from a Manichean understanding of absolute freedom versus total containment. The film locates the family as a site of order and authority with Bobby Green (or rather, Robert Grusinsky) mirroring Prince Hal's journey of accepting his place in the family and in society at large. Juxtaposing a dysfunctional family with a city torn by crime, the film foregrounds the connection between the private sphere of domesticity and the public one. In doing so, *We Own the Night* interrogates the notions of fate and freedom well beyond the private domain of the self and the family. According to James Gray, "social mobility and self-invention is doomed from the start," a view that questions key ideas of freedom and individuality that are crucial components of the American Dream, the dream "of a better, richer, and happier life for all our citizens" (Adams 1931, xx). This questioning of absolute freedom and individuality lies at the heart of *We Own the Night*, since it presents choice as limited and fraught with loss. The director himself explains that the tragic dimension of the film is "informed mostly by post-1968 poststructuralist thinking." Gray uses this framework to explain what he perceives to be the contemporary understanding of fate, as he notes:

As far as the idea of free will goes, the major thing I came across was the writing of Louis Althusser. He spoke about the fact that we are beholden to an ideological state apparatus. Your ability to decide for yourself — good and evil, do I turn left or right, this product is what I want, this is what I want to watch — all this stuff is not about you choosing. It's about the way you have been programmed from birth by culture, language and ideology. Your expectations and your desires are not your own, really; they have been created for you. I found this to be very powerful. If you combine that notion with the central Horatio Alger myth, you've got two ideas that are totally in conflict, and are destined to create resentment. (Gray 2011, n.p.)

When viewed in this framework, Bobby's tragedy is an individual embodiment of the tragedy of a delusive socio-political system that, far from granting one's freedom, imposes an order. Located at the core of this system, the family functions as a site of entrapment and as a determiner of identity in a film that, following James Gray's comments in the press, can be read in Althusserian terms: as a

depiction of a social system according to which individual freedom is constraint and the social structure is as determining of our choices as it is of our ability to choose. The interpellation mechanism, via ideology, supplies society with subjects that occupy an assigned role in the system while believing they are completely free individuals. This Althusserian vision underpins *We Own the Night*, as the film presents the process of interpellation of an individual (i.e. Bobby) who is determined by dominant ideology and forced to take a side; progressively, he is “hailed” as Robert Grusinsky.

According to Althusser, the family takes a leading role in the process of securing the system, disseminating ideology and constructing identity: institutions such as education, religion, the media, and the family, among others, constitute the Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs), which become entwined with the so-called Repressive State Apparatuses (RSAs), like the army and the police, whose assigned role is to implement the ideology of the state through the use of violence (1971, 96–97). A representative instance of each apparatus at work is directly present in the film: both an ISA, the family, and an RSA, the police, constrain Bobby and mark his struggle in the private and the public sphere. The repressive nature of the RSA is overtly exposed in the violent raid on El Caribe, during which the police physically attack Bobby. Through the use of violence, the police coerce Bobby to cooperate, but he resists and ends in prison (another RSA). His family had tried before to make him cooperate, in an instance of ideological constraint that the film, meaningfully, situates in a church — pointing towards another ISA, religion.

The combination of ideological and repressive forces determines Bobby’s siding with the sphere of order and patrilineal family, symptomatically encapsulated in a frame of eloquent composition: Bobby’s image is not just enmeshed in a trapping structure dominated by the police’s badge, but also diminished and marginalized by it. It is a shot that foresees how, ultimately, the structure affects his enrolment as a police officer. Indeed, shots which frame Bobby as pictorially diminished and decentered by the surrounding architecture pervade the film.



Fig. 8 and 9: Structural oppression of Bobby is conveyed cinematographically with shot composition.

With Bobby as a postmodern individual determined by a system that limits free choice in an ideologically constraining society, this cinematic interpretation of the *Henriad* can be placed alongside that of Jan Kott, since both Gray and Kott read the texts as tragedies whose protagonist is the system, or what the Polish theoretician calls “History.” According to Kott, the core of Shakespeare’s historical plays is the Grand Mechanism of History, a device in which human life is meaningless and identity hollow, with individuals being assigned a given slot in the structure. Characters are subjects assigned a role in a system that erodes individual freedom: “there is only the king’s situation, and the system. This situation leaves no room for freedom of choice” (Kott 1967, 14). In other words, subjects are interpellated into a system where they function as “cog-wheels in the Grand Mechanism” (Kott 1967, 28). But Kott does not deny human agency completely, as he understands this perverse mechanism to be originated by a Machiavellian person, with which an Althusserian reading may converge: the tragedy of the Grand Mechanism is the tragedy of *realpolitik*, of a certain political system that constrains individuals, forced to occupy a certain subject position, or a given slot in the structure. In sum, “the implacable roller of history crushes everybody and everything. Man is determined by his situation, by the step of the grand staircase on which he happens to find himself. It is that particular step that determines his freedom of choice” (Kott 1967, 39), although the perpetrator of such entrapment is, in the end, another human agent. Writing during the Cold War from Poland, Kott adapted the *Henriad* to the socio-political context of Poland during the late 60s. Similarly, James Gray views the *Henriad* through the lens of a Gen-X camera, and thus emphasizes the limited choice individual at the time had given the precariousness of the socio-economic situation. Following the dominant forces of ideology, Hal-as-Bobby is

interpellated and tragically led to occupy a subject position. He faces a limiting choice between two opposing spheres and the film poignantly registers the cost of such a choice through the banishment of the Falstaff figure. The loving Puerto Rican partner functions as the scapegoat and signals the emotional cost of the Grand Mechanism. The film's interpretation of the *Henriad* questions the reality of freedom and individuality from the perspective of the Generation X, for whom "the American Dream was but a long gone and foreign past" (Lee 2010, 21), entering thus into dialogue with its sociocultural context. As a consequence, the film challenges the conventional categories of success and failure, breaking down the dichotomy since the protagonist simultaneously succeeds in avenging his family and fails, since this success happens at the cost of leaving part of his life behind.

Conclusion

This article demonstrates that *We Own the Night* functions as a sustained and sophisticated retelling of the *Henriad*. Drawing mainly from Hal's story in *1 Henry IV*, the film functions as a Shakespeare adaptation that transposes the *Henriad* to a police context. It presents the story of Prince Hal with a tripartite Falstaff, a split Hotspur and a series of climactic events that cinematographically correlate to key scenes in Shakespeare's play. This article argues that *We Own the Night* updates the *Henriad* as a (post)modern tragedy from an Althusserian perspective to question how the constraining forces of society determine the individual, mobilizing the concerns of the so-called Generation X. Taking an Althusserian perspective, James Gray rewrites a story in which Hal, far from being a Machiavellian character, is the victim of his socio-political circumstances—paradoxically succeeding through failing, as registered through the tragic cost of "banishing" Amada while becoming a policeman. In this way, the adaptation aligns itself with Jan Kott's seminal interpretation of Shakespeare's play. Analyzing *We Own the Night* in the light of poststructuralist theorizations of ideology and in relation to Kott's insights can significantly enhance our understanding of the film's engagement with the *Henriad* and of the contemporary approaches undertaken to adapt Shakespeare on screen.

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Notes

William Forrest: Poetry, politics, script and power*

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the poetic and scribal activities of the sixteenth-century poet and scribe William Forrest. Forrest's works survive in a number of manuscripts that he prepared himself, some for presentation to specific individuals, some for less definable purposes. The article assesses his achievements as a scribe and manuscript producer over several decades.

KEYWORDS: William Forrest; manuscript; autograph; poetry; paleography

William Forrest: poesía, política, letra y poder**

RESUMEN: Este artículo examina las actividades poéticas y como escriba del poeta y escriba del siglo XVI William Forrest. Las obras de Forrest sobreviven en varios manuscritos que preparó él mismo, algunos para presentarlos a personas específicas y otros para propósitos menos claros. El artículo evalúa sus logros como escriba y productor de manuscritos durante varias décadas.

PALABRAS CLAVE: William Forrest; manuscrito; autógrafo; poesía; paleografía.

William Forest: Poesia, política, manuscrito e poder***

RESUMO: Este artigo examina as atividades poéticas e manuscritas do poeta e escriba quinhentista William Forest. As obras de Forest sobrevivem num conjunto de manuscritos preparados por ele próprio, alguns para serem apresentados a indivíduos específicos, outros com propósitos menos claros. O artigo avalia o seu trabalho como escriba e como produtor de manuscritos ao longo de várias décadas.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: William Forest; manuscrito; autógrafo; poesia; paleografia.

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** Translation into Spanish by Tamara Pérez-Fernández

*** Translation into Portuguese by Miguel Ramalheite.



The activities of William Forrest (fl. 1530–1576) have received little attention from literary historians of the sixteenth century. Such facts of his life as are recoverable can be summarized swiftly.¹ He was born in the early sixteenth century (the date is unknown) and attended Cardinal College (now Christ Church) in Oxford in the 1530s. He was ordained priest and became a petty canon at Osney Cathedral in Oxfordshire, receiving a pension when it was dissolved in 1546. After the accession of Mary Tudor, he claims to have become one of her chaplains (although documentary evidence is lacking). Subsequently, in 1556, he became parson of Bledlow in Buckinghamshire, a position he retained under Elizabeth and only resigned in 1576 at what must have been a fairly advanced age (Young 1964). The date of his death is unrecorded.

These facts suggest that Forrest possessed a level of adroitness in the rapidly changing circumstances during which he lived. Through four reigns and changing doctrines he held various priestly roles without any apparent setbacks. If he was a chaplain of Mary Tudor the fact seems to have had no discernibly harmful consequences after Elizabeth's succession. It appears that Forrest had some skill in the politics of survival.

He was also a cleric of evident learning and culture. He owned a number of manuscripts. Among these were Cambridge, Trinity College MS B. 1. 18, the contents of which include fifteenth-century copies of Richard Rolle's *Emendatio Vitae* and of Hugh of St Victor (James 1900, I, 20–21), to which he added a few of his own verses.² In addition, he had a twelfth-century manuscript from Thame Abbey, which included writings of Anselm of Canterbury and other theological works and which survives now in detached portions as various British Library Burney manuscripts.³ He also owned an early sixteenth-century Sarum hymnal, now Oxford, St John's College, MS

¹ These facts are outlined in the article on Holmes (2007), that is significantly dependent on the account of Forrest by Emden (1974, 209–10).

² Forrest has added eight lines of verse in his own hand on fol. 103v: "Who liste be fedde in the fode spirituall, | of sweete internall Contemplation. | heere maye be spedde in sorte moste speciall: | thorowe goddess divine inspiration, | thoughe layde Aparte in sundrye Nation. | In readyng heere of hampole and of hughe | it may to some geve goode occasion: | this worldes vayne pleasures the lesse to ensue." Printed in James (I, 21) with some variations from my own transcription above.

³ Burney MSS 246, 285, 295, 341, 344, 357; see Ker (1937–1938, 134–35).

60 (Hanna 2002, 80–81), and an important collection of Tudor masses, now Bodleian Music School E. 376–81;⁴ this comprises six paper part books, begun *ca.* 1528–1530. It is possible that Forrest may have partly responsible for its transcription.⁵

Forrest's literary interests extended beyond the manuscripts he owned. His own writings offer evidence of a considerable acquaintance with literature contemporary and past. His evident interest in religious music may make it unsurprising that he shows a familiarity with the psalm translations of Thomas Sternhold (1500–1549).⁶ More striking is the fact that he is the first person known to have commented on the poetic achievements of Henry Howard, earl of Surrey.⁷ He speaks admiringly of the poet and dramatist, John Heywood,⁸ and seems to have had some form of relationship with George Cavendish, the poet and biographer of Cardinal Wolsey.⁹ He also appears to have been on close terms with the poet and translator Alexander Barclay, successively Benedictine monk, Franciscan friar and, after the Reformation, beneficed clergyman until his death; he

⁴ These are numbered, in order, D, A, T, B, Q, S; Forrest's name and the date "1530" appear on fol. 1 of A; for a description see *Census-Catalogue of Manuscript Sources of Polyphonic Music, 1400–1550* (1979–1988, II, 292–94).

⁵ See further Bergsagel (1963). See most recently the information and digital facsimiles on DIAMM at <https://www.diamm.ac.uk/sources/2285/#/>

⁶ He alludes to Sternhold in the heading to his Psalm translations in British Library MS Royal 17. A. xxi, fol 5 where they are described as "added to maister Sterheholids and others;" the passage is printed in W. D. Macray's edition of Forrest's *The History of Grisild the Second* (1875, 179).

⁷ Forrest speaks of the poet in BL Royal 18. C. xiii, fol. 2v:

Callynge vnto mynde yeat better aduysment,
your noble ffather, Earle of Surraye
howe (in his tyme) to Bookes he was bent

and also endytyng many a vyrylaye [...].

⁸ He mentions Heywood in British Library MS Add. 34791, fol. 3:

For learnynge Heywoode and I be neare one,
But for conveyance of a fyne sentence

He shall have my prayse of all to Rome hense.

He includes in British Library, MS Harley 1703, fols 108–9 a poem of twenty 4-line stanzas titled "A discription of A most nobel ladye | aduowed by Iohn Heywoode presently | who aduertisinge her graces as said | saith of her thus, in much eloquent phrase [Incipit] Geue place, ye ladyes all bee gone;" see also Graves (1923).

⁹ On possible links between Cavendish and Forrest see Sylvester (1959, 259–68).

mentions him several times.¹⁰ He also alludes to the by then traditional collocation of Chaucer, Gower and Lydgate.¹¹ Forrest's acquaintance with Lydgate's corpus may have been more extensive than such a conventional allusion might suggest: he appears to have known his *Fall of Princes*, for instance.¹²

Forrest's own writing show that he was also, at times, a first-hand observer of contemporary events. By his own report he attended the debates about the validity of Henry VIII's marriage to Catherine of Aragon at Oxford in the 1530s: "I sawe it trulye [...] I was present and herde their complaynte" (Forrest 1875, 77–78). He also appears to have been present at the funeral of Catherine in 1536, of which he gives a detailed account (Forrest 1875, 120–22). Such direct experience provided the subject for some of his own poetry. It also possibly contributed to an awareness of political realities that is partly reflected in the content of some of his writings and in some of the contemporary dedications of his own manuscripts to particular figures of contemporary significance (a point to which I will return).

The range of Forrest's writings and their chronology require some summary. In the course of his clerical life he found the opportunity to compose a number of generally substantial works in verse. These mainly survive in manuscript. Only a couple of short poems were printed during his lifetime.¹³ This corpus amounts to between roughly twenty-five and thirty thousand lines of verse. And it is possible that there were once both further copies of surviving works and of other works now lost.¹⁴ No part of his larger corpus is available in a satisfactory form in a modern edition.

¹⁰ Forrest refers at length to Barclay in Royal 18 C. xiii, fol. 2r–v and Harley 1703, fols 85v–86v; the passages are printed in White (1928, xxxi–xxxv).

¹¹ The passage, on fol. 3, is printed in Forrest (1875, 167).

¹² At one point in his Psalm translations he talks with casual intimacy about Lydgate's relationship with Humfrey, duke of Gloucester, the patron of Lydgate's poem. The passage, from British Library, MS Royal A. xxi, is printed in Forrest (1875, 178).

¹³ The only poems published in his lifetime were a poem celebrating Mary's accession, *A new ballade of the marigolde* (1553; STC 11186), in single sheet folio and his versifications of the Pater Noster and Te Deum, again addressed to Queen Mary, which appear in the first edition of Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* (1563, 1139–40).

¹⁴ Anthony Wood, *Athenae Oxonienses* (1691, col. 95) records among Forrest's works in the possession of "Robert, Earl of Alesbury" two manuscripts "Poems upon several Occasions—MS. fol" and "Certain meditations and Prayers necessary of a Christian—

The nature and chronology of his verse oeuvre can be established with relative clarity. His earliest work is his *History of the Patriarch Joseph*, which was apparently completed sometime between 1543–1547, around the period when he was pensioned off from Osney.¹⁵ He describes it in the Preface (fol. 3) as “the firste I ever sett for the.” It survives in British Library, MS Add. 34,791, of a hundred and sixteen leaves, and is dedicated to William Parr, created earl of Essex in December 1543.¹⁶

In 1548 Forrest began the composition of *The pleasaunt poesye of princelie practice*, a work in the Advice to Princes tradition, addressed to Edward Seymour, duke of Somerset, Lord Protector to Edward VI. This appears uniquely in British Library, MS Royal 17. D. iii, a manuscript of seventy-seven leaves.¹⁷ The text breaks off abruptly partway through Chapter 24, stopping near the top of a recto leaf, after nearly four thousand lines, in rhyme royal stanzas. (The table of contents lists a total of 37 chapters.) Forrest may have abandoned it after Somerset’s arrest for treason in October 1549. By 1551¹⁸ he had also prepared a metrical version of forty-eight Psalms (fols 5–77v) followed by “The ffowre special canticles” (fols 77v–83). This collection is also dedicated (fols 1–3) to Protector Somerset, and is now

MS. fol. In prose and verse;” neither of these can be identified among those manuscripts of Forrest’s works that now survive. In addition, Edmund Bernard, *Catalogi librorum manuscriptorum Angliae et Hiberniae* (1697) records among “Librorum Manuscriptorum Ecclesie Westmonasterensis Catalogus,” “Some Psalms in *English Verse* by W. Forest” (II, 1315.225); this was destroyed in a fire in the late seventeenth century; see Robinson and James (1909, 57). The *Dictionary of National Biography* asserts that “a copy of both parts [of the *History of Joseph*] in one folio volume of 286 pages, written on paper, is in the possession of the Rev. J. E. A. Fenwick, at Thirlestane House, Cheltenham, being in the collection of Sir Thomas Phillipps, which that gentleman inherited.” This manuscript has not been located. It cannot be identified with Bodleian Library MS Eng. poet. d. 9 (*olim* Phillipps 8909), a paper manuscript of 161 leaves. In addition, the following entries appear in a sale catalogue, *Bibliotheca illustris sive catalogus variorum librorum* [...], issued by T. Bentley and B. Walford in London on 21 November 1687, under “Manuscripts in English, in Folio”: “25. *William Forrest* Chaplain to Queen *Mary* his *History of Joseph*, in old *English Verse* – 26 Another Volume of his *Poems upon Several Occasions*.”

¹⁵ For a recent discussion of the dating see Wort (2017).

¹⁶ It has been edited by Mehok (1971, 1481A).

¹⁷ The text of this work was edited by Manzalaoui (1977, 390–534); the promised commentary volume has never appeared.

¹⁸ Fol. 5 is headed “Certain Psalmes of dauid [...] by William fforeste, 1551.”

British Library, MS Royal 17. A. xxi, a small manuscript of eighty-three leaves.¹⁹

By 1558 Forrest had finished his *History of Grisild the Second*, a biography, or quasi-hagiography, again in rhyme royal, of the life of Katherine of Aragon, mother, of course, of the then Queen, Mary Tudor; what appears to be a presentation manuscript of this poem to Mary herself survives uniquely in Bodleian Library, MS Wood empt. 2, of seventy-seven leaves.²⁰

After this Forrest seems to have embarked on the preparation of a revised version of his *History of the Patriarch Joseph* completed around 1569, the first part of which is now Oxford, University College MS 88, of ninety-seven leaves; the second is British Library, MS Royal 18 C. xiii, of eighty-nine leaves. Both parts are dedicated to Henry Howard, duke of Norfolk. There is a further manuscript of this work in Bodleian Library MS Eng. poet d. 9 (*olim* Phillipps 8909), of a hundred and fifty-seven leaves, which has an explicit “ffinis .1569. die vero aprilis 11” (fol. 157).²¹ His last surviving major work seems to have been British Library, MS Harley 1703, a collection of Marian verse of various kinds, of a hundred and fifty-three leaves; this is dated in its colophon “ffinis 27 Octobris 1572 | per me Guilelmum forrestum” (fol. 153).²² Not all the poems in this manuscript are by Forrest himself; one poem, for example, is identified there as by “a devoute Scotte,” sometimes incorrectly identified as William Dunbar.²³ Forrest only infrequently identifies himself as author by his name or initials.²⁴

¹⁹ For discussion of these Psalm translations see Wort (2016a).

²⁰ The 1875 edition of this manuscript, by Macray, is not always accurate in transcription and almost wholly without commentary, but has a helpful Introduction, including a listing of Forrest’s manuscripts. For a recent discussion of the date of the work see Wort (2016b).

²¹ Wort (2017) suggests that these manuscripts contain different versions of the text, but does not present evidence for this view.

²² Edited by Keenan (1960); see *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 21 (1960), p. 1555. Two of the poems in Harley 1703 have recently been transcribed by Milsom (2010, esp. 35–36, 37–38, from fols 62v–63, 33r–v respectively).

²³ See MacCracken (1909, 110–11); the poem is on fols 79v–80. On the misattribution see most recently Dunbar (1998, II, 30).

²⁴ His full name appears only three times at the end of particular poems: “haec gulielmi fforest” (fol. 62), “Qd. W. fforest. 1571.” (fol. 66), “deo gratias Willm forest” (fol. 106); at

In total eight manuscripts survive containing Forrest's works. What makes these manuscripts particularly distinctive is that they were all copied by Forrest himself. He has left a far larger body of autograph verse than survives for any other sixteenth-century English poet. In several of these manuscripts he specifically identifies them as copied in his own hand. Royal 18 C. xiii is described as "per me Guilelmum Forrestum manu propria conscriptum" (Fig. 1); elsewhere he describes his work as copied by "Wyllyam Forrest, Preiste, proprie manu" (Bodleian, Wood empt. 2, fol. 69v). In other manuscripts he subscribes his work simply "per me Gulielmum Forrestum" (Harley 1703, fol. 153) or "Quod william fforest" (Bodleian, Eng. poet. d. 9, fol. 157).

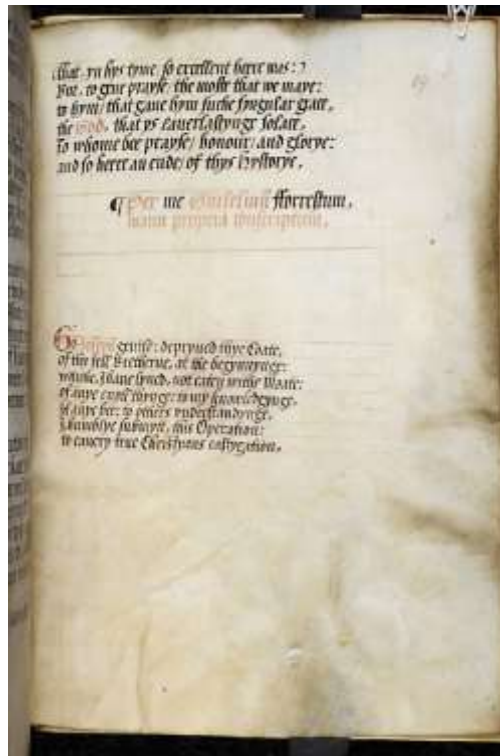


Fig. 1: © British Library Board MS Royal 18 C. xiii, fol. 19

several other points he gives his initials at the end of poems: "finis Amen W. F" (fol. 98), "Amen finis W. F." (fols 100, 101v).

To the burden of composition then was added the labor of transcription and also (probably) of related tasks. Such labor was clearly not inconsiderable in view of the number of his manuscripts, the length of his texts and the often-high level of their production values. Five of the eight are copied on vellum,²⁵ and a number are also decorated, some quite elaborately. Forms of decoration range from various forms of penwork initials,²⁶ to illuminated ones²⁷ to occasional illustrations.²⁸ Whether Forrest himself was the creator of all these forms of visual enhancement is unresolvable. But the possibility cannot be discounted. If he did undertake all of this decoration himself, including the illuminated initials and illustration, it would be very unusual testimony to his comprehensive grasp of the range of skills associated with manuscript production.

The deployment of such skills, whether personally exercised or supervised, seems to have been controlled by an overall shaping sense of what constituted the forms in which his works should be read. The unfinished *Pleasaunt poesye of princelie practise*, in Royal 17 D. iii, begun in 1548, fairly early in Forrest's career as scribe and poet, shows a careful attention to decorative aspects, notably the elaborate painted initials that recur through much of the text (they disappear towards the end) and the consistent use of rubrication and of words written with different colored letters. The elaborateness of its decorative program seems designed to reflect both the seriousness of its topic, kingship, and the status of its dedicatee, Somerset. It appears to be carefully conceived to offer, in effect, a physical form appropriate for presentation to one who holds the power that forms the subject of the poem. Here the poet/scribe/artist is deployed in an overtly political role not just through the content of his work, but also through the nature of its materiality. Through an unintended irony the manuscript's incomplete state also starkly demonstrates the hazards of such political involvement in the form of [through] the

²⁵ These are British Library, MSS Royal 17. A xxi, Royal 17. D. iii, Royal 18. C. xiii, Bodleian Library, MSS University College 88 and Wood empt. 2.

²⁶ As occur at the start of each chapter in Royal 18. C. iii.

²⁷ As occur in Royal 17. D. iii.

²⁸ There is a full-page drawing of Forrest presenting his manuscript to the young Edward IV at the beginning of Royal 17. D. iii.

circumstances that may have entailed its incompleteness, that is, Somerset's fall from power in 1549.

Similar elaborate decoration occurs in Bodleian Library MS Wood empt. 2, the unique copy of Forrest's *History of Grisild the Second*. It seems likely that this manuscript was intended for presentation to Mary Tudor. It is on vellum and carefully ruled for four spaced rhyme royal stanzas to a page. Each of the twenty chapters begins with an elaborate painted initial; proper names are rubricated. Once again there is a sense of an effort to create a form of the work appropriate for the status of the dedicatee or commissioner. Such a sense of appropriateness extends beyond the text. The original binding was in black velvet (now virtually disappeared) with four bosses, each inscribed "ave Maria gracia plena" thereby linking dedicatee directly to the form of Christian faith she so forcefully embodied.

The standard of decoration achieved in Forrest's earlier manuscripts is not sustained in the later ones. It may be that in later life Forrest either had less access to necessary resources or less ability to execute decoration and (perhaps) less ready access to patrons eager for lavish copies. Both Eng. poet d. 9 and Harley 1703 are on paper and without decoration; as already noted, these were completed in 1569 and 1572 respectively.

Forrest's concern with the visual aesthetics of his works finds related expression in the central element in his autograph creations, his transcriptions. Crucial here is his ability to deploy a hierarchy of scripts in the same manuscript. In Royal 17 D. iii, for example, *The Pleasant Practise of Princelie Poesie*, the distinction is less a matter of size or form of script than of duct. There is a contrast between his upright display script, with alternate lines in different colored inks, which is used in title and dedication, and his regular slightly right leaning text hand, largely written in black ink.²⁹ The page also reflects an evident concern with spacing and the proper overall balance of the page, seen in the employment of different hierarchies of decorated initials, with a larger (7-line) one to mark the beginning of the text itself. The chief paleographical characteristics of both scripts are the two lobed -g- linked by a vertical short vertical ascender, the lower lobe not invariably fully closed; single compartment -a- with a left turning hooked ascender; open -e-; and the absence of any forms of ligature

²⁹ See the facsimile of fol. 8 reproduced in Manzalaoui (1997, 400).

apart from -st-, -th-, such double consonants as -ff- and -ll-, and forms involving -g- and a following letter: -ge-, -gh-, -gn-, -go-, -gr-. It is a distinctive hand; the consistency in its forms and the regularity of aspect demonstrate a kind of visual authority, one that is made the more distinctive by the transitions between black and red inks, often in alternate lines, with [but] red [is] also used to give emphasis to proper names.

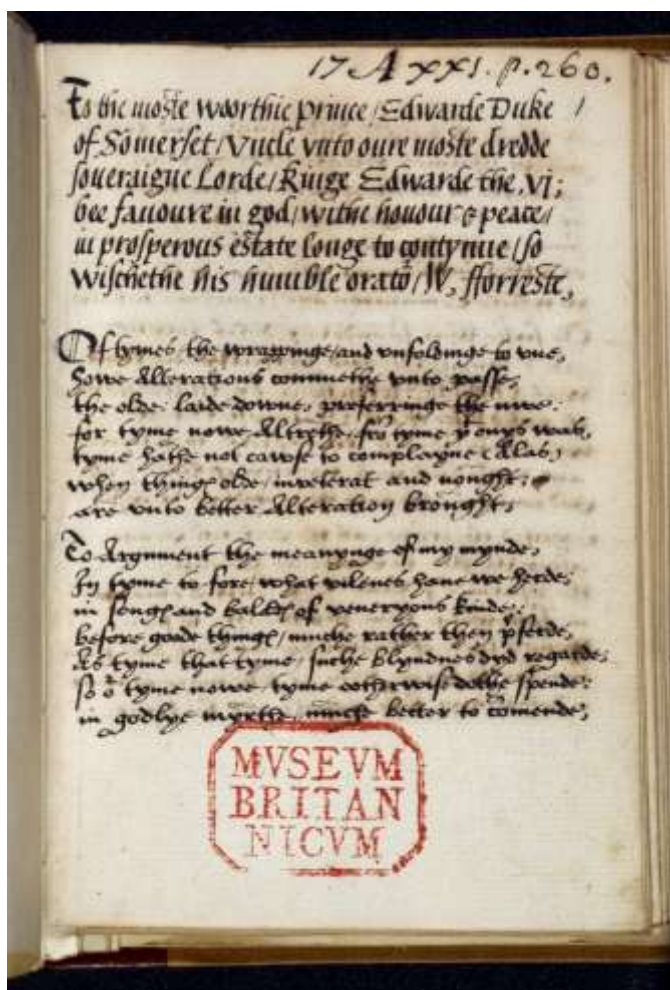


Fig. 2: ©British Library MS Board Royal 17 A. xxi, fol. 5

One can contrast the handling of script here with that in the other manuscript that Forrest dedicated to Somerset in Royal 17 A. xxi, fol. 1, where the categories of script appear unsupported by any decorative elaborateness (Fig. 2). There is an obvious distinction between the larger display script of the title heading ("Certaigne Psalmes of dauyd [...]"), where size and lack of ligatures between letters provide the chief means of emphasis, and the smaller, fluent cursive script of the text itself, where only the opening word is emphasized in heavier ink ("**Come** [sic], let vs singe vnto the lorde [...]"). But there is a modulation between these forms through the use of another, thinner form of display script ("Heere doothe the propheet call us all [...]") clearly written with a sharper nib.

The conception of the relationship between forms of script and page layout, here and elsewhere, serves as a reminder of the relationship, famously formulated by Stanley Morison (1972), between script and politics. It is clear that Forrest, writing in an age primarily of print, took such forms of representation as a serious element in the "delivery" of individual copies of his works in manuscript to particular prominent figures, both Catholic and Protestant, from Mary Tudor herself and Thomas, duke of Norfolk on the one hand, to Protector Somerset, and the reformist (or opportunist) William Parr, earl of Essex, on the other. The careful balancing of such a range of scripts in these presentation copies, together with the use of different colored inks and illumination, shows an awareness of the relationship between the visual and the verbal. The evident aim is to create a series of harmonious visual effects through which what is being said is consonant in its written forms with the status of the envisaged audiences.

It is unclear how Forrest developed his skills as a scribe. It is possible that he was trained in a monastery in his youth. If so, there may be a parallel with Andrew Borde (*ca.* 1490–1549), who began his career at the start of the sixteenth century as a scribe in the London Charterhouse, copying vernacular religious writings; his name occurs as copyist in Bodleian Library, MS Douce 262, in a colophon to a copy of the *Book of Privy Counselling*. But whereas Borde went on to a prolific career in print, the trajectory of Forrest's activities was very different. It is also possible that he may have had connections to the secular manuscript book trade. As I have said, he can be linked to the poet Alexander Barclay, whose will includes bequests to his cousin Parnell

Atkinson and to her husband Thomas Atkinson, described there as a London scrivener.³⁰ This tenuous connection between Barclay, Forrest and metropolitan commercial scribal activity in the mid sixteenth century can offer no more than a reminder of the contexts in which manuscript production could obtain at this time.³¹ But it is a reminder worth having in relation to Forrest even if it brings no greater clarity about the ways in which he developed his scribal and decorative skills.

It is not easy to find precedents for Forrest's activities as a scribe-poet. The most apposite is probably the work of the Augustinian monk, John Capgrave (1393–1464), who in the fifteenth century also made a number of copies of his own writings intended for presentation to specific, often powerful, individuals and who apparently oversaw a scriptorium producing further copies.³² Capgrave's activities are the only precedent in England for a religious vernacular poet preparing numbers of copies of his own works personally for prestige audiences. There are, however, significant differences between the two. Forrest, of course, found himself in circumstances where such monastic resources were no longer available and where he must have had to find other means to produce his works. Thus, he embodies a model of literary entrepreneurship that has no obvious contemporary parallels in the number and often the quality of his manuscript productions. Forrest seems to have combined in one person forms of literary activities that, in later periods, were to require distinct organizational categories: author, production manager and literary agent, as he negotiated the preparation of bespoke manuscript versions of his writings.

The last category remains the most intriguing and the most unclear. Given their often relatively high production standards it seems likely that the majority of his manuscripts were commissioned. Even if Forrest undertook all aspects of decoration himself, as well as acting as scribe, the expense of acquiring vellum, colored inks and paint, would have been considerable. And if he did not, but drew on

³⁰ On Barclay's relationship with Atkinson see Orme (2008).

³¹ For a fine overview of manuscript circulation in this period, see Woudhuysen (1996); this does not, however, discuss Forrest.

³² On Capgrave's activities see Lucas (1969); this is reprinted in revised form in his *From Author to Audience: John Capgrave & Medieval Publication* (1997, 19–68).

the services of other artisans, these expenses would have been correspondingly greater. That he could have borne the attendant expenses himself seems unlikely. As is often the case, the dynamics of subvention, or patronage, if that is what it was, resist confident analysis. But the most likely implication is that Forrest had access to networks that could provide material support for at least some of his manuscripts, most probably from those to whom works were dedicated. Such expensive investments in manuscript production were uncommon by the middle of the sixteenth century. They offer testimony to the level of attention Forrest devoted to creating forms of his poems that were personalized through the integrated activities of poet, scribe and decorator(s) (possibly all the same person) to meet his sense of a precisely defined audience.

Forrest appears to have appreciated that in a print culture there were still audiences for such highly personalized manuscript productions. And that the demand for such manuscripts cut across political and religious divisions, embracing both Catholic and Protestant circles, finding audiences among those in positions of power in different regimes.

This is not the place to raise the question of the nature of Forrest's literary achievement. Any assessment of it would be premature since, as already noted, no significant part of his corpus exists in a reliable modern edition. But it is clear that those of his writings intended for presentation to persons of political standing generally articulate a coherent moral vision in which personal history often becomes exemplary biography, emblematic of the constancy of virtue in an unstable world and the operation of Divine justice. These matters can be seen in obvious ways in the variant forms of his *Life of Joseph*, composed for different prominent Catholics in the reigns of Henry VIII and Elizabeth I, and his account of the injustices meted out to Mary Tudor's mother in his *History of Grisild the Second*. Both Katherine and Joseph are victims of a world in which they experience extreme loss, ingratitude and injustice nobly borne and triumphantly transcended through faith and God's will.³³ But Forrest's interests also extend to obvious devotional ends in his manuscripts concerned with Psalm translation and Mariolatry as well as to more immediate issues

³³ The two figures are explicitly linked in the "Oration consolatorye" addressed "To the Queenys Majestie," with which *The history of Griseld the Second* concludes: "So hathe the wicked disquieted thee, | (O noble Queene!), as the like *Joseph* dyd" (ed. Macray, p. 158).

of Realpolitik. In the only partially completed work of political instruction that he addressed to Protector Somerset, he presents himself as guide and counsellor proffering sage guidance.

Forrest's dedications of a number of his works to specific individuals may also reflect his awareness of changing political and religious circumstances and a final withdrawal in later life from involvement in such matters. His latest work, from the early 1570s, the transcription of a variety of poems treating of the Blessed Virgin, has no named dedicatee and may reflect a wholly personal devotional piety. The contrast here between the less elaborate form of this collection in comparison to his earlier manuscripts may be suggestive of such a retreat to private reflection.

Evidently Forrest was both a poet of some versatility and a scribe of considerable proficiency. In the latter respect he shows himself to be capable of deploying a range of scripts and (possibly/probably) decorative techniques, and adept at integrating text into a larger sense of page design. The market for his productions was largely precisely targeted to those in positions of power. His production of such manuscripts over several decades for persons of prominence across a spectrum of politics and faith in the mid sixteenth century shows some of the ways in which the manuscript form continued to be applicable in such contexts. Forrest's activities suggest the continuing existence of a demand for high end personalized manuscript books, books designed for coterie audiences, within an established print culture. That he was able to identify and serve such a manuscript market and to disseminate his own verse through it in such bespoke forms as survive makes him a curious manifestation of late English scribal and clerical literary culture. A fuller appreciation of the interrelated roles he enjoyed as both poet and artisan may contribute to a broader understanding of the potentiality of the manuscript book at a relatively advanced stage in its history.

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Reviews

Patrick Cheney. 2018
English Authorship and the Early Modern Sublime
Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

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It requires little more than common sense and a certain familiarity with the poetry, drama and prose of the period to realize that early modern English authors were capable both of experiencing the phenomenal sublime and of expressing it in their writings. Yet, the category of the sublime has been largely ignored as a potentially useful concept for analyzing early modern English literature. If not quite taboo, the concept has been sidelined as somehow not *à propos*, whether because of its purported anachronism or its contravention of standard rhetorical practice. It is true that the term “sublime” was not used in its current aesthetic sense until the second half of the seventeenth-century, but that does not mean the related experience did not exist. It is true, too, that the figures typically associated with the literary sublime often involved elocutionary license and were therefore treated and used with caution; but they were in no way anti-rhetorical as has sometimes been asserted. It is certainly not true that until Boileau’s 1674 French translation of Longinus no aesthetic or philosophical discourse of the sublime was possible, nor that Longinus was the only classical source that dealt with the sublime.

Fortunately, the history of the sublime in literature has come to look very different over the last three decades. Much of the credit for this face-lift is due to classical scholar Porter (2016), who has demonstrated beyond all doubt that the sublime existed before, and could quite well have existed without, Longinus; to Renaissance scholars such as Refini (2012) and Martin (2012), who have uncovered a thriving continental discourse of the sublime *avant la parole*; and to literary historians such as Boitani (1989) and Jaeger (ed. 2010 and 2012), on the one hand, and Norbrook (1999 and 2010) on the other, who have filled the gap in the history of the sublime between classical antiquity and late seventeenth- and eighteenth-century aesthetics by pointing to its centrality in medieval literature and Milton, respectively. It was only a matter of time before the gap between

Dante and Milton started to be filled, and Cheney's book achieves much of that task in many ways. Indeed, taken all in all, *English Authorship and the Early Modern Sublime's* principal claim to present fame and future posterity lies in its partial completion of the history of the English literary sublime by using the authors it discusses to plug that historical and critical blindspot. Thanks to Cheney, the timeline of the English literary sublime is now almost finished, featuring, last but not least (and better late than never), the Fabulous Four of Spenser, Marlowe, Shakespeare and Jonson.

Cheney's Introduction surveys the recent scholarly rediscovery of early modern sublime discourse on the continent and in England; it also anticipates what will be one of Cheney's main theses, namely, that "the invention of the modern notion of the author is coterminous with the recovery of the classical sublime as an aesthetic category" (4). This explains the fusion of two usually distinct categories into the single "sublime authorship," which is the true object of Cheney's study of inscriptions – or "fictions" – of a sublime authorial self in the works of the Fab Four and their drawing on a repertoire of replicable topics (fire, flight, magic, rapture, transport, wonder, etc.) inherited from classical antiquity. It should be noted that a poet's fashioning of himself as a sublime author is no guarantee that his work will be sublime in effect; readers looking for an account of how early modern literary texts actually contrive to set readers' pulses racing should look elsewhere.

Through a host of close readings Cheney, one of today's most prolific writers on early modern English literature, proves beyond doubt that his writers did indeed fashion themselves "sublime," while in his Afterword, he concludes by exploring the link between sublimity and canonicity: canonicity depends on "literary greatness" (Cheney's "working definition of the sublime," 36), "literary greatness" is the aspiration of authors who write themselves sublime, the Fab Four were the first to do so in English and therefore, by ushering in the sublime, inaugurated the English canon. All that is well and good and makes *English Authorship* worth reading; it is also controversial in its own terms, as well as negligent of more materialist accounts of the rise of the author (e.g. Kesson 2014, Squires 2007). But the relative simplicity of Cheney's central thesis is sometimes obfuscated by a tendency to overcomplicate. For his Introduction also raises the question of "whether we see the sublime as an aesthetic of

citizenship or of godhood, in service of the nation or the deity, a principle finally of immanence or transcendence" (21). While this question is to be welcomed for its built-in critique of Kantian disengagement, it leads on the one hand to an awkwardly taxonomical approach to the four writers discussed and, on the other, to occasionally forced claims for political engagement.

Chapter 1 complicates things further. Intended as a theoretical framework, it is rather a woodpile of concepts and authorities (from Longinus to Lyotard) awaiting assembly into a coherent whole. A further problem is Cheney's decision to use *phantasia* as a rhetorical thread running through the Fab Four's negotiations with the sublime. Glossing the term as "visualization" (38), Cheney seems to understand it as the psychological correlate of elocutionary *energeia*, later glossed as "visuality" (75), and as a near-cognate of imagination (38n27). *Phantasia*, we are told, is "the technique of the immortalizing process [of sublimity]" (38). The question begged here is whether *phantasia*, or the use of the imagination, is a sufficient condition for immortality via literary sublimity: if that is the case, then, *ut pictura* (i.e. as something visual), almost all *poesis* must be sublime and all writers of it immortal. Furthermore, the equation of Longinus' "posthumous fame" with immortality is either disingenuous or lacking in thought: one doubts whether Faustus would have traded his soul for mere posterity, one knows that the Fab Four are only really immortal metaphorically. And that figurative immortality certainly cannot be a sufficient condition of any retrospective attribution of sublime authorship, for all kinds of long-dead writers are still remembered today, but not all of them are regarded as sublime. Recent studies of *ekphrasis* have shown its consanguinity with *phantasia* (Webb 1999, 2009), but none have hailed it as offering a fast route to immortality. Indeed, in an important article, Goldhill reminds us of Longinus' own remarks to the effect that *phantasia* can "enslave" (*douloutai*) the reader "to get round the censor of the intellect" (2007: 6). Enslavement is the underbelly of rapture or ravishment that Cheney prefers not to see since, eager to proselytize for a liberating sublimity which flourishes in a democratic society, he overlooks the relevant passage in Longinus (15.9). And in this connection, Cheney once again does not quite think things through, for if sublimity really is "the highest mark of a democracy" (43), where are the sublime artists of today, and why were the great sublime writers of the past all

unfranchised citizens of pre-democratic societies (with the arguable exception of the Greek tragedians)?

There is something whiggish to Cheney's five chapters of practical analysis which want Spenser to lead to Marlowe and Marlowe to Shakespeare, despite their very close contemporaneity, with each building on or against each other and culminating in a Jonsonian synthesis, pending the arrival of Milton. So, Chapters 2 and 3 speak grandiloquently of Spenser's "inventing an art form impossible to subject to the rationalizing powers of the mind: an art form, that is, of liberating revelation" (86) and differentiate his sublime into four strands, the "theological" or "godly," the "political" or "patriotic," the "erotic" or "marital," and the "artistic" or "laureate." Spenser's sublime is, Cheney suggests, "instrumental" and therefore "immanent" as the poet "assume[s] an active role in shaping the world" (257). In contrast, so Chapter 4 would have it, as well as innovating an English "counter-national" (157) tragic sublime of terror, Marlowe prefers transcendence to immanence, "using the immanent to disappear inside transcendence itself [in] a sublime coupling with the literary image" (258). Chapter 5 shows how "The Shakespearean sublime combines those of Marlowe and Spenser, and somehow pushes beyond them, inventing a myriad-minded sublime [...] that is the quintessence of creative freedom" (258) as well as inventing the "comic sublime" (Falstaff) and providing us with "one of the greatest moments in theatre history" when Octavius becomes "a resurrectional witness" (259). Finally, in Chapter 6, Jonson's sublime "counters Shakespeare's myriad-mindedness with a Protean sublime," variously "comedic," "tragedic," "parodic," "lyric" and "romantic". Jonson is "nationalist" like Spenser, "parodic" where Marlowe was "tragedic," and, with Shakespeare, co-founder of the comic sublime. In this brief summary we observe the pitfalls of Cheney's taxonomizing: is there a qualitative distinction between "myriad-mindedness" and "Protean" (both used of Shakespeare by the Romantics), or are they both sides of the same coin, or, better perhaps, is the former not simply an explanation of the latter? why should Spenser be any less "Protean" than Jonson, if Cheney himself attributes to him as many varieties of sublimity as Jonson?

There is, of course, much to admire in Cheney's impressively documented book. The chapters on Spenser and Marlowe are largely cutting-edge state of the art, while that on Jonson is possibly the most

ground-breaking in applying to its subject's principle of judgement the optic of sublimity. More disappointing is the chapter on Shakespeare, written largely after Coleridge and Bloom. There are also over-readings, signs that Cheney is himself at times intoxicated or enslaved by his own grand ideas. A signal example is the conclusion to his commentary on Vernon's narrative, cited by Edmund Burke, of Hal vaulting onto his horse (1 *Henry IV*, 4.1.96–109): "Overwhelmingly, the imagery is of flight [...]. Yet the high-vaulting Prince *lands*, 'As if an angel dropped down from the clouds,' making clear that for this horseman, sublime transport is not the end but the means to instrumental action in the world" (180). Cheney emphasizes "*lands*," as if there were something surprising or wondrous about it. Yet, Hal's landing simply makes clear that even if Newton had yet to formulate the Law of Fall, gravity existed in Shakespeare's late Medieval England, a fact which needs no emphasizing at all but at least saves Hal's sublime leap from ending in ridiculous aerial suspension. Nonetheless, despite all the misgivings, Cheney's book is to be welcomed for setting the sublime squarely on the agenda of early modern English literary studies. It is remarkable for its efforts to balance Bloomean aestheticism with Helgersonian-Greenblattian committedness, and it is, finally, bold in its advocacy of a superannuated, WASM-ish canon. Cheney conceives of scholarship as fostering "conversation"; this book will do more than that.

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Paul Edmondson and Ewan Fernie, eds. 2018
New Places: Shakespeare and Civic Creativity
Bloomsbury: London

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2014 and 2016 are the key years around which this stimulating collection is based. As the 450th anniversary of Shakespeare's birth and the 400th anniversary of his death respectively, the various celebrations and commemorations discussed in the volume provided ample opportunities for the type of Civic Shakespeare in which the collection is interested. These anniversary celebrations moved outside professional Shakespeares in the theatre and the academy to occupy new spaces in towns and cities in the UK, Europe and North-America and, in the process, invited new audiences for their work. There are also other commemorations and celebrations dealt with in the book, including the 150th anniversary of the Deutsche Shakespeare-Gesellschaft in 2014 and the 500th anniversary of the establishment of the Venice ghetto in 2016, both of which combine with these Shakespearean anniversaries in interesting and multifaceted ways.

Several of the contributions in this volume deal with the traffic between civic Shakespeares in the past and present. The first section of the volume, for instance, looks back to the 1769 Jubilee in Stratford-upon-Avon and David Garrick's performance of *An Ode upon dedicating a building, and erecting a statue, to Shakespeare, at Stratford upon Avon*, a performance which has become a central moment in the history of English Bardolatry. Michael Dobson's chapter looks back from the present to ask whether Garrick's *Ode* was actually any good and finds himself paradoxically "impressed and delighted" with Sam West's 2016 performance of the work in Holy Trinity Church, whilst "struck by how comparatively useless and inaccessible and merely quaint it seemed to be for everyone else there" (13). He adds laconically that "2016 was a big year for being outvoted" a comment on the Brexit referendum, which is very much the sub-conscious of the volume because of its consequences for Europe and Europeans as

well as for the failure of the attempt to make Shakespeare a European Poet Laureate. Other chapters look at the new work commissioned alongside the *Ode* in 2016, particularly *A Shakespeare Masque* with music by Sally Beamish and poetry by Carol Ann Duffy. Duffy's autobiographical approach to Shakespeare and the participation of both amateur and professional as well as young and old performers in this work indicate some of the more contemporary features of Civic Shakespeare. Tobias Döring's illuminating chapter on the 1864 and 2014 Jubilees of the Deutsche Shakespeare-Gesellschaft in Weimar also contrasts the way in which the former's close connection with the desire for a German nation and first performance of Shakespeare history plays as a cycle became the very different 2014 Bremen Shakespeare Company' performance, which was not only "less textually centred than performatively inspired" but portrayed history as "fragmentary, purposefully incoherent, without higher destiny or meaning" (141). In the North-American section, Katherine Scheil points out how the aims of "personal fulfilment, community building, and civic enrichment" in women's Shakespeare clubs in the nineteenth century have given way to online meetings in the twenty-first century and their concerns with "social isolation, lack of personal contact and community coherence" (221).

Yet the traffic in the volume is not only between past and present but also between competing versions of the present. This is most apparent in the necessary task of defining what is meant by Civic Shakespeare, a task that is enthusiastically taken up by most of the contributors. A term coined by Tobias Döring, Paul Edmondson and Ewan Fernie at a 2011 meeting in Stratford, Edmondson's contagious enthusiasm for Civic Shakespeares is balanced by Fernie's more cautious approach. In the Preface, Edmondson argues that Civic Shakespeare "refers specifically to forms of engaging with Shakespeare that might take place on the streets or in other civic spaces, spilling beyond the boundaries of schools, universities, theatres, concert halls, galleries, libraries and museums" (x). Such forms, he continues, "dare to risk embarrassment, to be sentimental and enthusiastic, to be passionate" (xiii) and that "some might even wave flags" (xiii). His chapter on his own 2016 libretto set to the final fourteen minutes of Wagner's *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* is just such a work of passion, although it is equally passionate about

Shakespeare as a central figure of European culture. Fernie plays Jaques to Edmondson's Duke Senior, eschewing flag waving and pointing to the danger in Civic Shakespeare that it might simply reinforce the status quo and be instrumentalized by a disappearing State to solve essentially social and economic problems. Aware of the fact that a term like Civic Shakespeare might fail to resonate in non-Anglophone contexts, Döring examines the tortured history of a German word like "volk" as a translation of "civic" in order to reveal its "rebellious, unruly, anti-establishment" potential (138). Graham Holderness' Afterword historicizes the notion of the civic and its transformations over time. He notes the volume's concern "to find and occupy a 'civic sphere' of consensus and agreement and accord [...] beyond institutional and personal divisions" (253) but cautions that

We need to be confident that our civic domain of inclusion and integration, beyond political and religious controversy, is not simply an echo chamber in which we hear only the sound of our own voices: homogenous because exclusive, harmonious because purged. (253)

Conscious also of the ways in which the advocacy of Civic Shakespeare is also an attempt by academics to move beyond the strictures of the neo-liberal university, he encourages academics nevertheless to remain open to losing control of cherished understandings of Shakespeare when engaging with wider audiences. Katherine Craik and Ewan Fernie's chapter on The *Marina* Project, which seeks to find a radical contemporary meaning for Marina's chastity and Silvia Bigliazzi's chapter on creating alternatives to the constant reproduction of *Romeo and Juliet* in Verona are both valuable attempts to rethink the work of the academy within a wider society. However, it could be argued that their presuppositions of what constitutes the radical and the alternative also mean that the basis of the projects is already determined before the projects begin, leaving less room for more open processes of creation.

Other attempts to define Civic Shakespeare make use of existing theoretical formulations which are then applied to the field. David Ruiter's intersectionally-inspired exploration of "the civic intersection" or "a place teeming with the traffic of history and present day life, of identities and narratives built, shared and owned

in a lively, if sometimes challenging process of self-authoring and inclusion" (235) brings a necessary focus on diversity and temporal shifts to notions of the civic while Döring cites Almond and Verba's 1963 definition of civic culture as a third culture "neither traditional nor modern but partaking of both; a pluralistic culture based on communication and persuasion, a culture of consensus and diversity" (xxii) and thus goes beyond attempts to cast the civic as simply progressive or regressive. All these formulations illustrate the real strength of the book—its ability to open up new questions prompted by working outside the conventions of the academy or the theatre. The other great strength of the book is the observer-participant or insider perspective which brings a strong sense of creative process and insider knowledge to the discussions along with the welcome reproduction within the book of much of the new material created, from the liturgy *Seeing More Clearly with the Eyes of Love* to the performance script of *Shakespeare Unbard* by the performer/researchers Hester Bradley and Richard O'Brien, which accompanies an exemplary analysis of the pitfalls of celebrating Shakespeare, to Garrick's *Ode* itself.

There are questions that might have been dealt with in more detail. The reference to "New Places" in the title, obviously plays on the association with New Place in Stratford, but apart from Shaul Bassi's chapter on *The Merchant of Venice* in the Ghetto, which extensively documents the various meanings, both historical and contemporary, that accrue to this highly symbolic performance space and Silvia Bigliazzi's notion of Verona as a space saturated by *Romeo and Juliet*, there is little discussion of how the locations themselves create meanings for the artistic endeavours that take place there. There is also little indication of how Civic Shakespeare feeds back into the institutional sites of the academy and the theatre. Silvia Bigliazzi talks movingly of her memories of working with theatre practitioners and hearing words she has written come to life. David Ruiter charts the re-authoring of *Macbeth* by the civic performance project: Will Power to Youth in 2016 which reimagined the play as "the tragedy of lost agency, of lost authorship, the tragedy of following someone else's story rather than writing one's own" (248) yet these are no more than tantalising details of what was learned from such experiments.

New Places: Shakespeare and Civic Creativity, to its credit, opens up many such questions without prematurely answering them. Fernie's rather understated conclusion to his Introduction "Civic Shakespeare, we propose, could make a real contribution" (xxiii) may not inspire people to take to the streets, yet it is a judicious assessment of a productive area of work that offers many rewards but also demands experimentation with new ways of thinking about and working with Shakespeare.

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**Keir Elam. 2017. *Shakespeare's Pictures: Visual Objects in the Dramas*. The Arden Shakespeare
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**B. J. Sokol. 2018. *Shakespeare's Artists: The Painters, Sculptors, Poets and Musicians in his Plays and Poems*
The Arden Shakespeare. London: Bloomsbury**

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Edward Dowden's 1899 edition of *Hamlet* marked the start of Arden's priceless contribution to Shakespeare studies. With the publication of *Measure for Measure*, planned for November 2019, the third series of editions will be complete; meanwhile the fourth series is at the planning stage, the new general editors already appointed. The Arden editions, attractively produced and increasingly weighty, have become, so to speak, the market standard, the first port of call for students and academics alike. And over the years, under the Arden brand, other collections have come into being, not least the companion series "Arden Early Modern Drama" (a notable contribution being Clara Calvo and Jesus Tronch's edition of *The Spanish Tragedy* [2013]) and "Shakespeare Studies and Criticism," to which belong the volumes under review. Shakespeare Studies is an endlessly proliferating field of interest to a world-wide audience of general readers, performers and scholars; it is, therefore, a big business with an apparently insatiable market. The question is whether that market is supply or demand-driven; the uneven quality of these two volumes suggests that the suppliers have the upper hand.

Keir Elam's *Shakespeare's Pictures* is no discredit to Arden's reputation. Its excellent Introduction provides a thorough, critical survey of the academic literature relating to Shakespeare and the visual arts, the "agency" of pictures and early modern visual culture. On the basis of his actual involvement in device design and his extensive technical lexicon, the Introduction also argues convincingly for the "intermedial" nature of Shakespeare's art; it finds time too for some observations on ekphrasis as a natural nexus between the dramatic and the visual arts. Chapter 1, whose title "Doing things

with words” signals theoretical indebtedness to J. L. Austin’s *How to do Things with Words* (1962), offers a complementary survey of Shakespeare’s tactical deployment of pictures throughout the plays as objects which, with a “performative power” of their own, act pragmatically as visual counterparts to words. The 118 pages of these two chapters are as useful and as up-to-date a guide to Shakespeare’s relations with the visual arts as could be wished for.

Each of the remaining four chapters is dedicated monographically to sensitive and informed close readings of individual plays. Chapter 2 argues that the “wanton pictures” referred to in the Induction to *The Taming of the Shrew* are Marcantonio Raimondi’s engravings (1524) of Giulio Romano’s notoriously explicit drawings of sexual acrobatics (*I modi*), to accompany which Pietro Aretino wrote his notoriously scurrilous sonnets (*Sonnetti lussorosi*, 1527). Shakespeare may not have known of Romano’s original creations since, as Elam shows, contemporary English writers tended to suppose that Aretino was responsible for illustrations as well as text. In Chapter 3, Elam locates *The Merchant of Venice*’s casket plot within the cultural praxis of viewing at Venice, the Shakespearean “republic of the gaze” (153). Chapter 4 is a veritable wunderkammer, presenting first Hamlet’s possibly Platonic mistrust of visual images and then digging up testimony from contemporary portraiture and funereal sculpture to show how Hamlet’s own figuratively iconic gestures—young man holding skull, young man holding book, young man holding picture—are actually conventional portrait poses which therefore configure him as literally iconic. Thus, Elam finds a new irony in a play which further underscores its well-known resistance to stability of any kind. Chapter 5 considers what might be called “double vision” in *Twelfth Night*. Once again, the historical underpinning is as convincing as absorbing: Elam’s discussion of “Mistress Mall’s picture” (*Twelfth Night*, 1.3.122) is persuasive; so too his interpretation of Olivia’s self-ekphrasis as an exercise in verbal limning. However, Elam’s contention that Orsino’s phrase “a natural perspective” alludes to the relative superiority of the English thrust stage to the illusionistic perspective picture sets is, I think, overstated.

In lieu of an afterword, Elam supplies an “Afterimage” dealing briefly with Hermione’s statue in *The Winter’s Tale*. Here, predictably, Giulio Romano, the only visual artist named in Shakespeare’s works, returns, but briefly and in relation to the technique of *trompe l’oeil*.

Sokol (81–92), by contrast, expends considerable energy on the Italian artist's significance for the statue scene, a point which indicates the considerable amount of overlap between the content of both books. For by "Shakespeare's Artists" Sokol means painters and sculptors, poets, and musicians, to each of which he devotes a brace of chapters.

Sokol's short Introduction sets out his methodological principles and some random theoretical observations concerning what he claims is the "literary critical experiment" of focusing on "Shakespeare's musicians, poets, painters and sculptors" (1). The claim is extravagant, firstly, because much of the book's contents recycles earlier work available elsewhere (Sokol is generous in citing 14 of his own publications, the earliest of which dates back to 1980) and, secondly, because the theoretical framework rests heavily on Rudolf and Margot Wittkower's *Born under Saturn* (1963), Ernst Gombrich's notion of the "beholder's share," as formulated in *Art and Illusion* (1977), or T. S. Eliot's of "The Three Voices of Poetry" (essay title, 1953): this is no criticism of the Wittkowers, Gombrich or Eliot, but their venerability does undermine the purportedly experimental nature of Sokol's book. To point out that Sokol's treatment of Shakespeare's artists in the body of the work actually reverses the order in which they appear in the sentence quoted above may be to quibble, but the piecemeal construction of the book hardly facilitates its coherence, a problem Sokol's clarificatory note on the arrangement of the chapters (2–3) only obscures.

The general, and hardly startling, message seems to be that "Shakespeare's artists" are represented with ambivalence. Apart from the extensive consideration given to ekphrasis in *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece*, Chapters 1 and 2 on Shakespeare's representations of painters and sculptors contain little that is not covered more cogently and with more recent references in Elam's work. The truth is that the plays' *dramatis personae* are hardly milling with artist figures, which may explain why Sokol is forced to train his sights on pictures too, particularly those of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, as well as to include the painter figures that are members of the cast in *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Arden of Faversham* (which entails acceptance of Shakespeare's disputed collaboration in both plays). The *paragone* between Painter and Poet in *Timon of Athens* receives due coverage, as does *The Winter's Tale's* statue, though to little purpose.

Chapters 3 and 4 on Shakespeare's poet figures consider, among others, the issue of "literary criticism by example" (97), drawing predictably on *Love's Labour's Lost*, *Romeo and Juliet* and *As You Like It*. Sokol prefers to bypass the potentially fruitful topic of how Shakespearean characters such as Richard II, Hamlet or Camillo conceive of themselves as poets on the suspect grounds that the latter two at least "fall foul of Freud's noble stricture that 'the aesthetic attitude towards an object is characterised by the condition that we do not ask anything of the object, especially no satisfaction of our serious needs'" (97; quote from Freud 1963, 10–11). To adduce Freud at this point (who, despite Sokol's record as an analytical critic, has so far kept a low profile in the book) seems somewhat arbitrary, especially as Freud is simply re-tuning Kant; more seriously, it runs counter to Sokol's previous readings which have made much of the art work's therapeutic capacity. Chapter 4's analysis of poetic self-disclosure in the Sonnets drifts away from its brief towards the trite conclusion that "*Odi et amo*, love and loathing, are often intertwined in Shakespeare's poems" (138), which sounds more like an A-level exam question than an innovative scholarly insight.

Chapter 5 is the most useful in its accumulation of interesting detail about the Elizabethan context of musical production and performance, as well as its social status; Sokol's reading of Sonnet 128 in the light of harpsichord technology is fascinating and persuasive. Casting about for more material, Chapter 6 explores Shakespeare's direct or indirect allusions to mythological musicians, chiefly Marsyas, in *The Merchant of Venice*, and Babys, in *Othello*. Once again, the background, in this case, iconographic, is fascinating; the interpretations a little overdone but, treating of bagpipes and other wind instruments, mercifully under-Freudian.

On the evidence of these two books, afterwords instead of conclusions are the order of the day. Sokol's carries the title "Considering Joyousness in Art" (219), which sits oddly in a work that evinces little authorial enthusiasm for an admittedly diffuse topic, in contrast to Elam's volume, which is plainly a labour of love. Elam's textured, historically informed, jargon-free readings will persuade his readers of the serious pragmatic and semiotic functions of pictures in Shakespeare's plays; Sokol's, too narrow in their focus, will leave his feeling short-changed. Both books would have benefitted from a more considered conclusion which, in Elam's case, did full justice to his

enlightening arguments by bringing together their various strands, and, in Sokol's, gave a measure of coherence to his otherwise motley contents.

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**Carme Font. 2017. *Women's Prophetic Writings in
Seventeenth-Century Britain*
London and New York: Routledge**

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The simple, almost formulaic title of this book, *Women's Prophetic Writings in Seventeenth-Century Britain*, screens the multifarious approaches that turn the issue into a field of research in its own right: if each of the items in the sequence—"women," "prophecy," "writing," and "seventeenth-century Britain"—is charged with its own history of scholarly speculation, in the book the trail of such critical approaches is not simply evoked, but woven structurally to untangle some of the key knots in these threads and allow the flow of a new narrative. The study, therefore, does not simply provide an overview of the latest contributions concerning British prophetesses, but, in doing so, it contributes significantly to the debate on the perceptions of female agency throughout history, the activism of sects in the political-religious landscape of the seventeenth century, or the struggle of modern religious discourses and practices to resist the drift of the mainstream secular movement. Carme Font avails herself of the supposedly peripheral ground on which some of these issues still stand to question some central tenets and bring to the fore inherited misconceptions.

The structure of the book furnishes that combined comprehensive approach whereby individual cases are presented as part of a continuum that unfolds, both chronologically and thematically, as the constant critical remarks add to its understanding. By concentrating on the heady first decades of the seventeenth century, Font sets the course of her study under no other label than *Politicum*: the biblical and classical legacy supporting the bond between women and prophetic experience could not fail to re-emerge in Reformation England, a period that also reproduced the disputes concerning the intellectual capacity of women. As the seventeenth century witnessed the spread of reading habits, along with the proliferation of diverse

religious attitudes, female writing developed amazingly and its role amidst this emerging religious environment was readjusted so as to echo a number of responses to the main political decisions and events. Font looks at the religious and social background of these women, whether they still kept contact with recusant circles, partook of the Anglican basic structure or put their faith in any of the sects that provided the communal or conventicle habitat where their messages might be heeded. She also consistently incorporates information on their family relationships, especially their links to a father, mother or husband figure, essential to their spiritual formative moments and their resistance in face of adversity. The Habermasian concept of public space is invoked by Font as she also highlights the permeable boundaries existing between the categories of the private and the public in this particular context. Certainly, both spheres coalesce once these women commit themselves to the prophetic task. Such a mission demands the arranging of their private selves so as to channel the divine voice and, thus, the thwarting of their personal dimension for a higher universal vocation. If the motif of the spiritual crisis triggered by illness, a strong emotional family loss or divine calling is almost a must in this literature, the other major ingredient in their adventure is the printing enterprise they embark on. In fact, one fascinating aspect is Font's attempt to track the contacts between prophetesses and the editorial world: they gained access to hard-to-find texts through circles of radical activists among which these booksellers and printers proved essential (Elizabeth Poole even owned the building where an unlicensed printing press belonging to Elizabeth Calvert was located), or took the opportunity to travel to the continent to have their treatises and pamphlets secretly printed (the case of Lady Eleanor Davies's journey to Amsterdam). These women were, therefore, not only the transparent empty vessels through which God's message might be conveyed. They took the trouble to comment on their writing role and pointed at the inspiration, the composition process and even the final layout of their texts. They insisted on printing, copying and preserving them and involved their close family, relatives and friends in the process. They played with the literary *persona* that would better respond to the requirements in each situation and, once introduced to the public eye as prophets, they clung to the title to construct a specific authorial self: it is this specific writing style in each of them, the animosity of some of their attacks, the opportunism in the use of some

of their metaphors, the sophisticated visionary quality beyond the basic biblical patterns, or the delirious tonality of their trances that Font so effectively describes through her hermeneutic practice.

In the first section of the book she analyses prophetic discourse as a gender-specific way for women to participate in public matters. Thus, by conducting a thorough study of their treatises, she is able to grasp the degree of independence in their utterances or else the possibility of their being handled in the political game between dissenting and official positions, as well their political repercussions. Although the prophetic stance was not in itself regarded as necessarily dangerous or radical at the time, some of these women became active creators of public opinion in daring to advise, admonish, or even condemn the religious, political and military authorities before and during the Civil Wars. Consequently, they might be initially accepted and hailed as revolutionary, only to be deemed politically incorrect or subversive later on. Such is the case of Mary Pope, who resorts to the argument of natural order and reciprocity between God, King and subjects to talk against the regicidal possibility in the tracts addressed to Parliament. Baptist Elizabeth Poole's early stance equally seemed to be in accordance with that of the Army Council, only to prove otherwise when invited to deliver a speech before Charles I's execution. Font's careful reading of their texts leads to a series of insightful questions about the doctrinal and political training of women as they so subtly offered sound political coverage through the religious fabric. Font also takes pains to reveal the hidden agenda of some male members of these non-conforming groups, in stark contrast to the sorority spirit and organizational skills of their women.

It is precisely in the conventicle meetings where such an opportunity arose for those who had a bent for prophecy. Many of the wives and daughters attending those encounters would expect to learn from one another by sharing their souls' progress through autobiographical accounts. This need to partake of an election narrative—seeking salvation and social regeneration through personal testimony—might lead to a more mystical and individually oriented sequence of prophecies, characteristic of Puritan authors like Hanna Allen, Jane Turner or Sarah Wight. This is the main theme of the second section in the book: *Protean Feminisms*. A key aspect in

some of their work is the importance granted to intellectual knowledge as different from the experience of being endowed with divine grace, as well as the ecstatic quality of this kind of prophecy and the entailing performative powers displayed accordingly. These are masterfully illustrated by Anna Trapnel's raptures, where dream and vision mingled in the sacred conversation between the woman and Christ. In clear contrast to this irrational current, the argument of this section dwells further on the didactic efforts of some of those who, confronted with the female incapacity to preach and with the hard circumstances dissenters underwent, produced an outstanding diversity of writings: poems, diaries, catechisms, prophecies, spiritual autobiographies. The chapter analyses the contribution of Elizabeth Bathurst, An Collins, Anne Venn, Elizabeth Major, Dorothy Burch, the anonymous I.K., Katherine Sutton or Katherine Chidley, all of them finding ways to preach under the guise of prophetic discourse or resorting to the recurrent theme of the in-dwelling of the Holy Spirit, thus availing themselves of the closeness between preaching and announcing.

Finally, the third part, *In-Communications*, grants attention to the relationships among these women, and to the manifold implications of their writing practice. Special consideration is given to Lady Eleanor Davies and Jane Lead, whose personal and writing trajectories are exposed so as to confirm their authorial freedom. The exceptionality of the former comes not only from her enigmatic imagery and disruptive linguistic style. Of aristocratic stock and Anglican leanings, she is as unconventional in launching her prophetic tirades against Anglican archbishops as she is when defending double predestination against Calvinist tenets. If, like some of her sectarian counterparts, she reinforced her subversive agenda by invoking Prophet Daniel as her source of inspiration, Font introduces Jane Lead as one who resorted instead to the medieval mystical traditions that nourished her visionary female iconography. The popularity of her complex visions, both at home and abroad, proves the resilience of female prophecy, a discursive and cultural phenomenon all the more meaningful when registered as part of female common religious practice. Font reminds us that many women met regularly, shared their readings and religious experiences, organized political action when necessary, challenged the authority of

congregation leaders, and acquired a distinct sense of themselves as liable to participate within a larger authorial chain. Upon Jane Lead's death, for instance, Anne Bathurst, belonging to the former's original group, saw herself as Lead's successor and produced her own poetry. Davies' or Lead's exceptionality could, therefore, be absorbed into the wider general flow. Quaker women are a case in point: capable of undertaking all kinds of dangerous tasks and adapting to the new political climate in the second half of the century, they took to writing as an activity which would keep them safely anchored to their community and god, while undertaking hard prophetic activism. Katherine Evans and Sarah Cheevers, imprisoned after distributing their Quaker pamphlets among the Catholics gathered at mass in Malta, or Rebecca Travers's detention for preaching in the street, among other cases, show that prophetic practice could still be used to fulfil an evangelic mission. Furthermore, the constant commitment to godly and collective affairs would undeniably inspire these women's confidence to denounce even the inner disorder in their congregations, or else the violence at home, thus submitting the domestic sphere to the vaster prophetic powers so as to dispel its effects.

The density of Font's multifocal approach responds to the study of a thick net of primary and secondary sources which the author has carefully placed in a dialogic space. The compilation of letters, tracts, prologues, treatises, catechisms, pamphlets, poems, diaries or songs rescued from mainly the first half of the seventeenth century is entwined on almost every page with the specialized comments from a number of fields. Readers grow aware not only of the biographic ups and downs of these women and their writings, but also of the reverberation of their voices on today's feminist ears: Font is sincere when questioning our current interest in the prophetic female phenomenon, just as she is lucid in pointing out how this tradition may have dwindled away at the time. Most of all, through a careful and sensible procedure, she moves pertinently to demonstrate the diversity and theoretical complexity implied in women's uses of prophecy: the gift, sealed by printing, was widely enjoyed by a significant number of women of all persuasions and conditions, who managed to project their voices and fully inscribe themselves upon

the daily reality of the seventeenth century. Font's tour de force offers one of the most consistent and compelling depictions of this process.

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Sebastián Fox Morcillo. 2017
De honore. Estudio y traducción
Translated and edited by Antonio Espigares Pinilla
Madrid: Ediciones Complutenses

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Although not receiving as much attention as other early modern topics, the scholarly examination of the concept of honor in sixteenth and seventeenth-century English texts has consistently been part of academic endeavors since at least the 1950s. Indeed, already since Edward Wilson's pioneering studies on honor in Shakespearean drama (from the standpoint, it must be said, of a scholar of the Spanish Golden Age), various works have attempted to explore the notion of honor as a central concern of much early modern literature. To be sure, since Wilson's influential "A Hispanist Looks at *Othello*" (1952, re-edited in 1980), a number of books and articles have periodically approached this topic as one of evident relevance for the understanding of many early modern works. This is the case of, to mention just a few, Wilson's "*Othello*, a Tragedy of Honour" (1952); Charles L. Barber's *The Idea of Honour in the English Drama* (1957); Curtis B. Watson's seminal *Shakespeare and the Renaissance Concept of Honour* (1960); Norman Council's *When Honour's at the Stake* (1973); John Alvis's *Shakespeare's Understanding of Honor* (1990); and Ewan Fernie's *Shame in Shakespeare* (2001).

What all these works—and some others—have in common is, first and foremost, the strong belief that there is much in early modern literature that cannot be adequately grasped without properly addressing what honor (and related notions such as reputation, fame, glory, honesty or dishonor) meant for Elizabethan and Stuart communities. The aforementioned scholarship has mostly concluded that early modern creative texts by Shakespeare and others were informed by the pamphlets and treatises which helped shape the philosophical content of honor and its aggregates as they developed between the late fifteenth and the early seventeenth centuries.

There certainly is a consistent body of specialized pamphlets, conduct books and treatises which were instrumental in producing the concept of honor that informed so many works under the Tudors and the Stuarts. Among these, every scholar will recognize the relevance, for various reasons, of Thomas Elyot's *The Book Named the Governour* (1531); William Baldwin's *A Treatise of Morall Philosophie* (1564); William Segar's *The Booke of Honor and Armes* (1590); John Norden's *The Mirror of Honor* (1597); Count Hannibal Romei's *The Courtier's Academy* (1598); Lodowycck Bryskett's *Discourse of Civill Life* (1606); James Cleland's *The Institution of a Young Nobleman* (1607); Thomas Milles' *The Catalogue of Honour* (1610), Gervase Markham's *Honour in his Perfection* (1624), or Francis Markham's *The Booke of Honour* (1625).¹ These texts are the fundamental sources that anyone who wants to understand the early modern notion of honor that Shakespeare and other Elizabethan and Stuart authors introduced in their works needs to read.

Indeed, all these sources were influential in their own way, and most scholars acknowledged their relevance in the building of a narrative of honor in sixteenth and seventeenth-century England. Yet, among all these works, a book was published towards the turn of the century that every single scholar addressing this topic (then, as now) had to carefully consider, examine at length and cross-reference whenever honor was, in Hamlet's words, "at the stake."

Robert Ashley (1565–1641), lawyer, translator, polyglot, book collector and founder of the Middle Temple library (Ferris 2004) presented his manuscript essay *Of Honour* to Thomas Egerton, Lord Keeper of the Great Seal, between 1596 and 1603. This text, currently preserved in MS Ellesmere 1117 in the Huntington Library, was edited by Virgil Heltzel in 1947. In his edition, Heltzel introduced the essay as "the first attempt by an Englishman to deal with the subject of honor comprehensively and systematically in a separate work" (1947, 349). After Heltzel's pioneering edition, scholars unanimously considered Ashley's *Of Honour*, which was a sophisticated combination of Aristotelian and Platonic ideas about honor, the major source of early modern writings on honor and related ideas. Although

¹ A few non-English sources were also highly influential for early modern readers and writers; notably, Antonio de Guevara's *Diall of Princes* (1529), and Michel de Montaigne's essays, especially "Of not Communicating One's Honour," "Of Recompenses of Honour" and "Of Glory" (ca. 1580).

some attempts were made by Heltzel to identify some more or less direct sources for Ashley's work, Heltzel's unambiguous conclusion was that Ashley's was "an original English work" (1947, 349). However, since the publication of Antonio Espigares's work on Sebastián Fox Morcillo, we know it was not.

Prof. Espigares Pinilla's *Sebastián Fox Morcillo. "De honore." Estudio y traducción* offers English scholars the invaluable evidence that Robert Ashley's *Of Honour* was not an original work or Ashley's own elaboration on the concept of honor. Quite on the contrary, it was an almost literal translation of Fox Morcillo's earlier work *De honore*, an essay originally written in Latin and published in Basel in 1556, at least forty years before Ashley's *Of Honour* appeared in print. In unequivocal terms, Espigares writes: "*Of honour* no es más que un burdo plagio del tratado *De honore* de Sebastián Fox Morcillo" (2017, 58). Espigares explains and demonstrates this plagiarism through textual comparisons which leave no room for doubt. Furthermore, although Espigares does not proceed to examine the whole Ashleian text (it is not his major concern), any interested reader may easily confirm that Espigares's conclusion is correct.

To be sure, early modern "originality" is a concept we cannot take for granted, as it was common practice in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to borrow themes and topics, even to lift whole passages *verbatim*, without acknowledging the source. However, Ashley's book can only be characterized as a mere translation, from Fox's Latin into Ashley's (significantly Latinate) English, with only some very minor adjustments which Espigares adequately explains and accounts for. Other than that, Espigares demonstrates – and any reader can observe – that Ashley's work, far from being an original conflation of Platonic and Aristotelian ideas on honor, is simply a translation of what, forty years earlier, Fox Morcillo had to say about this matter.

Sebastián Fox Morcillo (1528–*ca.* 1559), Prof. Espigares tells us in an informative biographical sketch (chapter 2), was a prestigious Spanish humanist from Seville who spent some years in the Low Countries, during which he had his *De honore* published in Basel. After some coming and going between Flanders and Seville, he died – presumably drowned in shipwreck – while trying to flee the Inquisition, which had already burned his brother as a heretic (25–30).

It must be emphasized that Espigares Pinilla's essay goes beyond exposing Ashley's plagiarism of Fox Morcillo's *De honore*. Indeed, he not only makes this important Latin work more easily accessible to scholars of the early modern period, but it also includes an informative introduction on the subject. Firstly, Espigares elaborates an interesting analysis of the concept which examines the evolution of "honor" from Ancient Greece to sixteenth-century Spain (chapter 1, 7–24). This introductory study addresses such classical authors as Plato, Aristotle, the Stoics, Cicero and Seneca. The author also considers the writings of Aquinas and Augustine and their influence on medieval notions of honor, and confronts them with dominant views of honor and reputation in early modern Europe. Ideas of Montaigne, Vives, Erasmus or Ginés de Sepúlveda are briefly examined and convincingly discussed by the author.

After the aforementioned summary of Fox Morcillo's life (chapter 2), Espigares considers his work on honor from a diversity of interconnected perspectives. Firstly (3.1), *De honore's* genre adscription and addressees, i.e., Fox Morcillo's potential readership. Then, Espigares carries out a valuable philological effort of identifying an impressive number of textual sources present in Fox Morcillo's work (3.2). The most important ones are—as Fox Morcillo himself acknowledged and could be presumed—Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* and *Rhetoric*, and Plato's *Dialogues*. In addition, he considers many other, relatively minor sources such as Plotinus, Cicero, Plutarch, Marsilio Ficino, Lorenzo Valla, Antonio de Torquemada, Ginés de Sepúlveda, Castiglione, Possevino (the only contemporaneous source that earlier scholarship had claimed for Ashley) and several Biblical references. Espigares's comments are succinct and insightful, and any scholar interested on this topic (and early modern English texts) will find here significant food for thought.

In section 3.3 the author carries out an interesting stylistic analysis and concludes that Fox unsuccessfully tried to reproduce, as had so many early modern authors, a Ciceronian style. This Espigares shows through some thirty Latin expressions from *De honore* which he compares with their Ciceronian precedents. Finally, the fourth section of this third chapter demonstrates how Fox Morcillo's idea of honor was heavily indebted to both Aristotle and Plato. The former, he argues, can be perceived in the external manifestations of honor (the "honor-as-reward-of-virtue" approach), whereas Platonic honor is

associated with the introspective concept of honor: honor as virtue, disregarding awards and outward expressions. The final section deals with Ashley's plagiarism of *De honore*.

Espigares's translation of *De honore*, which constitutes the *raison d'être* of the work, is highly readable in spite of dealing with a source text dense with accumulated meanings and sophisticated concepts. At times, Espigares seems to yield to the convoluted syntax of the original ("Por otro lado [...] patentes," 96), but more often the resulting text lends itself to both academic and casual reading. Special mention must be made of the annotations. Espigares introduces abundant footnotes, with relevant and often even essential information, which clearly enrich the reading. These notes not only clarify obscure passages from the original but also introduce additional references and provide intertextual allusions.

The most significant shortcomings have to do, firstly, with the unexplained absence of bibliographical references for all those works included in the footnotes. Readers of such a scholarly edition as this one may require references to all the works mentioned in the translation notes. These include works by—among others—Horace, Tacitus, Plato or Cicero (notes 1, 4, 11, 14), but the source texts are left unreferenced. Also, either the author or the publisher has decided not to include the original—Latin—source text together with the translation. This is unfortunate, because a bilingual edition would have enriched the result by allowing readers to easily compare both texts, assess the quality of the translation and have access, with one look, to the two texts. This is especially interesting if one is also trying to work with what we might want to consider the "third" text, that is, Ashley's *Of Honour*.

In general, the edition could have also profited from a more nuanced approach to the notion of honor, not so much in terms of the classical origins of the concept (which are more than adequately addressed) but from an anthropological and historical—even ideological—perspective. All things considered, however, Antonio Espigares Pinilla's book is an extremely valuable contribution to early modern studies. It will prove of interest for the study of European humanistic writings, on the one hand, through the examination of Fox Morcillo's relevant contribution to early modern thoughts on honor, dishonor and reputation. And it will also provide a new understanding of English seventeenth-century texts on the same

notions (and their links with the poetry and drama of the period) by exposing the unexpected origin of Robert Ashley's *Of honour*, and its plagiarized nature.

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**José Manuel González, ed., José María Ferri
and María del Carmen Irles Vicente, coord. 2017**
Cervantes-Shakespeare 1616–2016:
Contexto, influencia, relación. Context, Influence,
Relation. Kassel: Reichenberger

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Cervantes-Shakespeare 1616–2016: Contexto, influencia, relación. Context, Influence, Relation is a monumental essay collection, the result of a team collaboration from the Universidad de Alicante with José Manuel González featuring as general editor and José María Ferri and María del Carmen Irles as co-editors. The volume is part of the series “Teatro del Siglo de Oro. Estudios de literatura 129; Cervantes y su mundo 9,” published in Germany with financial support from the local government of Valencia (AORG/2016/108). Most of the essays originated at a conference held at the University of Alicante (19–21 of April, 2016), commemorating the 400th anniversary of the deaths of Shakespeare and Cervantes in 1616.

Attempting to bring together the two iconic literary figures of Spain and Britain, this impressive essay collection stands out for its far-reaching scope. It harmoniously combines articles in both Spanish and English covering a wide range of subjects concerning the life and works of Cervantes and Shakespeare. With an ambitious aim in mind, the three editors have wisely distributed the essays into three distinctive blocks: “La época de Cervantes y Shakespeare,” (Cervantes’s and Shakespeare’s time), “Cervantes y Shakespeare: su mundo y su obra” (their world and their work) and “Cervantes and Shakespeare beyond *Cardenio*.” The collection is eminently interdisciplinary with contributions by prestigious specialists from various countries in the field of the literature and history of the early modern period in Britain and Spain.

The opening section contains four essays which function as a preface to the collection. The first introductory essay is by Darío Villanueva, former director of the Real Academia Española, who discusses the historical roles of Shakespeare and Cervantes as

forerunners of cinema. As Villanueva explains, in the notable scenographic conception of their works one can find “un repertorio insuperable de atisbos y soluciones precinematográficas” (7) [an unsurpassable repertoire of pre-cinematographic traces and solutions]. Michael Dobson, director of the Shakespeare Institute, reflects on the “immense overlaps” observed in the two authors’ “achievements and their influence” (14). Stephen Greenblatt in turn offers a translation into Spanish of a fictional letter authored by Shakespeare and addressed to Cervantes. Greenblatt, who dates this letter 2 August 1612, the signal year in which *Don Quixote* officially appeared in print in Britain, uses this literary artifice to dramatize key features of the relation between Cervantes and Shakespeare. The prefatory section concludes with “Consideraciones introductorias” by editor José Manuel González, a well-known expert on the reception of Shakespeare’s works in Spain.¹ González offers a comparative approach to the ways Shakespeare and Cervantes have made a notable impact on Spanish and English letters, respectively. As he points out, this fruitful interaction started rather late in the case of Spain with Ramón de la Cruz’s first translation of Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* (1772), which marked the beginning of the bard’s long-standing presence in the history of Spanish drama.² By contrast, Thomas Shelton’s 1612 translation into English of the first part of *Don Quixote* gave full rein to the influence of Cervantes’s work, which had probably been available in manuscript from c. 1607 (Darby, 306) in Britain. The lost play *Cardenio*, a joint work by Shakespeare and John Fletcher, based on an episode of *Don Quixote*, is mentioned by González as a major point of contact, which will later be explored in the articles by other scholars included in the collection (Pujante 1998).

Part I, which is introduced by co-editor M^a del Carmen Irlés Vicente, is made of five essays exploring Cervantes’s and Shakespeare’s worlds: from socio-economic aspects, to meteorological conditions and geographical background. Among these articles Armando Alberola-Romá’s study of the so-called “First Ice Age,” (1570–1630) stands out by reminding us of the role played by climate in the contemporary conflicts of England and Spain. Also in this part, Rafael Benítez analyzes Cervantes’s biography and literary

¹ Among other works, González is the author of *Shakespeare and Spain* (2002) and the editor of *Spanish Studies in Shakespeare and His Contemporaries* (2006).

² For further information on this first translation see Portillo and Salvador (2003).

production against a Mediterranean background. The historical context is subsequently considered by Porfirio Sanz, who investigates the conflictive relations between England and Spain after Elizabeth I's accession to the throne in 1558.

Introduced by co-editor José María Ferri, Part II provides five more essays treating literary aspects found in the two writers' production. Ana L. Baquero offers a study of the dream motif in the Cervantine corpus while Jesús G. Maestro deals with the presence of devilish figures in Shakespeare's *Richard III* and Cervantes's plays. Eva Valero in turn considers the reception of the figure of Don Quixote in seventeenth-century Spanish colonies in South America. This part concludes with María Paz de Miguel's article offering the results of the archeological excavations carried out in the crypt of the Church of St Ildefonse, where the remains of fifteen people, including Cervantes's own corpse and that of his wife Catalina de Salazar, were deposited in 1697 after having been transferred from the original church of the Convent of the Barefoot Trinitarians of Madrid. Further updating is provided by José Manuel Lucía's analysis of the evidence afforded by the document preserved in the University Library of Seville (A Mont. Ms. C29 [1]), rediscovered in 2016, in which Cervantes signed as a witness in a legal suit supporting fellow comedy playwright and actor Tomás Gutiérrez.³

Part III, introduced by José Manuel González, includes seven essays which trace the common literary interests observed in the production of Shakespeare and Cervantes, bringing to light several notable aspects such as the subject of the "treacherous friends" which is explored by Trudi Darby as a possible underlying motivation for the composition of the lost *Cardenio*. The Cervantine legacy of the ghostly *Cardenio* may have something to do with *The Spanish Gypsy* (1621–1622), which is attributed to Shakespeare's dramatic successors Middleton, Rowley, Dekker and Ford. Eric Griffin thus investigates the possible Cervantine sources that could have been used in this collaborative play. Brean Hammond in turn studies "Shakespearean and Cervantine traces" (281) in Theobald's *Double Falsehood*, which provides probably "the only surviving record" (281) of *Cardenio*; thus, the lasting success of Cervantes's *Don Quixote* is evident in its

³ The existence of this document was actually made known in 1914, but in 2016 it was digitized and publicized on occasion of the 4th centenary. See "Documento con dos firmas de Cervantes."

continuation in Restoration drama.⁴ A complementary essay is provided by Barry Ife, who reflects on the intersections between drama and novel in Cervantes's and Shakespeare's literary production.

In *Cervantes-Shakespeare 1616–2016* readers will therefore find an immensely learned collection of essays with splendid contributions from well-established scholars. The volume will no doubt constitute an essential reading which will bring light to the Golden Age of English and Spanish literature through paramount authors Shakespeare and Cervantes. José Manuel González is therefore quite right to foresee the collection's strong impact on the field of Spanish and English studies, since it will represent "an academic and editorial landmark" ("un hito académico y editorial," 41). The volume has indeed set the standards very high for the quinquecentenary.⁵

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⁴ A comparative analysis of this play and *Don Quixote* is offered by Pujante (1998). For the popularity of *Don Quixote*'s adaptations to Restoration drama, see Mora (2015).

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Ángel-Luis Pujante and Keith Gregor, eds. 2017
Romeo y Julieta en España: Las versiones neoclásicas
Murcia; Madrid: Universidad de Murcia;
Universidad Complutense de Madrid

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This volume is the third installment of learned monographs on the early Spanish neoclassical versions of Shakespeare plays that Ángel-Luis Pujante and Keith Gregor, of the Universidad de Murcia, have regaled us with so far. In 2010, the first installment was devoted to *Hamlet* and its four Spanish versions, made between 1772 and 1825, and based on the neoclassical French recastings by Jean-François Ducis initiated in 1769 (Pujante and Gregor 2010). A *Macbeth* volume followed in 2011, with two of the three Spanish versions of Ducis's adaptations (Gregor and Pujante 2011). Now is the turn for the so-called greatest "love story ever told," with three early Spanish play-texts that relate to it in different ways. The earliest monograph on *Hamlet* set a pattern, in both structure and accomplishment, that the subsequent volumes have followed: accurate modern-spelling editions, minimally annotated, constitute the bulk of the volume, and are preceded by thoughtful and well-documented introductions. The three early Spanish versions related to the Shakespearean story of the star-crossed lovers are: *Julia y Romeo, tragedia urbana*, premiered in 1803, and preserved in two manuscripts in Madrid; *Julieta y Romeo*, a verse opera, dated around 1805 by Pujante and Gregor (15), with two manuscripts containing its libretto and a vocal score respectively; and *Romeo y Julieta*, published in 1817. The first two versions are anonymous, and we only knew that the 1817 *Romeo y Julieta* was based on Ducis's adaptation.

A twenty-two-page "Introducción" displays the authors' meticulous detective work based on a complex and thorough investigation of sources, French (mostly) and German, and on a close comparative analysis of originals and translations-adaptations. Investigating the source(s) of the 1803 *Julia y Romeo* is quite a challenge. Pujante and Gregor have unravelled its intricate intertextual precedents to persuasively conclude that it is a free

version of Georges-Adam Junker's French translation (1785) of Christian Felix Weisse's German version *Romeo und Julie* (1768) (18–20). This is an unexpected finding since Ducis is the source for most of the early Spanish adaptations of Shakespeare plays such as *Hamlet*, *Othello*, and *Macbeth* (25). Pujante and Gregor painstakingly detail the matches in scene structure, plot development, character motivation and even verbal elements, and argue that they are so specific and so interrelated that the filiation with the French translation of Weisse is unquestionable (21). Written in rhymed verse, the Spanish *Julia y Romeo* has two different endings, a tragic one (in the manuscript at the Biblioteca Nacional) and a happy denouement (in the manuscript at the Biblioteca Histórica Municipal de Madrid, which after the "FIN" trailer adds a transcription of the tragic denouement in the other manuscript). The happy ending is original, and Pujante and Gregor wonder if it derives from Rojas Zorilla's Bandello-inspired *Los bandos de Verona* (1640), which was performed in 1797 (27). An interesting lesson can be learnt from the fact that between Weisse and the Spanish *Julia y Romeo* stand two other French versions, and that Weisse's German tragedy is based not only on Shakespearean themes but also on situations present in the Italian antecedents by Luigi Da Porto (1524) and Matteo Bandello (1554): we cannot lay on Shakespeare the exclusive driving force behind the dissemination of the Romeo and Juliet story.

For the verse opera *Julieta y Romeo*, Pujante and Gregor conclude that it is a rewriting ("refundición") of Joseph-Alexandre de Ségur's libretto for *Roméo et Juliette*, which premiered in 1793 in Paris (34). They do not discuss the relationship between this French opera and Shakespeare's tragedy. They focus on the problem of dating *Julieta y Romeo*, for which they conjecture 1805 as a likelier date than 1815, which is recorded in the catalogue of the Biblioteca Histórica Municipal de Madrid. This conjecture is based on the fact that the names in the *Julieta y Romeo* libretto coincide with those belonging to a company that performed in Madrid between Easter 1805 and Palm Sunday 1806 (36). The absence of references to a production in the periodical publications at that time make it likely that this opera was never performed, which makes this a case of "reception without dissemination" (36).

As for the 1817 *Romeo y Julieta*, Pujante and Gregor qualify it as a rewriting of Ducis's *Roméo et Juliette*, probably from its 1813 version

(28). After explaining the dramatic distinctiveness of this French neoclassical adaptation, they analyze its Spanish version, written in hendecasyllables with even lines rhyming with one another. Two features are worth highlighting: it corrects the unlikelihood of some situations in Ducis's version, and tries to depoliticize it and turn it into a domestic tragedy so as to avoid any reference to the political situation in Spain after Ferdinand VII resumed the throne in 1813 (in Ducis, the Duke of Verona is called Ferdinand) (31).

The "Introducción" is followed by ten pages of "Notas complementarias" on the texts and their authorship. Pujante and Gregor reinforce Emilio Cotarelo's attribution of *Julia y Romeo* to Dionisio Solís (also endorsed by Andioc and Coulon, against Par and other scholars) by pointing out the fact that the main players performed in this adaptation and in another adaptation, written by Solís and performed in 1800, of a play by August von Kotzebue; and the fact that both share the method of free translation in the "romance" versification form when their respective originals are in prose (50). They also suggest Dionisio Solís as a "fairly probable candidate" for the authorship of the spoken dialogue in the opera *Julieta y Romeo* (51). For the 1817 *Romeo y Julieta*, Pujante and Gregor clarify some confusions in earlier scholars that had assigned this version to Solís and concur with Cotarelo (1932) that it was written by Manuel García Suelto.

The "Note" on the texts also includes a statement on the choice of the base text (where appropriate) and a description of the editorial procedures for each version. As pointed out above, the editions are offered in modernized spelling and punctuation, without line numbers, and the emendations—limited to a minimum (12)—are silently incorporated in the text without any indication in textual notes or any critical apparatus. Pujante and Gregor add stage directions, between square brackets, of the kind that help visualize the stage action, and include minimal notes on textual issues. García Suelto's *Romeo y Julieta* is the most textually complex version, with four manuscript prompt-books at the Biblioteca Histórica Municipal de Madrid, and two quartos published in 1817 and 1820, the latter being a reprint of the first one (43). Pujante and Gregor opt for the first quarto as the basis of their edition, since it is the fullest textual version (44). The edition of the 1803 *Julia y Romeo* is mainly based on the manuscript at the Biblioteca Histórica Municipal de Madrid, prints the

cuts for omission in italics and includes the appended tragic ending. The edited text of the opera *Julieta y Romeo* combines the spoken dialogue and the sung sections (the latter being indented and in italics) in one single text, so that they alternate with the sung sections (45).

After the Bibliography section, the volume includes an updated table-list, compiled by Jennifer Ruiz-Morgan, of sixty-seven Spanish-language translations, adaptations, and selected derivative works (such as Jose María Pemán's 1936 *Julieta y Romeo: comedieta en prosa*), from which one might just miss the great poet Luis Cernuda's translation of the first act.

To conclude, this "*Romeo y Julieta*" en España monograph, like its *Hamlet* and *Macbeth* predecessors, is a welcome contribution to the scholarship on the presence of Shakespeare in Spain, both for having printed for the first time two of the early Spanish versions of the story of the lovers of Verona, and for their insightful analysis; but it would not be an exaggeration to qualify this monograph as exceeding its predecessors since the early *Romeo and Juliet* versions pose greater enigmas of provenance and authorship than the *Hamlet* and *Macbeth* versions, enigmas which Pujante and Gregor have been able to solve, or suggest solutions for, in a convincing way. One can only look forward to their planned volume on *Othello*.

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Poonam Trivedi and Paromita Chakravarti, eds. 2018
Shakespeare and Indian Cinemas: Local Habitations
New York: Routledge

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Poonam Trivedi and Paromita Chakravarti's *Shakespeare and Indian Cinemas: Local Habitations* (2018) is a more-than-welcome addition to the field of Shakespeare film scholarship. It is a superb and groundbreaking collection that aims to explore Shakespeare on the Indian screen beyond Bollywood cinema. Thus, it moves away completely from previous research on Indian Shakespeares, which mainly focused on Bollywood cinema, *Bollywood Shakespeares* (Dionne and Kapadia 2014) being a case in point. Numerous articles and chapters have been devoted to this field. Jonathan Locke Hart's latest collection *Shakespeare and Asia* (2019) includes for instance a chapter on *Goliyon ki Rasleela Ram Leela* (a Bollywood movie based on *Romeo and Juliet*) and Jonathan Gil Harris' *Masala Shakespeare* (2018) discusses several Bollywood Shakespearean adaptations throughout. Those essays that have gone beyond Bollywood Shakespeares have mostly focused on Vishal Bhardwaj's trilogy, either regarded as challenging Bollywood conventions (García-Periago 2014) or examples of "auteur" films (Burnett 2013). However, the way Shakespeare has been used or reinterpreted in Indian regional cinemas has been quite scarce and limited. Burnett's *Shakespeare and World Cinema* (2013) is one of the few instances with a chapter on the southern Indian filmmaker Jayaraj. Hence, this book opens uncharted territory, exploring in depth Shakespeare's presence outside the Bollywood arena, and claims for more visibility of regional cinemas. Trivedi and Chakravarti's collection is precisely distinctive in its emphasis on regionalism for further research in the relations between Indian film and Shakespeare.

One of this volume's greatest virtues is its wide film corpus (115 titles), which covers a wide range of movies that have never been discussed, such as *Ambikapathy* (1937) or *Nanjundi Kalyana* (1989). Even those that have previously been analyzed (Vishal Bhardwaj's trilogy or Mansoor Khan's *Qayamat se Qayamat Tak*) are approached

differently, with a focus on Indianization. But *Shakespeare and Indian Cinemas: Local Habitations* even discovers a new movie for the Indian Shakespeare corpus: *Champraj Hado* (1923), which seems to be the first Indian adaptation of *Cymbeline* to date.

The book is neatly structured into four thematic sections, followed by three interviews and the filmography listed in two different formats. Instead of providing only a summary of the subsequent essays in the volume, Trivedi and Chakravarti's introduction is informative *per se*. The collection then starts with a first section entitled "Indianising the Tragic" whose central purpose is to spotlight the adaptation of the Shakespearean tragic into various Indian artistic idioms, "given the absence of the tragic genre in indigenous aesthetics" (10). The collection starts with a poetic and illuminating chapter on the expanded role of women in Bhardwaj's trilogy (*Maqbool* 2003; *Omkara* 2006; and *Haider* 2014); they are given more agency and voice. Furthermore, Trivedi also sheds light on how these female characters move beyond Indian female heroes and how they are affected or driven by different types of violence, being either the instruments of justice or violence. Hence, the kernel of Trivedi's argument is the feminization of the tragic in Bhardwaj's adaptations. Chapters 2 and 3 examine how the Shakespearean connection is not enough to understand the movies that are discussed, *Eklavya* (a free adaptation of *Hamlet*, 2007) and *Gunasundari Katha* (drawing on *King Lear*, 1949), respectively. Robert White in chapter 2 argues that *Eklavya* owes more to *The Mahabharata* than to Shakespeare, who is a spectral presence in the film, whereas Nishi Pulugurtha in chapter 3 claims that both sources are equally appropriated and mingled, resulting in a hybrid adaptation. Both adaptations encounter the tragic similarly. *Eklavya* disrupts it via allusions to *The Mahabharata* and *dharma*, whereas *Gunasundari Katha* turns the tragic ending into a comic resolution. Chapter 4 explores Malayalam Cinema. While there was an absence of Shakespeare in Malayalam Cinema for the greater part of the twentieth century, the situation changed considerably thanks to *Kaliyattam*, *Kannaki* and *Veeram* or *Karmayogi*. The chapter revolves around the four film adaptations, which follow Shakespeare's text closely, are set in rural backgrounds and borrow heavily from the traditions of Kerala. In chapter 5, Koel Chatterjee takes up the challenge of dealing with a frequently neglected adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet*, *Qayamat se Qayamat Tak*. Chatterjee mainly focuses on the resolution, since it

deviates from typical Bollywood movies including a tragic ending, which is precisely what makes the movie so Shakespearean. All the chapters within this section shed light on the cultural negotiation between the Shakespearean dramatic elements and structure and the local; all these adaptations “Indianize” the plays, with a special focus on the tragic.

The second section entitled “Critical innovations” only comprises two chapters, which are examined in the light of different aesthetics within film studies. The core of chapter 6 is the creation of an archive of “silent” Shakespeares on the Indian screen. Due to the lack of availability of these movies at the National Film Archive of Pune, the films are not analyzed. The main strength of this chapter resides in its discovery of the hitherto unknown Indian Shakespeare silent film, *Champraj Hado*. The chapter entitled “Shakespeare, Cinema and Indian Poetics” by Anil Zankar aims to apply the concept of *rasa-s* to the adaptation process, and analyses the opening scenes of Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*, Vishal Bhardwaj’s film *Maqbool* and Akira Kurosawa’s film *Throne of Blood*, using the concepts of dramaturgy from the *Natyashastra*.

Of particular interest is part three of the collection, with adaptations that navigate between the global and the local. All the articles included in this section touch upon political issues. Chapter 8 is an engaging analysis of the novel *Such a Long Journey* (1991) and homonymous film (2002), based on *King Lear*, exploring the dilemma of the male Parsi colonial subject. The most interesting difference between them affects the use of Shakespeare in the novel and in the film. While the novel appropriates, quotes and misquotes Shakespeare to interrogate the Parsi relationship to the Raj, the film omits the Shakespearean allusions, depoliticizing the film, thus enhancing the nostalgic, exotic tone. In chapter 9 Paromita Chakravarti discusses four English-language films made both in India and the UK: *36 Chowringhee Lane*, *Second Generation*, *The Last Lear* and *Life Goes On*. The essay addresses how these films explore “Bengaliness,” how *King Lear* is used to construct a Bengali identity, “poised between the West and the East, tradition and modernity, colonial and postcolonial legacies” (161). Chakravarti finishes the chapter on a positive note, claiming that recent movies such as *Arshinagar*, *Hemanta* or *Zulfiqar* construct a new form of Bengaliness, which is more inclusive. The chapter by Varsha Panjwani is a

valuable asset to the collection because it analyzes Indian parallel cinema for the first time. The essay revolves around *8×10 Tasveer* and *10 ml Love*, based on *Hamlet* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* respectively. Panjwani argues that both movies shed light on the money issue, offering new and fresh insights into Shakespeare's plays. This section closes with an inspirational chapter on the film *Ambikapathy*, regarded by Thea Buckley as an excellent epitome of hybridity, being influenced by Hollywood Shakespeares and Tamil Cinema's Hybrid Heritage. The political engagement reaches its peak in this essay, since the film blends Shakespearean translation with political subversion. *Ambikapathy* "was perfectly placed to glorify Tamil sentiments, its release coinciding with the loosening of censorship laws in 1937" (207). The author convincingly argues how scenes from *Romeo and Juliet* symbolize political transgression, and even a kiss between the lovers could hint at political Independence. Politics offers an interesting discussion throughout the whole section.

The last section of the collection entitled "Reimagining Gender, Region and Nation" gathers together four chapters that analyze how these three issues mingle in the different adaptations. This last section opens with Mark Thornton Burnett's brilliant essay on the Kannada movie *Nanjundi Kalyana*, an adaptation of *The Taming of the Shrew*. Apart from the individual engagement with Shakespeare, the film "places a regional gloss on the play, citing cultural practices and gendered attitudes related to southern parts of India and to Karnataka in particular" (222). Burnett offers a strong conclusion to the chapter by highlighting this regional gloss, which imbues the original play with new and fresh meanings. In chapter thirteen, A. Mangai does not concentrate on full-length films, but on citations, exploring the intersections between Tamil drama and cinema. The complex intertextuality across various regional language cinemas Mangai suggests is precisely one of the strengths of the chapter. In a smooth essay that flows easily and reads well, Amrita Sen focuses on the multiple adaptation of *The Comedy of Errors* in Indian languages (relying primarily on *Bhranti Bilash*, *Angoor*, *Do Dooni Char*, *Ulta Palta* and *Double di Trouble*). One of the interesting discoveries of the essay is that these adaptations seem to engage with their predecessor, the result being "a unique clustering, wherein the films influence each other, informing the way each adaptation Indianizes its retelling of Shakespeare" (251). It is important to ponder here the significance of

the last chapter within the collection because it is the first analysis of Hemant Kumar Das's 2014 debut film *Othello (We Too Have Our Othellos)*. It is also the first Assamese film to address Shakespeare explicitly, and it does so by including three Othellos instead of only one. Via the characters' failure to achieve their revolutionary ends, the film offers a serious critique of the political scenario, since it is "a quiet but firm rejection of the political ideologies that have haunted the state for the last fifty years and more" (281). Hence, this essay, following on the footsteps of most of the chapters within the collection, emphasizes the inevitable connection between Shakespeare and politics that embeds the volume.

Two of the collection's greatest virtues are the splendid interviews with Pankaj Butalia, Roysten Abel and Aparna Sen, well-established names within the field of Indian Shakespeares and filmography. The three practitioners interviewed have adapted Shakespeare differently, but with tremendous success in all cases. The annotated filmography included at the end of the volume should not be overlooked either since it provides information about all the Indian Shakespearean adaptations to date. It is a valuable asset that can be used for reference because it certainly paves the way for future research in the field of Shakespeare and Indian cinema.¹

Of course, limitations in such an innovative volume can occur. With so many interesting chapters on the adaptation of Shakespeare into various Indian cinemas, the reader might appreciate more references from one essay to other essays within the collection, bringing out the similarities and differences in the approach to Shakespeare. This could potentially lend greater cohesion to the collection. Yet, it is in this variety of approaches to Shakespeare within the Indian *milieu* that the volume's strength resides. The collection as a whole helps to understand the Indianization and localization of the Bard, whose adaptations acquire new meanings and nuances in their reinterpretation. Trivedi and Chakravarti's

¹ See my annotated database of Indian Shakespeare adaptations, recently launched under the title *Shakespeare and Indian Cinematic Traditions*, Queen's University Belfast (April 2019) <http://www.qub.ac.uk/schools/ael/Research/English/CurrentResearchProjects-ENGLISH/INDIANSHAKESPEARES/shakespeare%20and%20indian%20cinematic%20traditions%20qub/>

pioneering work constitutes an important and significant contribution to the field of Shakespeare on screen. It paves the way for future research and opens the door to the mandatory study of the Indian Shakespeare film.

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PERFORMANCE REVIEWS*

Sónia Baptista, *I Call Her Will* Centro Cultural de Belém, Lisbon, 6 April 2019

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Sónia Baptista's performance lecture took place within a wider Shakespeare cycle at the Centro Cultural de Belém in Lisbon entitled *For Goodness Sake* that also included a performance of *Timon of Athens* by Teatro Praga, a series of public lectures on the plays by Maria Sequeira Mendes and three days of musical performances. The title of the performance lecture punned on the name Will as Shakespeare himself did in the *Sonnets* but also called attention to the central concern of the performance, which was to give back a sense of agency both to female characters in Shakespeare and to contemporary women performers who create works based on Shakespeare. Baptista repeated the phrase "Women in Shakespeare—it's complicated" at several different moments of the performance and at the beginning she posed the question of whether she actually liked Shakespeare or not, rather than assuming that Shakespeare's supposed universality rendered such questions irrelevant.

The performance lecture format is appealing to performers as a way of bringing together diverse materials, whether theoretical, poetic, visual or anecdotal. The staging for the lecture consisted of three simple lecterns on the stage with a screen behind the performer.

* *Sederi Yearbook* collaborates with www.ReviewingShakespeare.com, the first website devoted to scholarly reviews of and writing about worldwide Shakespearean performance (theatre, film, TV) for a general audience. Reviews about Shakespearean performances worldwide submitted for publication to the *Sederi Yearbook* are sent to the team of specialists managing *ReviewingShakespeare*, and they will decide whether the review might also be suitable for publication on their webpage. Inversely, a selection of reviews of Spanish and Portuguese productions of Shakespeare's plays submitted to *ReviewingShakespeare* are also considered for publication in *Sederi*.

The setting established and then deconstructed the notion of an educational lecture in order to emphasize the fact that Shakespearean materials circulate widely within popular and elite culture and are not concentrated exclusively within educational or theatrical settings. This was immediately apparent from the beginning of the performance when Baptista danced to *Shakespeare's Sister* by the Smiths and a song by the '80's pop group Shakespeare's Sister before reading from Virginia Woolf's writings on the tragic fate of Shakespeare's sister and the Brazilian writer Clarice Lispector's own rewriting of Woolf's narrative.

The structure for this hour-long performance lecture was provided by a personal narrative around an illustrated edition of three of Shakespeare's works given to Baptista as a child. The three plays were *Romeo and Juliet*, *Hamlet* and *The Tempest* and the focus here on Juliet, Ophelia and Miranda enabled Baptista to reflect on these female characters from a contemporary viewpoint. For the section on Juliet, Baptista came to recognize her sexual agency in re-reading the play and recast her suicide as a freely assumed attempt to control what happened to her rather than be subject to the dictates of her family. As Baptista narrated this section, popular cultural references to the play, from text messages to Shakespearean memes were projected on the screen behind her in a loop. This emphasized the continuing circulation and transformation of the play in the public sphere, although the examples chosen illustrated also how new media do not necessarily transform gender ideologies. Among these references was a video of a '60's North-American television show with a Romeo and Juliet dance. The men enacted Romeo's steps while the line of women opposite them danced Juliet. Baptista repeated the dance steps with a female volunteer from the audience, cutting across the gender fixity of the original programme.

The section on Ophelia gave an opportunity for Baptista to create her own poetic text, apologising to the character for not doing what she could to save her earlier in her life and wanting to be Hamlet instead. This was a timely reminder that not all women who read the plays necessarily identify with the female characters, an interesting queer twist on the notion of heteronormative female identification. The section on Miranda was perhaps the most successful of the three. Baptista posed the question of whether Miranda inherited her father's library and created a vision of a contemporary Miranda with a passion

for reading and an open sexuality. She developed parallels with contemporary Mirandas like Miranda Hobbes in *Sex and the City* and the writer and film-maker Miranda July. Beyond the reflection on these three characters, Baptista also introduced moments of humour by taking the audience through the online quiz about which Shakespeare character they might be (which I'm sure many Shakespeareans have done themselves!).

Baptista is something of an anglophile and she referenced during the performance such conventional notions of Englishness as tea drinking, crumpets and the British Museum as well as her own visits to London. She was more concerned with exploring questions of gender here (despite her quip about whether her reading from Judith Butler might be considered too feminist) than those of nation, although her references were taken from a variety of cultural settings, emphasising the global reach of Shakespeare. In some senses, this was less a performance lecture than a performance in the making, which could in the future develop Baptista's own richly poetic writing. It was an innovative and important piece of work on Shakespeare from a gender perspective that is not often addressed in Portugal by performers. Hopefully, the performance lecture might travel more widely and encourage other women to engage critically with the female role models proposed in the Shakespeare plays.

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