Facing Europe in Crisis: Shakespeare's World and Present Challenges

COORDINATION
Richard Chapman
Florence March
Paola Spinozzi
Nathalie Vienne-Guerrin

Facing Europe in Crisis: Shakespeare's World and Present Challenges

COORDINATION

Richard Chapman
Florence March
Paola Spinozzi
Nathalie Vienne-Guerrin

Coleção Transversal

Contents

Acknowledgements

Notes on contributors

Mariacristina Cavecchi is Associate Professor of English Literature at the University of Milan - UniMi. Her research interests include the history of twentieth- and twenty-first-century British drama and theatre as well as contemporary appropriations of Shakespeare's plays for theatre and cinema (stage productions, adaptations, rewritings), Shakespeare in contemporary popular culture and Prison Shakespeare. She is the author of *The Art Gallery on Stage. New Vistas on Contemporary British Theatre* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2024). She co-edited with Lisa Mazoni and Margaret Rose *SceKspir al Bekka. Romeo Montecchi dietro le sbarre dell'Istituto Penale Minorile Beccaria* (Edizioni Clichy, 2020) and a special issue of *Altre Modernità / Other Modernities* on *Will Forever Young! Shakespeare & Contemporary Culture* (2017). She served on the executive board of IASEMS – Italian Association of Shakespearean and Early Modern Studies – from 2012 to 2018.

Juan Francisco Cerdá Martinez lectures on English drama, American literature, and cultural studies at the University of Murcia. He has mostly written about the reception of Shakespeare's plays in Spanish theatrical culture and cinema. His articles have been published in journals such as *Shakespeare*, *Cahiers Élisabéthains* and *Borrowers and Lenders*. He has contributed to *Shakespeare and Conflict: A European Perspective* (Palgrave, 2013), *Shakespeare beyond English: A Global Experiment* (Cambridge UP, 2013), *The Taming of the Shrew: The State of Play* (Arden, 2021) and has co-edited *Shakespeare in Spain: An Annotated Bilingual Bibliography* (Uni Murcia / Uni Granada, 2015, with Ángel-Luis Pujante) and *Romeo and Juliet in European Cultures* (John Benjamins, 2017, with Dirk Delabastita and Keith Gregor). *Macbeth in European Modernity (1875-2025)*, co-edited with Paul Prescott, is forthcoming.

Richard Chapman is Researcher in English Language in the Department of Human Sciences at the University of Ferrara. His research interests include testing and assessment, pragmatics, corpus linguistics and current

developments in English language teaching approaches and language change. Publications include "The deceiving ELF? Can English fulfil the role of a Lingua Franca?" (2015); "Naming or Shaming? Presentations of the Self in Specialised Weblog Discourse" (2017); "Is the Current Role of English Sustainable?" (2018); "The Words that Count: Exploring Theoretical Questions in CADS" (2019); "New Medium but Old Messages?" (2021) and "Sustaining Languages and the Language of Sustainability. The Need for Change" (2022). He has also published numerous course books in English language teaching, including *PET Practice Tests* (Eli, 2004); *KET Practice Tests* (Eli, 2008); *English in the Workshop* (Hoepli, 2008, with Caterina Rinaldi); *Switch on Your English* (Hoepli, 2011); *Flash on English Advanced* (Eli, 2017, with Laura Clyde).

Meegan Louise Clark graduated from the Freie Universität Berlin in September 2018 with a BA in English Language and Literature. She completed her MA in English Literary Studies: Literary and Cultural Studies Pathway, in 2019 at Lancaster University. Her interests include utopia, dystopia, the post-apocalypse and the environmental crisis in literature, cinema, and TV series.

Paul J. C. M. Franssen was a lecturer in the English Department of Utrecht University, the Netherlands, from 1979 until his retirement in 2021. He obtained his PhD at Utrecht in 1987. He specializes in early-modern English literature and in South African literature. His main research interest is in Shakespeare. In addition to authoring a wide range of articles on early-modern writers and John Coetzee, as well as reviews of productions of Shakespeare, he has co-edited books on *Shakespeare & His Biographical Afterlives* (Berghahn, 2020, with Paul Edmondson), *Shakespeare and War* (Palgrave, 2008, with Ros King), *Shakespeare and European Politics* (AUP, 2008, with Dirk Delabastita and Jozef de Vos) and *The Author as Character* (AUP, 1999, with Ton Hoenselaars). He is the author of *Shakespeare's Literary Lives: The Author as Character in Fiction and Film* (CUP, 2016).

Marta Gibińska worked until 2012 at the Jagiellonian University and currently teaches at the Jozef Tischner European University in Krakow, Poland. Focusing on Shakespeare Studies and Translation Studies, she has researched the history of Shakespeare on Polish and European stages as well as the translation and reception of his plays in changing historical contexts. Her publications on the theatrical history and translations of Shakespeare in Poland include *Functioning of Language in Shakespeare's Plays. A Pragma-dramatic Approach* (Nakł. Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 1989), and *Polish Poets Read Shakespeare. Refashioning the*

Tradition (Tow. Nauk. Societas Vistulana, 2000). She is a member of the Polish Shakespeare Society, Deutsche Shakespeare Gesellschaft, International Shakespeare Association, and European Shakespeare Research Association.

Hannah Goldstein is a recent Freie Universität graduate living in Berlin. She is the recipient of the Best File of Original Literary Work Prize awarded by Newcastle University and the *New Faces* Mariangela Tempera Prize. Academically, she is interested in blending the boundaries between historical and contemporary literature in order to better understand the challenges of our time. She has been defined as a fatalist, which her work likely shows, although within that fatalism is an optimism that through facing our existential challenges our most damaging societal habits may be broken.

Miguel Ramalhete Gomes is Associate Professor with "agregação" at the University of Lisbon and researcher at CEAUL / ULICES and CETAPS. His interests encompass early modern drama, Shakespeare, and presentism; uses of Shakespeare during the contemporary debt crisis, 20th-century German drama, Irish studies, and Utopian studies. He is the author of *Texts Waiting for History: William Shakespeare Re-Imagined by Heiner Müller* (Rodopi, 2014). He has coedited *English Literature and the Disciplines of Knowledge, Early Modern to Eighteenth Century* (Brill Rodopi, 2017, with Jorge Bastos da Silva) and contributed to *Shakespeare's First Folio Revisited: Quadricentennial Essays* (Uni Salamanca, 2023). He is currently working on a book on the uses of Shakespeare during the years of austerity in Portugal.

Imogen Goodman is a postgraduate researcher and journalist based in Berlin. Born in the UK, she obtained a BA in English from the University of Cambridge in 2013 and a diploma in Journalism in 2014, before moving to Germany to study for an MA in English at Freie Universität Berlin. Her academic research interests include conceptions of value in the work of Dickens, ethics and economics in Chaucer and Middle English Romance, and the work of Jean Rhys and Geoffrey Hill. In June 2021, she presented a paper at the University of Warwick's *Urban History Conference* on Charles Dickens and the contemporary high street, drawing parallels between the geographical divides of Dickens' London and global wage inequality. In her journalistic work, she has written about migrant rights issues, climate change, German politics, and housing. She currently works as a reporter for *The Local Germany*.

Ton Hoenselaars is Emeritus Professor of Early Modern English Literature at the University of Utrecht, the Netherlands. His main research interests are the international relations of early modern English literature (national identity, xenophobia, writing the nation, forms of translation) and Shakespeare's afterlives (including translation, opera, cinema, popular culture, and European history). His books include *Images of Englishmen and Foreigners in the Drama of Shakespeare and His Contemporaries* (Fairleigh Dickinson UP, 1992), *Shakespeare's Italy* (Manchester UP, 1993, 1997), *400 Years of Shakespeare in Europe* (Delaware UP, 2003), *Shakespeare and the Language of Translation* (Arden, 2004, 2012), *Shakespeare's History Plays* (Cambridge UP, 2004, 2006), *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare and Contemporary Dramatists* (2011), and *Shakespeare Forever!* (Amsterdam, 2017). He edited *Shakespeare and the Cultures of Commemoration* (Berghahn, 2018, with Clara Calvo) and two themed issues of *The Shakespearean International Yearbook*: *European Shakespeares* (Routledge, 2008, with Clara Calvo) and *Shakespeare and Refugees* (Routledge, 2022, with Stephen O'Neill). He is one of the six editors on the *Cambridge Guide to the Worlds of Shakespeare* (2 vols., 2016).

Mirka Horová is a Senior Lecturer in British Literature at Charles University, Prague. Her research focuses on British Romanticism, primarily Byron, play theory, and Scandinavian literature, especially the Norwegian Romantic poet Henrik Wergeland. She edited a special issue of *Litteraria Pragensia* on *Tears, Tortures and the Touch of Joy: Byron in Italy* (spring 2014, with Alan Rawes) and a special issue of *The Byron Journal* (43: 2, 2015) on *Byron and the Bible*. Publications include "Byron and the Politics of Heroic Transformation" (Routledge, 2016), "Playing with History: Byron's Italian Dramas" (Manchester UP, 2017), "'Hurl'd first out of and then back again to Chaos': Byron's Lucretian Regency" (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2018), and "The Satanic School" (Cambridge UP, 2019). She co-organized the international Newstead Abbey Byron conference from 2013 to 2019 and has been the Editor of *The Byron Journal* since mid-2019.

Attila Kiss is Professor and Head of the Department of English Studies at the Institute of English and American Studies of the University of Szeged, Hungary, where he is also co-director of REGCIS – Research Group for Cultural Iconology and Semiography (https://szegedenglish.hu/regcis/). His publications include *Contrasting the Early Modern and Postmodern Semiotics of Telling Stories* (Edwin Mellen, 2011), and *Double Anatomy in Early Modern and Postmodern Drama* (JATEPress, 2010). His fields of specialization include the comparative semiotic

analysis of early modern and postmodern culture, English Renaissance drama and theatricality, and the poststructuralist theories of subjectivity. The focus of his current research is on the representations of anatomy and corporeality in English Renaissance revenge tragedies and their postmodern adaptations.

Larisa Kocic-Zámbó is a Senior Assistant Professor at the Department of English Studies, University of Szeged, and a member of its Gender Studies Research Group. Her comparative analysis of early modern and postmodern popular culture focuses on religious and metaphysical poetry and prose with attention to their gendered aspects, orality and literacy of culture, and their vestiges in fandom and comics studies. Further interests include the works of the Romantics and the Victorians. Her most recent study of "Milton's Domestic Life and the Tempering of Female Ambition in Kim Wilkins' *Angel of Ruin*" has been published in *Women (Re)Writing Milton* (Routledge, 2021).

Andreas Mahler teaches English Literature at Freie Universitaet Berlin. His main areas of research are early modern epistemology, plot-making on the early modern stage, Elizabethan satire, Shakespeare's subcultures, early modern genres and London as an early modern centre. He is the author of *Moderne Satireforschung und elisabethanische Verssatire: Texttheorie, Epistemologie, Gattungspoetik* (Fink, 1992), and the editor of *Stadt-Bilder. Allegorie, Mimesis, Imagination* (*City Images. Allegory, Mimesis, Imagination*, Carl Winter, 1999), *Shakespeares Subkulturen: Typen, Tricks, Topographien. Ein Lesebuch zu Alltag und Unterwelt* (*Shakespeare's Subcultures: Types, Tricks, Topographies. A Reader on Everyday Life and the Underworld*, K. Stutz, 2002) and *Der Essay als 'Neue' Form* (*The Essay as 'New' Form*, Harrassowitz, 2020). His chapter on "Space / Translation. Metamorphosing the Semiosphere: Shakespeare and the Inns of Court" has been published in *Shakespeare, Space. Contemporary Readings in Spatiality, Culture and Drama* (Bloomsbury: 2024).

Florence March is Professor of Early Modern English Literature at Université Paul-Valéry Montpellier 3 and Director of the Institut de recherche sur la Renaissance, l'âge Classique et les Lumières (IRCL, UMR5186 CNRS). She has published on Shakespeare's presence and structuring role in South France festivals (Avignon, Montpellier and Nice) in *Shakespeare Jahrbuch*, *Shakespeare Studies*, and *Litteraria Pragensia*, and is the author of *Shakespeare au Festival d'Avignon* (L'Entretemps, 2012). She is the co-editor of *Shakespeare on European Festival Stages* (Bloomsbury/Arden, 2022, with Nicoleta Cinpoes and Paul

Prescott). Since 2015 she has co-directed a programme on "Shakespeare and Citizenship" in Montpellier, which inspired a chapter in *Reimagining Shakespeare Education: Teaching and Learning through Collaboration* (Cambridge UP, 2023, eds Liam E. Semler, Claire Hansen, Jacqueline Manuel). She is Co-Editor-in-Chief of *Cahiers Élisabéthains. A Journal of English Renaissance Studies* and a translator at Maison Antoine Vitez, the French international centre for theatre translation.

Ágnes Matuska is Associate Professor of English at the Department of English Studies, University of Szeged. Her main field of research is late medieval and early modern English drama, with a focus on the changes in the logic and ontology of theatrical representation. In her book entitled *The Vice-Device: Iago and Lear's Fool as Figures of Representational Crisis* (JATEPress, 2011) she proposes a re-evaluation of the Vice character in morality plays. She has taught and published internationally on topics related to early Tudor drama as well as Shakespeare Studies (including film and theatre). Her most recent publication appeared in *Early Theatre* (December 2022), on an early Tudor adaptation of Plautus' *Amphitruo.*

Jean-Christophe Mayer is a Research Professor employed by the French National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS). He is a member of the Institut de recherche sur la Renaissance, l'âge Classique et les Lumières (IRCL, UMR5186 CNRS) at Université Paul-Valéry Montpellier 3. His fields of expertise are Shakespeare and religion; Shakespeare and literary theory; the history of reading; the history of the book and early modern English palaeography (history of writing). He is the author of *Shakespeare's Hybrid Faith* (Palgrave, 2006), *Shakespeare et la postmodernité* (Peter Lang, 2012) and *Shakespeare's Early Readers: A Cultural History from 1590 to 1800* (Cambridge UP, 2018). He has directed two collective research programmes supported by CNRS: "The Question of Succession in Elizabethan England" and "Representations of France, the French and the French in English Renaissance Drama". He is currently Co-Editor-in-Chief of *Cahiers Élisabéthains: A Journal of English Renaissance Studies.*

Martin Procházka is Professor of English, American and Comparative Literature at Charles University, Prague. He is the author of *Romantismus a osobnost. Subjektivita v anglické romantické poezii a estetice* (*Romanticism and Personality. Subjectivity in English Romantic Poetry and Aesthetics*, Kruh moderních filologů, 1996), *Transversals* (Litteraria Pragensia Books, 2008) and *Ruins in the New World* (Litteraria Pragensia Books, 2012) and a co-author of *Romantismus a*

romantismy (*Romanticism and Romanticisms*, Charles UP, 2005, with Prof. Zdeněk Hrbata). He is Fellow of the English Association (EA), Advisory Board member of the International Association of Byron Societies (IABS), founding editor of the international academic journal *Litteraria Pragensia*, visiting professor at the University Porto and Honorary Professor at the University of Kent.

Olivier Py is the author of a number of plays, novels and essays, as well as an international theatre and opera director, a translator and an actor. Among the forty or so plays he directed, he composed and staged a twenty-four-hour marathon play, *La Servante (histoire sans fin)*, at the Avignon Festival in 1995. His interest in Shakespeare has led him to translate, adapt and direct *Romeo and Juliet* at the Odéon-Théâtre de l'Europe in 2011, *King Lear* in the Honour Court of the Avignon Festival in 2015, *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *Othello* in various venues of the Avignon Festival in 2017, 2018 and 2019 respectively, with inmates of Le Pontet's penitentiary, as well as a ten-part play about *Hamlet*, *Hamlet à l'impératif!*, with professional and amateur actors at the 2021 edition of the festival (Py, 2011, 2015, 2020, 2021). He directed one of France's thirty-eight national dramatic centres, the Centre dramatique national d'Orléans, from 1998 to 2007, and one of France's five national theatres, the Théâtre national de l'Odéon in Paris also called Odéon-Théâtre de l'Europe, from 2007 to 2012, before being appointed director of the Avignon Festival – the biggest arts festival in France, and one of the biggest in Europe – in 2014. His work with the all-male penitentiary in Le Pontet started shortly after. He was appointed director of Théâtre du Chatelet, Paris, in 2023.

Eline Reinhoud obtained a Bachelor of Arts in English Language and Culture and graduated from Utrecht University's Research Master in Comparative Literary Studies in 2019. She is currently employed at a Dutch literary publishing house. Her areas of interest include post-truth, postmodern literature, cultural memory, and literary theory. She is the recipient of the New Faces Mariangela Tempera Prize.

Nathalie Rivère de Carles is Associate Professor in early modern English drama and diplomatic culture at Université Toulouse Jean Jaurès. She has authored books and articles on theatre history, early modern drama and diplomacy such as *Early Modern Diplomacy, Theatre and Soft Power: The Making of Peace* (Palgrave, 2016), "The 'strange and dangerous *Poynado*' of Georges Villiers, Duke of Buckingham: Weaponry, propaganda, and political identity" (*Cahiers Élisabéthains,* 2023), "The

Play as Truce: Attainable Peace in *Henry V* and *The Winter's Tale*" (*Early Modern Literary Studies*, 2022), "Diplomatic *Parrhesia* and the Ethos of Trustworthiness in Hotman's *The Ambassador* and Shakespeare's *Henry V*" (*Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 2020) and co-edited "Gestures of Diplomacy", *Legatio: The Journal for Renaissance and Early Modern Diplomatic Studies* (2021), "Territories of Diplomacy: The Anglo-American World and International Relations", *XVII-XVIII* (79, 2022).

Agnieszka Romanowska teaches history of English literature at the Jagiellonian University in Kraków. Her research interests include the literary and theatrical reception of Shakespeare in Poland and issues related to translation and adaptation. Her publications on the theatrical potential and reception of Shakespeare's dramatic texts in Poland and on Polish poet-translators include "Za głosem tłumacza. Szekspir Iwaszkiewicza, Miłosza i Gałczyńskiego" ("Following the Voice of the Translator. Shakespeare by Iwaszkiewicz, Miłosz and Gałczyński", Jagiellonian UP, 2017); "Żywoty równoległe. Szekspir Agaty Dudy-Gracz w oczach recenzentów" ("Parallel Lives. Agata Duda-Gracz's Shakespeare in the Eyes of Reviewers", Universitas Gedanensis, 2022); "Roztańczone słowa: potencjał teatralny sceny balu w Romeo i Julii Williama Szekspira" ("Dancing Words: The Theatrical Potential of the Ball Scene in William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*", *Studia Litteraria Universitatis Iagellonicae Cracoviensis*, 2021). She is the Co-Editor of *Przekładaniec*, a scientific journal devoted to literary translation and intercultural communication.

Sabine Schülting is Professor of English at Freie Universität Berlin. Her research focuses on early modern and 19th-century literatures and cultures, Shakespeare, Gender Studies, and transcultural encounters. She was the general editor of *Shakespeare Jahrbuch* (2006-2022), and her book publications include a co-edited collection *Early Modern Encounters with the Islamic East: Performing Cultures* (Ashgate, 2012), and two monographs: *Dirt in Victorian Literature and Culture: Writing Materiality* (Routledge, 2016) and *Precarious Figurations: Shylock on the German Stage, 1920-2010* (De Gruyter, 2019, with Zeno Ackermann). She edited a special issue of *Shakespeare* (vol. 18, no. 1, 2022, with Coen Heijes) on "Shakespeare and the Jews: A Global Exploration" and a special issue of *Shakespeare Bulletin* on "Contemporary Shakespeare" (vol. 41, no. 1, 2023, with Line Cottegnies and Gordon McMullan).

Paola Spinozzi is Professor of English Literature at the University of Ferrara. She is Pro-Vice-Chancellor for the Internationalisation of Teaching and Research, coordinator of the international and interdisciplinary PhD programme in *Environmental Sustainability and Wellbeing*, and co-coordinator of the *Routes towards Sustainability* International Network. Her research encompasses the ecological humanities and ecocriticism; utopia and sustainability; literature and the visual arts; literature and science; cultural memory. She has published on post/apocalyptic and climate fiction, nature poetry, eco-theatre; art and aesthetics, imperialism and evolutionism in utopia as a genre; the writing of science; interart creativity. She has edited *Cultures of Sustainability and Wellbeing: Theories, Histories, Policies* (Routledge, 2018, with Massimiliano Mazzanti) and *Discourses and Narrations in the Biosciences* (Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2011, with Brian Hurwitz), and is the co-author of *The Germ. Origins and Progenies of Pre-Raphaelite Interart Aesthetics* (Peter Lang, 2012, with Elisa Bizzotto).

Lieke Stelling is Associate Professor of English Literature at Utrecht University. Her research interests range widely across early modern literature and include religious culture, jest culture and Europeanness. She is the author of *Religious Conversion in Early Modern English Drama* (Cambridge UP, 2019) and has published articles on early modern literature in *English Literary Renaissance* and *Shakespeare Jahrbuch* among other journals. She is currently principal investigator of the Dutch Research Council funded project: *Discovering Europe in the Early Modern Period: How Literary Bestsellers Shaped a Diverse Community, 1517-1713*.

Janice Valls-Russell is a retired researcher of France's National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS) and a member of the Institut de recherche sur la Renaissance, l'âge Classique et les Lumières (IRCL, UMR5186 CNRS) at Université Paul-Valéry Montpellier 3. Her main areas of interest are the early modern reception of classical mythology and present-day engagements with Shakespeare in performance and education, with a focus on Europe. Since 2015 she has co-directed a programme on "Shakespeare and Citizenship" in Montpellier. She has co-edited several volumes, including *Thomas Heywood and the Classical Tradition* (Manchester UP, 2021, with Tania Demetriou) and *Shakespeare's Others in 21st-century European Performance:* The Merchant of Venice *and* Othello (Bloomsbury, 2021, with Boika Sokolova).

Nathalie Vienne-Guerrin is Professor of Early Modern English Literature at Université Paul-Valéry Montpellier 3 and a member of the Institut de recherche sur la Renaissance, l'âge Classique et les Lumières (IRCL, UMR5186 CNRS). She is a specialist of insult and evil tongues in the Elizabethan world and the author of *The Unruly Tongue in Early Modern England: Three Treatises* (Fairleigh Dickinson UP, 2012), *Shakespeare's Insults: A Pragmatic Dictionary* (Bloomsbury, 2016), and *The Anatomy of Insults in Shakespeare's World* (Bloomsbury, 2022). She is Co-Editor-in-Chief of the "Shakespeare on Screen" series (Cambridge UP, with Sarah Hatchuel), of *Cahiers Élisabéthains: A Journal of English Renaissance Studies*, and of the multidisciplinary open access journal *Arrêt sur Scène/Scene Focus* (OpenEdition). She co-directs, with Patricia Dorval, the "Shakespeare on Screen in Francophonia" programme and is currently Chair of the European Shakespeare Research Association.

Facing Europe in Crisis: Shakespeare's World and Present Challenges

Richard Chapman, Florence March,
Paola Spinozzi and Nathalie Vienne-Guerrin

Theatre feeds on crisis. Shakespeare's theatre feeds on crisis. From the crisis of "retirement" in *King Lear* (Porter, 1984), to the financial crisis in *Timon of Athens* (Berry, 2014), through the "energy crisis" in *1 Henry IV* (Borlik, 2017), the "cultural and gender crisis" in *Antony and Cleopatra* (Chevaillier, 2010), the "authority in crisis" in *The Tempest* (Cieślak, 2017), the "crisis of beauty" in *Twelfth Night* (Karim-Cooper, 2016) or even Shakespeare's "identity crisis" (Cyr, 1986), Shakespeare's theatrical world gives contemporary viewers and readers a lot of food for thought on crisis.

This book is the outcome of a European Strategic Partnership dedicated to understanding the complexities of crises, whether they be cultural, linguistic, political, social, religious, or economic. *NEW FACES. Facing Europe in Crisis: Shakespeare's World and Present Challenges*, an Erasmus+ Key Action 2 fostering Cooperation for Innovation and the Exchange of Good Practices, was coordinated by Université Paul-Valéry Montpellier 3 in France and formed by Freie Universität Berlin in Germany, Universiteit Utrecht in the Netherlands, Univerzita Karlova v Praze in the Czech Republic, Universytet Jagiellonski in Poland, Szegedi Tudományegyetem – University of Szeged in Hungary, Universidad de Murcia in Spain, Universidade do Porto in Portugal, and Università degli Studi di Ferrara in Italy.[1] The programme preceded the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine, two crises that have had an impact on the ways Shakespeare has been dealt with, performed on stage and represented on screen since 2020. Probably now more than ever, Shakespeare is considered as potentially "reparative" (Lanier, 2018).

The term "crisis" implies judgement and refers to a specific moment of instability, a change that may lead to death or recovery. Originally it had a medical meaning. In *Works of Chirurgery* (1543), Joannes de Vigo, defines the term as follows:

> Terminatio ad crisim. Crisis sygnifyeth iudgemente, and in thys case, it is vsed for a sodayne chaunge in a disease. Thys chaunge is wonte to happen foure maner of wayes. For eyther the patient is immedyatly delyuered of hys disease, or is moche better at ease, or dyeth incontynentlye, or becommeth moche worse. The fyrst of these chaunges is called Crisis, the seconde Elleipes that is wantynge, the thyrde cace, that is euyll, the fourth ateles, that vnperfyte. Hereafter it appeareth, that those chaunges which happen by litle and lytle, are not properly called Crises, but lises, that is solutions, or loosinges. (Vigo, 1543)[2]

In *An English Expositor* (1616), John Bullokar defined crisis as

> A Greeke word, which is interpreted iudgment. In Phisicke it signifieth the conflict betweene nature and sickenesse: that is, the time, when either the patient suddenly becommeth well, or suddenly dyeth, or waxeth better or worse, according to the strength of his bodie, and violence of the disease. (Bullokar, 1616: E4r)

The term thus points to a decisive moment. In *Shakespeare and Crisis: One Hundred Years of Italian Narratives* (2020) his plays have been connected to Italian crises and the "many ways in which [he] entered the Italian sociopolitical and cultural panorama between 1916 and 2016, his third and fourth centenary" (Bigliazzi, ed., 2020: 1-2). Moving beyond the Italian scope, *Facing Europe in Crisis. Shakespeare's World and Present Challenges* focuses on what the early modern period tells us about contemporary crises and what these, in turn, may bring to the understanding of the past. While readings of the past allow us to understand the present (Orszulak and Romanowska, 2021), the present also brings new insights into the early modern period.

I. Shakespeare's World and Ours

Shakespeare's world constantly attracts critical debate. In "Shakespeare's World and Crisis: Dilemmas of a Scholarly Representation", Ágnes Matuska deals with the notion of change that is at the heart of crisis and analyses how cultural and political changes may have an impact on the image and representation of Shakespeare. Presenting Shakespeare and early modernity essentially as a critical field, an object of theoretical debate fuelled by its instability, Matuska suggests that the present constitutes "an exceptional territory for potential experimentation" and asks the question: "what do we want the English Renaissance to be?". She notes that "scholarly and academic interpretations and representations of the Renaissance are embedded in or contribute to the reproduction, questioning and replacing of contexts that ultimately define our world view".

In "The Skin and Film on the Ulcer: Anatomy and the Performance of the Body on the Early Modern and Postmodern Stage", Attila Kiss investigates the articulation of the body and the mind, but also the connections between early and postmodern cultures. He defines the "growing occupation with the interiority of the human being as a cultural practice that has similar manifestations in both the early modern and the postmodern period because it is a reaction to the same kind of epistemological crisis". The image of the ulcer that appears in *Hamlet* epitomizes a world that is infected and has to face a critical phase, in the medical meaning of the word "crisis". Thus, the concept of crisis is reinscribed within its original anatomical and medical sense.

Miguel Ramalhete Gomes explores the relationships between the present and the past in "Learned Goths and Roman Exports: *Titus Andronicus* and Presentism in the 2010s". Stating that "the introduction of a new context (besides the introduction of a new text) will necessarily alter our previous configuration of past contexts too (besides texts)", he suggests that "the current refugee crisis encourages us to reconfigure our understanding of Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*, as well as its attendant contexts of production and of reference". Gomes notes that if the pro-refugee speech in Shakespeare's *Sir Thomas More* was used, in 2016 and again in 2018, as an exercise in empathy towards refugees, "*Titus Andronicus* can be partly looked at as a dramatization of anti-immigrant fears and hate". "Packed with anxiety concerning open borders and hostile guests", *Titus Andronicus* lends itself to a parallel with the contemporary refugee crisis, between Shakespeare's time and our time, and can be seen as a

"representative version of anti-immigrant hate speech" but also studied with a focus on "internal elements that deconstruct this same narrative".

In "Restitutional Shakespeare. Past Concerns and Present Issues", Andreas Mahler highlights the dialectic dialogue between present and past. Showing that the Shakespearean corpus is full of words like "remedy", "remediate", "restore", or "restitute" that imply the overcoming of a crisis by "healingly" coming back to the old order, Mahler also notes that a number of important plays suggest that this is not the case. He addresses the phantasm of restitution *in* Shakespeare and then goes on to address the aspect of healing *through* Shakespeare in the way his plays are used nowadays to bring "back to normal" people facing personal or private crises of their own, such as prisoners or inmates of psychiatric institutions. In a last step, he touches on the current crisis of linearity and addresses the question as to what Shakespeare might still be able to "do *for us*" in political and epistemological terms. His conclusion is that "Watching, and performing, Shakespeare makes us, once again or still, aware of the fact that a crisis will never be solved by coming back to the old ideas, but that what we need is always definitely something new".

The emergence of cultural materialism in the 1980s provoked a substantial reevaluation of Shakespeare's work, as critics felt the ethical need to renegotiate the values and discourses of early modern culture as they circulated in late Western societies. Such re-examination has since then affected the assessment of certain plays by Shakespeare, like *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Titus Andronicus* and *Measure for Measure*, which have received especial scrutiny from the perspective of gender. "'Time's Up, Tarquin': *The Rape of Lucrece* in the Age of #Metoo" by Juan F. Cerdá extends the presentist reevaluation of early modern literature by examining *The Rape of Lucrece* in the light of current discussions of feminism and gender violence. Analysed in relation to (post)modern conceptions of feminine empowerment, guilt and shame, social alarm and disruption of social order, patriarchal transaction and property, suicide and abortion, chastity and consensual sex, reputation, false accusations and civility, Shakespeare's treatment of rape can only travel problematically to modern times. Ultimately Cerdá questions to what extent Lucrece's bravery can be taken on by the brave new worlds, peoples, and women of the twentieth-first century.

"Educated Shrews: Shakespeare, Women's Education and Its Backlash" by Larisa Kocic-Zámbó situates Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* within a larger context of the, so called, shrew narratives, focusing primarily on the question of women's education and literacy. It thus goes beyond the simple redemptive effort of rendering Shakespeare's contested play palatable in light

of feminist criticism. The author highlights some overlooked details of the play (especially when compared to the text of *A Shrew*), inferring proto-feminist ideas that are at odds with its overall plot and reception. It is also worth noting how early adaptations of the play omit these details. Finally, by juxtaposing these details with other early modern texts on women's education, the chapter shows how these issues were and still are crucial to our perception of otherness and discriminations based on sex, and how these ultimately seep into our perceptions of current crises.

By studying "Mrs Shakespeare's New Face(t)s", Paola Spinozzi places Shakespeare's world at the heart of a critical debate that questions the relationships between biography and fiction. She notes that the battle of the critics who have delved into Shakespeare's life and relationships incorporates "methodological and ideological negotiations and raise issues about canonical and feminist approaches". While reflecting on the ontological crisis of literary criticism, she highlights that decision is the etymological meaning of *krisis*: a decision every critic must constantly make to prove their ability to criticise but also to compete with others in doing so. The desire and ability to criticize – *krinein* – involves discerning and deciding how to articulate a convincing interpretation of a controversial topic. Owing to the controversy it has aroused, "the biography of Mrs Shakespeare has become the catalyst for a metacritical enquiry about, and critique of, the intricacies of Shakespeare scholarship".

Meegan Louise Clark's "'No. I don't think I am me. Not any more': Sacrificing the Self in Utopia" focuses on the unavoidable structural crisis of desire and norm, spanning from early modern to contemporary utopia. On the one hand, *Utopia* (1516) and *New Atlantis* (1626) show Thomas More's and Francis Bacon's determination to envision societies that look ideal because individual identity has been subsumed under the notion of communal identity. Clark argues that "More tries to maintain both a sense of self-identity whilst sacrificing it in part, resulting in an extended self that may not be entirely natural, in order to achieve salvation, yet not succumbing entirely to predestination or resignation" while Bacon seems to disavow or sacrifice the self on the altar of knowledge-worship, yet allowing the elite that presides over all aspects of scientific endeavour to express a degree of self. On the other hand, Dennis Kelly's television series *Utopia* (2013-14) exposes the individual's refusal to trade identity for an elusive common good, showing how self is sacrificed to regain agency. While signalling that "self-repression with a resignation of agency and self-sacrifice in order to perceive an attainment of agency (...) are by no means comfortable", Clark looks into further systemic crises of I and We caused by current technologies.

II. Politics and Crisis

The essays dedicated to political issues in early modern and contemporary thinking are particularly pertinent to our present-day crises (be they economic, climatic, or of democratic representation). Mirka Horová analyses the role of chance in crises and their aftermaths in "Tott'ring Fortune / Who at her certain'st reels": Shakespeare's Politics of Chance". She notes that the word "fortune" occurs more than 375 times in his works and shows how "Fortune in Shakespeare functions as a trope symbolising the inscrutability, contingency and the unavailing arbitrariness of existence, called upon in moments of crisis – political, existential, and ethical". But this chance has some agency (Greenblatt's "swerve", 2011), following Machiavelli's ideas of *occasio* and *virtù*. Foucault's opposite view of modernist fortune, encapsulated in Nietzsche's "iron hand of necessity shaking the dice-box of chance", leads Horová to a persuasive explanation of current populist rejections of science and, perhaps, reason. Here we have an attempt to answer Greenblatt's intensely prescient question as to why a country should give itself to a tyrant (Greenblatt, 2018).

Extreme populism is tackled again in Paul Franssen's "The Thane and the Scullery Maid: Making Shakespeare Address the Populist Crisis". Franssen warns against a naïve use of Shakespeare's comments on the masses, as they would be seriously anachronistic and of little value to democratic nations. Instead, he points to recent Shakespeare spin-offs (e.g. *Lady M*, 2016; representations of *King Lear* in 2016 against Brexit) to show how "Shakespeare can be and has been fielded against the rise of populism". His answer to the question "Can Shakespeare help us to face crisis?" is subtle and convincing: we need to beware, as the theatre risks preaching only to the elite and the converted, of simply reinforcing the feeling of neglect at the basis of populism in Europe. After modernist critics rendered Shakespeare virtually incomprehensible to most people, effective deployment of his rich worldview against populism should consist not "just in preaching to those who fall to its lure, but also in listening to their genuine grievances and taking those seriously".

Martin Procházka delves into the role of the people in Shakespearean and contemporary politics in "From a Corrupt Eden to Bio-power: War and Nature in the Henriad". In a world where the ideal state of nature is lost, war is an infection of the body politic. With sadly intense relevance to the situation in Europe, and beyond, today, "war represented as a cosmic disorder becomes a powerful omen of evil haunting 'the unborn times'". But in this disorder, there

is agency: Henry IV claims he intends to read "the book of fate", and Henry V attempts to use nature to military advantage. Even more importantly, he explicitly claims that war is justified by his soldiers' possible future sins: "War is his beadle" (*Henry V* 4.1). Here we have a clear example of "the strategical model of power" (Foucault, 1969/2010: 64-70), of war as a policy and as politics, and bio-power policing the people. The figure of Falstaff embodies this crisis to devastating effect, at once debasing unity and the cathartic possibilities of Bakhtin's carnival, and alienating common humanity from nature, seeing as he does "no reason in the law of nature". This leaves us "valuing nature (and "time") only as random processes and opportunities for aggressive or calculating behaviour". Procházka's focus on leaders willing to "offend to make offence a skill" avoids mentioning climate change, war, or the fate of Donald Trump, but the connections are there for us to make.

In "'There Is No Alternative': *Timon of Athens* and Contemporary Economic Crises", Imogen Goodman traces detailed lines of comparison between Shakespeare's rather contested work and the 2008 financial crisis. Timon of Athens was unable to foresee his state's ruin in a way that reminds us of the failure of economists to predict the credit crisis. She notes that the ambivalence of critics towards a work that fails to offer a solution to the political crisis in Athens is similar to the lack of political vision besetting us today, where no alternative to painful debt repayment is offered. When Timon offers dishes of hot water instead of delicacies to his guests he is considered mad, but his sleight of hand exposes the deceit inherent in the credit market in Athens, and perhaps in our own. Goodman suggests that the "vision of nascent capitalism" in *Timon* matches the current confusion of exchange value and use value, causing both the adoption of unjust solutions to economic crises and the loss of trust in institutions. Timon's deep alienation and view of men as equal only in villainy is linked to the contemporary attempt to rob the crisis of its subjective memory and choose to extend it as an "eternal exception" (Agamben, 2003/2005).

Eline Reinhoud draws an explicit parallel between politics and acting in "'Dive, thoughts, down to my soul': The Politico-Aesthetic Function of Vice and Machiavel in *Richard III* and *House of Cards*". She does so in a contemporary frame by linking the characters of Richard III and Frank Underwood (the President in *House of Cards*), bringing the analysis of a leader into a focus that we can all understand. Indeed, the points of similarity are many: both characters are similar in their desire for advancement and aware of their own behaviour. Reinhoud sees them as both *Machiavel* and *Vice*. Their downfalls are largely due to the inadequacy of the Machiavellian approach

to politics, which allows the leader to gain power and hold on to it, but to no real purpose. Like Vice, they both engage in an explicit relationship with the audience (Richard III's asides and Underwood's direct chats to camera) and, to some extent, manage to gain our sympathy. Rancière's analysis of politics and aesthetics assists Reinhoud's claim that these villains, like modern-day populist politicians, enjoy the benefits of apparent authenticity: "The combination of traits derived from Vice and Machiavel are what gives Richard and Underwood their particular crooked allure".

The problem of not knowing what to do with power or being bereft of political aims might be resolved by utopian thought. But, as Hannah Goldstein explains in "Our Inability to Imagine a Utopian Alternative", scepticism limits our awareness and understanding. After delineating the history of utopian fiction, with its stages of utopia, dystopia, uchronia and finally post-apocalypse, Goldstein explores why it is that we are so passive to global disaster. A comparison between the treatment of strangers at Bensalem in Bacon's *New Atlantis* and the reception of journalists in present-day North Korea leads to a discussion of Fisher's concept of *Capitalist Realism*. We find it difficult to imagine a true stranger nowadays in our hooked-up world, and any criticism of social and economic practice risks commodification, as the story of the Sex Pistols in the United Kingdom illustrates. Movements to protect the environment risk summary rejection, and responsibility is shifted from the system to the individual. Our predicament is grave, and we need to think and act, even if hyper-pessimism is debilitating. As Goldstein says, "Long gone are the days when utopias could be used to instruct and warn the public". Meanwhile, "The apocalypse has already begun for those who are paying attention".

III. Intercultural Dialogues and Dialectics

The sea as a site of intercultural exchange is at the core of "Crossing the Mediterranean in Early Modern Drama", in which Sabine Schülting explores maritime networks and the risks of seafaring in Christopher Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta* and William Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, *Twelfth Night* and *Pericles*. The Mediterranean Sea oscillates between "its openness to encounter, trade, and communication on the one hand, and insecurity and danger on the other". Schülting's historicist insight into the relevance of the Mediterranean to the increasingly expanding world in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries

supports a presentist concern about its transformation into a lethal border zone separating Europe from Northern Africa and the Middle East.

The European refugee crisis is viewed through Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* and *Othello* in "Wheeling Strangers of Here and Everywhere. Present Issues of Integration and the Early Modern Crisis of Conversion" by Lieke Stelling. These plays help us recognize parallels between early modern English concerns about religious conversion and contemporary European anxieties about the integration of non-Western refugees, immigrants and other people who are perceived as "other". The ostensible desire for Christianization and assimilation expressed by many Western societies harbours an even stronger urge to label converts or non-Western immigrants as aliens to confirm boundaries between other and self.

In "Crisis and Otherness: The Role of Language", Richard Chapman explores the ways in which the 2018 "migrant crisis" is linguistically presented and shows that an "'us and them' reading of the migration event" is based on "a naïve dichotomy, negating or concealing the complexities and shades of difference and otherness in any immigration experience". He explores the friend-enemy dichotomy, and the part language plays in the experience and political treatment of the refugee crisis. Language may be exclusive, but it can also be a possible solution against exclusion, for "language (…) is hospitality".

Erasmus's treatise *Lingua* refers to the tongue as an "ambivalent organ" (Erasmus, 1525/1989: 365). Indeed, language may cause damage but can also be a source of healing; it may trigger crisis but also reparation. Words have probably never had such an extensive, global power as they have today, at a time when they circulate more quickly and at a wider scale than ever before. In the virtual digital era, the power of words is so *real*, so performative. In Shakespeare's days, the world was smaller, and words could not travel as fast and far as they do today, but even then, the impact of words used as insults was enormous. Nathalie Vienne-Guerrin draws attention to a scandal in France in 2019, showing how the mechanisms that are at work in the scandal may illuminate *Love's Labour's Lost*. Focusing on the Pageant of the Nine Worthies which can be seen as an episode of collective mockery, her main argument is that *LLL* is a kind of "Facebook", that is a book of faces or a play that reveals a preoccupation with one's own *face*. She also suggests that the end of the play shows a way out of crisis, by rejecting a bad use of laughter and promoting a good usage of it.

"Shakespeare and the Origins of European Culture Wars" by Jean-Christophe Mayer highlights how Shakespeare, owing to his strong societal aura, has been employed to assert national and cultural identity. With the expansion of the public sphere in the eighteenth century, he became engulfed in cultural wars and was used for various European political agendas. The beginning of Shakespearean culture wars in eighteenth-century England and France reveals how "cultural forms, and literature in particular, can structure public and diplomatic discourse and be appropriated, manipulated, and become instruments in a covert and at times overt race for political hegemony".

Nathalie Rivère de Carles's "Shakespeare's Diplomacy: A European Language in Conversation with the World" connects Shakespeare's drama to early modern and contemporary official and non-official diplomacy. It studies diplomacy in *Hamlet* and offers a view of "how Shakespeare is and can be used as a diplomatic instrument". His plays and adaptations can serve as "a language of true productive transnational conversations rather than a delusional picture-perfect or conquering view of Shakespeare's birth-culture". Shakespeare's theatre thus offers "a *lingua franca* for the diplomat and the layperson".

How words and dialogue can contribute to avoiding or solving crises is the object of Marta Gibinska's "Crisis: Meeting the Other and the Philosophy of Dialogue", in which she discusses interpersonal crises drawing upon the work of Martin Buber, Emmanuel Levinas and Józef Tischner. Meeting someone who is radically Other is an event that may turn into a crisis: learning "how to construct a working relation with the other rather than stay in permanent enmity" involves diagnosing a crisis and understanding how to solve it by redirecting the critical dialogue.

IV. What Can Shakespeare Do for Us? Education, Participation and Civic Engagement

Culture is what is left when one is deprived of everything. Vulnerable individuals, minorities and communities in contexts of war, poverty, migration, homelessness, and illiteracy have been at the core of thousands of projects over the last decades. Different forms of response include participatory theatre and, more specifically, "applied Shakespeare", a notion that has emerged in recent years to designate "a broad set of theatrical practices and creative processes that take participants and audiences beyond the scope of conventional, mainstream theatre into the realm of a theatre that is responsive to ordinary people and their stories, local settings and priorities" (Prentki, 2009: 9). Originally designed

to address large gatherings of spectators from all walks of life, Shakespeare's theatre lends itself particularly well to experimental practices in the service of social and community change.

Mariacristina Cavecchi focuses on a Prison Shakespeare programme in Italy, "A Dream in BeKKa", implemented in the "Cesare Beccaria" Juvenile Detention Centre in Milan and involving a group of university students and a theatre company, Puntozero Teatro. The joint project fosters collaborations between the world of prison and the world outside, paving the way for rehabilitation and integration, as well as aiming to debunk stereotypes about prison and inmates. In the case under study, all participants work on a production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, in which the motif of the metamorphosis crystallizes the transformative potential of Shakespeare's drama, which is here activated. As they experience solidarity by building a common project, without which there can be no society, they turn the prison into a heterotopia, that is, "a location that … reflects or comments on a site in the actual world" and "may even act as a foil for how we understand spaces and structures beyond a performance" (Tompkins, 2014: 1). Thus, "A Dream in BeKKa" allows us to re-evaluate both prison and university as cultural and political spaces while reasserting the crucial role of university in society.

Another instance of applied Shakespeare is the Avignon Festival's joint theatre project with Le Pontet Penitentiary, directed by Olivier Py, the festival director from 2014 to 2022. In an interview with Florence March, Py retraces the genesis of his collaboration with inmates, in which Shakespeare acts as a laboratory for a new prison, whereas the prison stands in its turn for a laboratory pushing back the limits of theatre. Py's carceral programme "brings us back to the origins of Shakespeare's theatre in Renaissance London, at a time when public playhouses were not allowed to be erected within the medieval city" but relegated to its suburbs, together with houses of prostitution, madhouses, pesthouses and prisons. Driven by both a centrifugal movement, as it takes theatre to the periphery of Avignon, and a centripetal force, as it brings a marginal population into the festival's spotlight, this ambitious project contributes to making Shakespeare popular again as it becomes accessible to remote audiences and amateur actors.

Although Shakespeare is not the only author whose texts were summoned behind bars, he certainly is a fixed part of what Ton Hoenselaars calls "cultures of internment" in Europe and beyond. In "Shakespearean Explorations in Captivity", Hoenselaars re-evaluates the role of Shakespeare in camps, choosing not to focus on cultural activity as a mere illustration of the prisoners' daily life but

rather to delve into the processes of appropriation of Shakespeare's texts leading to survival. Hoenselaars concentrates on a few case studies to reconstruct, through ego-documents, the internees' collective and individual experience and to show how the playwright obliquely gave them a voice, sometimes deputizing for their lack of words. More than a remedy against boredom and a source of solace, appropriating Shakespeare through reading, remembering, quoting, and performing was a way of expressing one's complex feelings and emancipating oneself through the power of the imagination. Transnational, pan-European Shakespeare qualifies as a "war poet" according to Hoenselaars, and his texts as "survival poetry" (Pfister, 2013: 250-256).

As applied theatre embraces a wide range of practices, Janice Valls-Russell focuses on community theatre in "Working with Shakespeare: The Ethics of Community Engagement and Participatory Theatre". After providing an overview of critical theories on participatory theatre, Valls-Russell concentrates on a few case studies and examines how socially engaged practices of Shakespeare's theatre "are a way of empowering the disempowered and including the excluded, and can achieve radical and remarkable transformations" (Keidan, 2008). Eventually she discusses legacies in ethical rather than quantitative terms, without overlooking the risk that, when community theatre projects come to an end, participants may be left even more vulnerable.

Agnieszka Romanowska's chapter centres on the spectator's multi-layered engagement in *Island*, a multimedia production by Song of the Goat Theatre inspired by Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. Just as Prospero plunges his enemies into a tempest as total experience, the Song of the Goat company immerses "the audience in a syncretic and synesthetic theatrical event which activates several channels of perception and enables a diagnosis and interpretation of our time's crises on many different levels". The spectators share in a powerful intellectual, aesthetic, and emotional experience which provides much more than a comment on the current migration crisis as it confronts them with the universal condition of humankind as "a refugee on an island of loneliness" – a sign of the production's focus on inclusiveness.

The title *Facing Europe in Crisis. Shakespeare's World and Present Challenges* has been carefully chosen. The participants in the European programme avoided using the term "solving" and agreed that the word "facing" would better suggest the complexities of crises and the need to examine and understand them with the lucidity demanded by scientific research. Crisis seems to be inherent in humanity, a permanent state everyone should face

with the awareness that in the solutions to one crisis lie the seeds of the next. Crisis is inscribed in seriality. That is what the cycle of Shakespeare's history plays reveals. His theatre feeds on crisis, but the Shakespearean theatrical experience also allows its audiences and participants to tackle crisis in all its ambivalence. Shakespeare's theatre is an invitation to tackle crises of all times and to think about them, being aware that, as Hamlet notes (2.2.239-40) "there is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so".

Notes

1. See *NEW FACES. Facing Europe in Crisis: Shakespeare's World and Present Challenges*, new-faces-erasmusplus.fr (accessed 22 January 2024).

2. See Vigo's glossary, "The interpretacion of Straunge Wordes", at the end of this 1543 edition.

Works cited

Agamben, Giorgio, *State of Exception* (2003/2005), trans. Kevin Attell, Chicago, The U of Chicago P. Originally published as *Stato di eccezione*, Torino, Bollati Boringhieri.

Bigliazzi, Silvia (ed.) (2020), *Shakespeare and Crisis: One Hundred Years of Italian Narratives*, Amsterdam / Philadelphia, John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Borlik, Todd Andrew (2017/2020), "Uncolting Falstaff: The Oats Complex and Energy Crisis in *1 Henry IV*", *Shakespeare Jahrbuch*, 117 (2017): pp 81-99; also published in Lisa Hopkins / Bill Angus (ed.), *Reading the Road, From Shakespeare's Crossways to Bunyan's Highways*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh UP.

Bullokar, John (J. B.) (1616), *An English expositor teaching the interpretation of the hardest words vsed in our language*, London, Printed by Iohn Legatt, STC (2nd ed.) / 4083.

Chevaillier, Flore (2010), "'Become What You Are.' The Cultural and Gender Crisis in Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*", in Delphine Lemonnier-Texier (ed.), *Représentations et identités sexuelles dans le théâtre de Shakespeare. Mises en scène du genre, écritures de l'histoire*, Rennes, Presses universitaires de Rennes, pp. 119-125.

Cieślak, Magdalena (2017), "Authority in Crisis? Dynamic of the Relationship Between Prospero and Miranda in Appropriations of *The Tempest*", *Text Matters*, 7, nr. 7 (2017): pp. 161-182.

Cyr, Helen W. (1986), *The Shakespeare Identity Crisis: A Reference Guide*, Baltimore, Shakespeare Oxford Society.

Erasmus, Desiderius (1525/1989), *Lingua*, trans. Elaine Fantham, in *Collected Works of Erasmus*, 29, Toronto, U. of Toronto P., pp. 249-412.

Foucault, Michel (1969/2010), *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. A.M. Sheridan Smith, Vintage Books Edition, New York, Vintage Books.

Gomes, Miguel Ramalhete (2018), "Presentism and Its Discontents: Cultural Translations of the Financial Crisis through *Macbeth* and *Timon of Athens*", *Shakespeare Studies*, 46, pp. 84-93.

Greenblatt, Stephen (2011), *The Swerve. How the World Became Modern*, New York, W. W. Norton and Company.

— (2018), "Shakespeare's close call with tyranny", *The New Yorker*, 4 May, https://www.newyorker.com/books/page-turner/shakespeares-close-call-with-tyranny, accessed 24 April 2024.

Jeffrey, David Ian (2021), "Shakespeare's Empathy: Enhancing Connection in the Patient-doctor Relationship in Times of Crisis", *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine*, 114, nr. 4, pp. 178-181.

Lanier, Douglas (2018), "Reparative Shakespeare", *Shakespeare désenchaîné*, Congrès 2018 de la Société Française Shakespeare, March, unpublished, https://journals.openedition.org/shakespeare/3900, accessed 23 January 2024.

Karim-Cooper, Farah (2016), "Shakespeare's Women and the Crisis of Beauty", in Dympna Callaghan (ed.), *A Feminist Companion to Shakespeare* (2nd edition), Oxford and Malden, MA, Wiley Blackwell, pp. 467-479.

Keidan, Lois (2008), "The ethics of socially engaged art", *The Guardian*, 8 May, https://www.theguardian.com/stage/theatreblog/2008/may/08/theethicsofsociallyengaged, accessed 9 April 2024.

Lucas, Ashley E. (2021), *Prison Theatre and the Global Crisis of Incarceration*, London, Methuen Drama.

Orszulak, Agnieszka / Agnieszka Romanowska (ed.) (2021), *Reading the Past, Understanding the Present*, Kraków, Jagiellonian UP.

Pfister, Manfred (2013), "Shakespeare's Sonnets *de profundis*", in Carla Dente / Sara Soncini (ed.), *Shakespeare and Conflict*, London, Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 250-256.

Prentki, Tim and Sheila Preston (ed.) (2009), *The Applied Theatre Reader*, London, Routledge.

Tompkins, Joanne (2014), *Theatre's Heterotopias. Performance and the Cultural Politics of Space*, London, Palgrave Macmillan.

Vigo, Giovanni da (1543), *The most excellent workes of chirurgerye*, London, STC (2nd ed.) / 24720.

Shakespeare's World and Ours

1.1. Shakespeare's World and Crisis: Dilemmas of a Scholarly Representation

Agnes Matuska

Szegedi Tudományegyetem / University of Szeged

ABSTRACT

A chapter on the Renaissance period in a contemporary history of English literature in Hungarian opens up theoretical dilemmas and questions regarding literary history, periodization, the social embeddedness of literary pieces as well as the cultural embeddedness of literary historians themselves. Examples include a history of English literature written in Hungarian in the '70s, as well as current debates about new historicism, with special regard to the changes in the assessment of new historicist works, the relationship between presentism and new historicism, as well as various ideas about the relationship between literary works and their historical context. The author suggests three main layers defining the perspective of literary historians: their immediate institutional background, the dominant academic paradigm(s), and the way in which they wish to participate in contemporary public discourse through their interpretations. Although these last two layers are intermingled, the ambivalence in their relationship is similar to the one characterizing the interconnectedness of a literary work and its historical and ideological context.

To the memory of Géza Kállay

The specific context and starting point of my investigation is a pragmatic task I was involved in as a member of a group of researchers writing the new history of English literature in Hungary, an overdue update of the previous literary history, dating back to the socialist era of the 1970s.[1] The whole undertaking has been a crucial and formative experience for several of us, Hungarian scholars of English literature and culture, mostly teachers at diverse Hungarian universities, but

also professors abroad, doctoral students, or secondary school teachers with research background and doctoral degrees. The project has become important for us specifically because it forced us to think and talk much more thoroughly and explicitly than usual about what we actually *do* as researchers and *why*. One important experience is to realize that the writing of the actual text took about as much time as discussing the preferred organizational concept that was to be followed when planning the chapters. From the outset it was clear that it would not be merely a History of English Literature, but rather the Hungarian version of it. For some time, the editors planned that this specification would also appear in the title of the volumes.[2] The potential audience of the text has been imagined to be anyone from the range of secondary school or university students to the knowledgeable wider public. The idea that the term "Hungarian" would be acknowledged in the title of the volumes was overturned in the end, but throughout the process of planning and writing it had a double function: it provided both a guideline and a sense of liberation. A guideline meaning that chapters have been written with special attention to topics and works with a Hungarian reception history and their role in Hungarian literature and culture. As for the sense of liberation created by the avowedly "here-and-now" perspective of the project: rather than endeavouring the impossible task of "covering the whole picture" by mentioning major authors and works as in an annotated phone book, importantly, authors were asked to follow their own interest, giving greater or smaller significance to works, authors, genres, or phenomena as they preferred. Clearly, this subjective viewpoint was combined with the more comprehensive editorial perspectives already when titles of chapters and subchapters were set, but authors were nevertheless urged to focus on issues they find important, things that are relevant for them, and *as* they are relevant for them beyond the fact that they are potential items of a literary history.

In the present essay I wish to discuss some of the more general, theoretical issues that the undertaking raised, particularly as somebody who was involved in the discussions on the chapter entitled "Changing images of the Renaissance after the cultural turn" [Változó Reneszánszképek a kulturális fordulat után] (Szőnyi, 2020: 12-16). Thinking about "the changing images", I found that at least two contexts should be taken into consideration. One context is the changing images of the Renaissance as they both influenced and were entailed by changing interpretations of works regarded as key texts of Renaissance English literature in English-speaking discourses. The other context is the change of the image of the (English) Renaissance, due to paradigmatic shifts in scholarship. This latter notion is doubly relevant in the Hungarian contexts, bringing radical changes in the

interpretations of the era by the fall of the socialist regime, and the consequent influence of the finally free and open influx of intellectual schools and scholarly trends, including the ones that can be considered under the umbrella of the "cultural turn". As for the first context, the main question is: how did some new interpretations of works re-shape the understanding of the period that bore them?[3] Another important issue is the significance of the expression *Early Modern* as an alternative to the *Renaissance*, as well as the debates about the relationship between the Medieval and the Renaissance. To take the example of Shakespeare, the epitome of renaissance (or early modern) literature, scholarship within the past decade has witnessed significant revaluations of this image, pointing to the crucial "medievalness" of Shakespeare (Cooper, 2010).[4] An earlier revaluation, with the rise of New Historicism, was the change in which the Tillyardean, highly aestheticized and idealized image of the Renaissance order, in which the macrocosmic universe was reflected in the microcosmic human being, was discredited. Scholars pointed out the related problem, namely that the idea of the worldview as such postdated the Elizabethans "like photography, by more than two hundred years" (de Grazia, 1997: 8). Also, as de Grazia suggests by referring to authors considered to be major figures of the cultural turn (Foucault or Althusser): "The days of uniform, coherent, and comprehensive historical pictures seem to be over" (*ibidem*). Rather than examining the way in which literary works could be interpreted with the help of contemporary notions of a cosmic order, New Historicist interests tended towards tracing the dialogue between the literary texts and the social discourse. As Drakakis and Fludernik explain,

> Old (literary) Historicism treated nonliterary sour-
> ces as materials that provided explanatory support
> for interpretations on the basis of facts about the
> cultural environment (Levin 1990); New Historicism, by
> contrast, takes the cultural discourses to be central and
> concentrates on how they are reflected in literature,
> which is thus demoted to a status of being merely one
> of the many cultural artifacts existing at a particular
> moment in time. (1984: 499)

"Cultural discourse", thus, seems to replace the idea of a less flexible and more clear-cut image of a world picture, but its explanatory function is not entirely different. De Grazia argues, however, that once the expression "world picture" is replaced by other, apparently more fashionable terms, such as

"systems of representations", "cognitive mappings" or "fantasy–constructions", we may wonder whether "[i]t is possible (…) that ideology might have slipped into the place of world pictures as a way of thinking about cultures of the past?". I am not sure about the extent to which the playful ambiguity of this question is intentional. Clearly, the terms quoted here – that work almost as synonyms for world pictures – come from scholars who are interested in the ideological constructions governing past discourse. De Grazia's footnotes identify the phrases as coming from Althusser, Geertz and Zizek (de Grazia, 1997: 21). There is, however, another meaning of the sentence referring to ideologies slipping in as a way of thinking about past cultures, which is perhaps even more relevant to the undertaking of writing a literary history. The elephant in the room is the ideology slipping into and shaping the project itself. Paradoxically, a strictly New Historicist paradigm almost seems to undermine any literary historical narrative by avoiding diachronic analysis and pointing to the blurred line between literary and non-literary texts (Drakakis / Fludernik, 2014: 500). The relevance of this second, perhaps unintended meaning of de Grazia's sentence for the specific Hungarian literary history is made tangible by the work to which the newly published series offers an updated alternative. The book published in the early seventies, the last comprehensive one prior to 2020, surely exemplifies this other, less obvious meaning of ideologies slipping in, while we are thinking about the past.[5] The turn that drastically shaped the changing image of the Renaissance in Hungary, and was indeed the prerequisite of the cultural turn, was ultimately the fall of the socialist regime.

The History of English Literature [Az angol irodalom története], edited by Miklós Szenczi, Tibor Szobotka and Anna Katona and published in Budapest, in 1972, like all academic works of the period, bears the signs of the then ruling socialist ideology. Usual ways to comply with the official requirements were to insert (sometimes barely or not at all) relevant quotations in the text from the main ideological figures, mainly Marx and Engels, and once the mandatory tribute to the fathers was paid, the endeavour was authorized, and the investigation could go on. The case with the English Renaissance, however, was more specific, precisely because it plays such an important role in Marx's own writing: for him, it is the English Renaissance that is, on the one hand, the dawn of capitalism, while on the other hand, it is also the first step towards the ultimate liberation of the worker. At the dawn of the Renaissance, workers gain freedom from the feudal ties. This significance is certainly not played down in Szenczi and his colleagues' literary history (see also de Gracia, 1997: 11-12), in which one can find

long passages paraphrasing the relevant, 24th chapter of Marx's *The Capital*. A sentence exemplifying what they (were required to) say about the perspective of their undertaking is the following:

> In the present chapter we wish to map out the most important literary and human values of the English Renaissance, but not for a moment should we forget about the gloomy events analyzed by Marx, the new, enslaving powers of capitalism that were active along with the liberation from feudal ties, and the enormous inner tension that lends a peculiar intensity to the intellectual life and literature of the English Renaissance, and which operates most clearly in the conflicts of drama. (Szenczi *et al.*, 1972: 58. [My translation])

As a consequence, the literary heroes of the era will be figures who may be representatives of Renaissance humanism but have to be at the same time critics of the emerging bourgeois class or at least have to be dissociated from groups that are regarded as responsible for the rise of capitalism. Shakespeare, for example, fits well in this category, as well as Thomas More. The former did clearly achieve individual material and social success, for which he may be criticized, still, he "was anything but obtuse in a bourgeois sense" (Szenczi *et al.*, 1972: 119). The latter may have been a deeply religious man, testifying to his beliefs through martyrdom, but he still condemned "the inhumanity of Christian Europe", which redeems him according to the authors' perspective. In fact, it is his work that saves him ultimately, allegedly being more progressive than the author himself: More, who was imagined as having been "ideologically lagging behind the citizens of Utopia", may have "believed in the superiority of revelatory religion", but still contrasted the "rationally designed state of wise and sober pagans with the ignorant, superstitious and greedy communal spirit of the Christian England" of his time (*idem*, 67).

I would like to remark here that although I am singling out some of the most ideologically loaded passages from the work, my aim is neither to ridicule the scholarly value of Szenczi's and his colleagues' undertaking, nor to make an impression that this is all that there is. In their time, in the confinement of the ideological era they worked in, there was simply no other way to view the English Renaissance, at least not in an officially published literary history. Was there

an opinion that would reflect what Szenczi and his colleagues *really* thought? Our dilemma, however, is certainly the one that is raised by the liberation from the ideological constraints: if the backdrop disappears that has made certain literary works significant in specific ways, what criteria will define the significance of the same or other, previously neglected works? The answer to this question regarding the case of the reinterpretation of the English Renaissance after the fall of the regime in Hungary may be looked for in a volume edited by Attila Kiss and György Endre Szőnyi (1998). English Renaissance literature may become significant for the reason it is significant in the English-speaking discourse: New Historicism. Ten years after the political change, a complete issue of *Helikon*, a journal of literary studies, was dedicated to New Historicism, with translations of some seminal articles, reviews of related volumes and a bibliography of New Historicism, as well as articles by the two editors. Szőnyi republished a text he had written a decade before, based on what he recounts as his shocking encounter with the new trends in Renaissance studies in the US at the end of the 1980s – one element of this shock surely being the fact that while Hungarian academia had finally got rid of the Marxist baggage, leftist literary theories were becoming increasingly powerful in the US. An important moral from reading his article today, is that at the time of publishing the article he still imagines his position of a Hungarian scholar of the English Renaissance as of someone who can decide the extent to which the western trends may or may not be useful or invigorating within the Hungarian intellectual arena. It seems to me that this perspective has disappeared partly because of the globalization of academia, partly because of what may be called semi-jokingly "self-colonization" into English speaking discourses, and partly because the valid academic system by which scholarly output is measured rates foreign (and foreign language) publications higher than domestic ones. The ideological constraints of the past are long gone, but new ones emerged instead. The new literary history project, in this sense, has been an exceptional territory for potential experimentation: what do we want the English Renaissance to be?[6] Do we see the milestones, the values that govern us in constructing its image, here and now, and are there perhaps some that we would rather have instead?

As a partial and rather philosophical answer to this above question, two quotations can serve as guidelines. One is from Szenczi's literary history, on Thomas More, while the other is by Pál Ács, a researcher at the Hungarian Academy and scholar of the European Renaissance.

> [Thomas More's] last work, reminiscent of Boethius, entitled *A Dialogue of Comfort against Tribulation* was written before his execution, during his imprisonment. Two Hungarian noblemen are debating, on the eve of the Mohács battle [lost against the army of the Ottoman Empire in 1526], how to prepare for martyrdom, in case the Turk occupies the country. The reference to Henry VIII's tyrannical despotism and to More's own fate is obvious; but equally clear is the reference (...) to the catastrophic consequences of the dissolution of European unity. (Szenczi *et al.*, 1972: 71)

The fear of the dissolution of the European unity, Hungary's image as a country that is at the border of Christianity, as well as the threatening image of a Muslim invasion – ideas known from contemporary political and ideological battles that crucially affect not only our Hungarian everyday but also our common European, and indeed, global future – cannot be more topical today. Denying that our scholarly and academic interpretations and representations of the Renaissance are embedded in or contribute to the reproduction, questioning and replacing of contexts that ultimately define our world view would be futile. Such interpretations also define who we become, or choose to become, through them. This perhaps gives us an opportunity to go a step further compared to the position of Presentism, the critical approach that offers itself as an alternative to New Historicism,[7] and not only engage with our own "situatedness" as something that is given, but rather see the performative responsibility in the consequences of *how* we see it. To illustrate my point, another, longer quotation, on the interpretation of the Renaissance, taken from an interview by Pál Ács, may serve us as a point of reference on the actuality of the debates about the meaning of the Renaissance:

> We all know that the widely spread knowledge about 'the renaissance era, the renaissance man' were not created in the 15th-16th century, but in the 19th, and they are not so much the reflections of Petrarca's, Ficino's or Michelangelo's world view, as they are of Michelet, Voigt and Burckhardt, in other words they are the modern European bourgeoisie's own image, projected back into

a period preceding them a few hundred years. This is precisely why several people deny that the Renaissance era was the age of the 'early new era, or Early Modern', and their understanding is that all these centuries, as they are, belong to the Middle Ages, and lack any modernity whatsoever. I cannot accept this, although I know very well how strong the medieval ties of the Renaissance were. I am not referring to well-known facts that clearly prove that European culture changed radically in the 15th-16th centuries, and a whole new word opened. Similarly, I am not pointing to the radically new forms and ways of seeing in the arts and literature that the Renaissance brought forth – following the models of Antiquity – first in Italy, and later in the whole of Europe, including Hungary. I would rather like to voice a hunch, according to which recent attacks against the Renaissance may be related to even more aggressive accusations against the Enlightenment, and liberalism as its progeny. The idea of the Renaissance is indeed the brain-child of bourgeois thinking, and today it is rejected by those who reject liberalism in its entirety. I am a follower of liberalism, and, among several other reasons, this is one that fuels my interest in the Renaissance. (Petneházi, 2016. [My translation])

It seems to me that the contexts to be taken into consideration as defining our work as critics, as authors of chapters in a literary history, emerge on three planes. The most pragmatic and materially constraining one is defined by the institutions that make our academic work possible. A non-poetic reason for our specific literary history project is that one of the biggest, regular funds available for research in Hungary is open for what is called "primary research", and in the humanities it is realized in the form of databases or editions of primary sources. There have been several such database projects – including some similar in scale – parallel to ours. To mention only two, one has been collecting data on all Hungarian theatre productions after 1949, while the other has dealt with the social history of Hungarian film, tagging all extant films in a grandiose database according to complex criteria. Such projects are maintained in spite of the fact that the funding logic allows little room for connection between the goals that the funds can be allocated for, and the people who are actively working on the project.

The other plane emerges as the ideological context of the critical paradigm within which we operate, but it is not always easy to differentiate it from the third, performative one, related to the larger goals the critic wishes to achieve within a given social context – as in Pál Ács' case. A very different approach compared to the Socialist Hungarian literary history, but also influenced, by Marxist materialist criticism, is Terry Eagleton's. His position and his relation to New Historicism provide us with perspectives that add further nuance to the scrutiny of the role of literary critics. In their introduction to the volume *Beyond New Historicism*, Drakakis and Fludernik claim that "Eagleton was, and continues to be, concerned to advance the cause of a particular theoretically informed materialist critical practice that the turbulent upheavals of late capitalism have reinforced rather than challenged" (2014: 495). In an article published in the early Nineties, Aram Veeser supports New Historicism against Terry Eagleton's criticism by saying, "Eagleton wants, obviously, to empower the human subject and feels cheated that New Historicism won't help him do it" (1991: 3).

By way of an illuminating example, Drakakis and Fludernik (2014: 495) compare Eagleton's two opinions on the witches of *Macbeth*, one published in 1986, and the other about two and a half decades later, in 2010. The witches are central to both readings, but while the former opinion celebrates the freedom they represent, "a realm of non-meaning and poetic play which hovers at the work's margins, one which has its own kind of truth" (Eagleton, 1986: 2), the later one stresses the threat posed by the witches to any social order (Eagleton, 2010: 81). The two opinions of the same author seem inconsequential: should we, then, celebrate the witches' freedom or be afraid of them and oppose them? At the same time, these opinions also epitomize the ambiguous relationship between literary texts and the (ideological) context that surrounds them. Although New Historicists have convincingly shown how literary and non-literary texts are similar in their contribution to the circulation of power and social energy, and all types of texts are similarly constrained by the discourse allowing them in the first place, it is in literary rather than non-literary texts that threats to order can be both subtle and powerful, represented in the way the witches are in *Macbeth*. A threat in itself is powerful precisely because it offers an alternative to the dominant power.

The element identical to the "witches" in More's *Dialogue of Comfort*, the Turks, are a similar threat to order, and although I imagine that More's belief in the necessity of order was incomparably stronger than Eagleton's, and in his own martyrdom he saw a radical possibility to maintain it, he could still make

his work function just like the witches do, and make his dialogue be the "Turk" threatening the system – in other words, the threat to the validity of the political order maintained by Henry VIII's court. Thus, he could also maintain a sense of freedom from ruling ideological constraints through literature, similar to the 1986 version of Eagleton's witches, while in King Henry's point of view More would constitute the threat to order, and not even his execution could have been enough for a complete eradication. Artistic freedom and political freedom are not easy to distinguish here, and it is similarly difficult to say whether containment is successful if we expand the context beyond the immediate material one to another beyond it, in which More certainly believed when offering an alternative literary and political truth in his *Dialogue*.

It is noteworthy to see how Greenblatt, the founding father of New Historicism, comes to view the power of Shakespeare's artistic autonomy as detached from the historical circumstances in a similar fashion in *Shakespeare's Freedom* (Greenblatt, 2010). As Drakakis and Fludernik observe, "[w]hat Greenblatt is in danger of succumbing to in *Shakespeare's Freedom* (…) is drifting away from the very overdetermining power of 'history' that New Historicism originally claimed to be the cornerstone of its practice" (2014: 497). After that, with *Tyrant: Shakespeare on Politics* (2018) Greenblatt has introduced presentist overtones that would have clashed with a historicist stance a decade or two ago. Eagleton and Greenblatt may seem inconsistent, since in different stages of their career they have offered different truths about Shakespeare or suggested different things about the way Shakespeare's texts function within the contemporary and contemporaneous contexts. But should we really think that their task is to *decide* whether the witches, in the end, are positive or negative, or whether Shakespeare's or anyone's artistic freedom is capable of surpassing the material and historical constraints of their context or not?

According to the definition of the New Critics' aesthetic, ambiguity is a crucial characteristic that distinguishes literary texts from non-literary ones. A reformulation of this idea informed by New Historicism could be to say that by way of their freedom, literary texts – just like texts of literary criticism in contexts that are more fortunate and less constraining than the one of Szenczi and his colleagues – can tap into sources of social energy to help their community of readers engage with orders as well as threats to these in meaningful ways that are otherwise not readily available. By trying to entangle the co-dependency of scholarly facts and their interpretation, we may be dealing with a version of the Renaissance debate on the relationship between body and soul. What emerges, while dissecting the body in the manner of Early Modern anatomists in the hope

to get closer to the soul (Kiss, infra; Kiss, 2011: 84-93), is the responsibility to make something of what we find or do not find there. And this responsibility relies equally on order as well as freedom from its constraints. The question is not whether subversion is possible, but whether and when it is necessary.

Notes

1. An earlier version of this paper was delivered at the "Renaissance Afterlives Revisited" seminar of the SAA in Atlanta, 2017, and I am grateful to the participants for their useful comments and suggestions, especially Jennifer Low and Monique Pittman.

2. So far, four volumes have been published: the first on the beginnings and medieval literature (Karáth / Halácsy, 2020), the second on the early modern period (Kiss / Szőnyi, 2020), and the third and fourth on the period between 1640-1830 in two parts (Komáromy et. al., 2021). The series editors are Tamás Bényei and Géza Kállay.

3. In this sense, say, Jonathan Dollimore's interpretation of *King Lear* in *Radical Tragedy* (1984) makes a more abrupt shift from the image of renaissance humanism with its fierce insistence on the lack of meaning in human suffering than Catherine Belsey's *The Subject of Tragedy* (1985), an equally groundbreaking volume on the role of tragedies in the formation of the modern subject, which however is more in line with a general understanding of the Renaissance as the period when the modern individual was born.

4. See also "Shakespeare's Medieval World", University of Cambridge, https://www.cam.ac.uk/research/news/shakespeares-medieval-world, accessed 19 March 2024: "Although we think of Shakespeare as quintessentially belonging to the English Renaissance, his world was still largely a medieval one".

5. It is useful to think of Hayden White's term "emplotment", referring to the genre of the narrative retelling of the past, that ultimately shapes its representation (White, 1973: X).

6. See *Filológiai Közlöny* 2013/4, Az angol irodalom története [History of English Literature]: the Literary Theory Committee of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences has dedicated this whole issue of the journal to the new History of English Literature in Hungarian. Among the theoretical aspects addressed by Géza Kállay (editor of the whole project), Péter Dávidházi, Attila Kiss, Zsolt Komáromy, Andrea Tímár, István D. Rácz, Tamás Bényei and Judit Friedrich, I have been especially influenced by Kiss's and Bényei's idea that the literary history project is an "intervention".

7. See Hugh Grady's complaint about the overwhelming power of the historicizing discourse: "At present, the trend toward historicizing Shakespeare appears to have become so dominant in the field and therefore so highly valued that more 'presentist' approaches – that is, those oriented towards the text's meaning in the present, as opposed to 'historicist' approaches oriented to meanings in the past – are in danger of eclipse" (Grady, 1996, 4-5). See also Evelyn Gajowski: "Presentism has ... challenged the dominant theoretical and critical practice of reading Shakespeare historically" (Gajowski, 2010: 675).

Works cited

Belsey, Catherine (1985), *The Subject of Tragedy*, London and New York, Routledge.

Cooper, Helen (2010), *Shakespeare and the Medieval World*, London, Arden.

De Grazia, Margreta (1997), "World Pictures, Modern Periods, and the Early Stage", in John D. Cox / David Scott Kastan (ed.), *A New History of Early English Drama*, New York, Columbia UP, pp. 7-24.

Dollimore, Jonathan (1984), *Radical Tragedy*, Chicago, The U of Chicago P.

Drakakis, John / Monika Fludernik (2014), "Introduction: Beyond New Historicism?", *Poetics Today*, vol. 35, nr. 4, pp. 495-513.

Eagleton, Terry (1986), *William Shakespeare*, Oxford, Blackwell.

— (2010), *On Evil*, New Haven and London, Yale UP.

Gajowski, Evelyn (2010), "Beyond Historicism: Presentism, Subjectivity, Politics", *Literature Compass*, 7/8, pp. 674-691.

Grady, Hugh (1996), "Introduction: A Postmodernist Shakespeare", in *Shakespeare's Universal Wolf: Studies in Early Modern Reification*, Oxford, Clarendon Press.

Greenblatt, Stephen (2010), *Shakespeare's Freedom*, Chicago, The U of Chicago P.

Greenblatt, Stephen (2018), *Tyrant: Shakespeare on Politics*, New York, W.W. Norton and Company.

Kállay, Géza (ed.) (2014), *Filológiai Közlöny*, vol. 59, nr. 3.

Karáth, Tamás / Katalin Halácsy (ed.) (2020), *Az angol irodalom története 1*, Budapest, Kijárat Kiadó.

Kiss, Attila (2011), *Contrasting the Early Modern and the Postmodern Semiotics of Telling Stories*, The Edwin Mellen Press, Lewiston, Queenston, Lampeter.

Kiss, Attila / György Endre Szőnyi (ed.) (1998), "Az újhistorizmus", *Helikon,* vol. 44, nr. 1-2.

— (ed.) (2020), *Az angol irodalom története 2*, Budapest, Kijárat Kiadó.

Komáromy, Zsolt *et al.* (ed.) (2021), *Az angol irodalom története 3-4*, Budapest, Kijárat Kiadó.

Petneházi, Gábor (2016), "A humanizmus halott? Beszélgetés Ács Pál irodalomtörténésszel" [Is humanism dead? Interview with literary historian Pál Ács], *Drót*, https://droteu.withssl.com/article/humanizmus-halott-beszelgetes-acs-pal-irodalomtortenesszel, accessed 19 March 2024.

Szőnyi, György Endre (2020), "Változó reneszánszképek a kulturális fordulat után", in Attila Kiss / György Endre (ed.), *Az angol irodalom története 2.* Budapest, Kijárat Kiadó, pp. 12-16.

Szenczi M. *et. al.* (ed.) (1972), *Az angol irodalom története*, Budapest, Gondolat.

Veeser, Aram H. (1991), "Re-Membering a Deformed Past: (New) New Historicism", *The Journal of the Midwest Modern Language Association*, vol. 24, nr. 1, pp. 3-13.

White, Hayden (1973), *Metahistory. The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-century Europe*, Baltimore, The Johns Hopkins UP.

1.2. The Skin and Film on the Ulcer: Anatomy and the Performance of the Body on the Early Modern and Postmodern Stage

Attila Kiss

Szegedi Tudományegyetem / University of Szeged

ABSTRACT

Recent findings in the history of the anatomical cultural imagery have revealed that the performance of dissection in the early modern anatomical theatre was a dramatic experience to both the anatomist and the spectators, while the representation of the violated body on the stage of the public playhouses was viewed by theatregoers as an anatomical experimentation presented by the revenger. In this interface of dissection and spectacle, playhouse and public autopsy, the early modern anxieties about the body are acted out in a social drama that inevitably addresses contemporary legal, religious, and political controversies. This chapter explores how this social drama can be interpreted as a laboratory for the nascent subjectivity of modernity. Relying on a semiotic understanding of the similarities between the early modern and the postmodern general epistemological crisis, the author examines representations of the body in postmodern Hungarian productions of *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*.

With the gradual unsettling and disappearance of the obstinate binary opposition between mind and body, we have been witnessing, in critical theory as well as in popular culture, a renaissance of the human body since the 1980s. Images of the dissected, anatomized, exposed corporeal structuration of the human being are endlessly disseminated and mediatized in consumer culture, while theories of the somatic, bodily modalities of the psychosomatically heterogeneous speaking

subject inform the foundations of almost each poststructuralist theory. Having been liberated from the suppression imposed on it by the non-corporeal abstraction of the Cartesian ego, the body has become a theoretical cornerstone as well as a cultural commodity. Besides the indefatigable vogue of TV series, soap operas, and documentaries on hospitalization, emergency rooms, surgery, and catastrophe management, we are also witness to a growing number of commercialized anatomy exhibitions.

Today, the most successful and popular sensation in the world is the travelling anatomical exhibition of specially prepared corpses directed and orchestrated by German professor Günther von Hagens. Since its first display in Japan in 1996, more than forty million people have visited the various versions of the "Body Worlds" exhibition.[1] The Other of the human subject is back: the materiality of the human being is again in the forefront of public curiosity, and this curiosity is now satisfied in massive anatomical exhibitions and theatres. This otherness finds its propelling fuel in the most deep-seated fantasies and anxieties of the subject, and its historical antecedents go back as far in time as Shakespeare's age. One of the most telling installments in the history of "Body Worlds" is the famous "Basketball Player" (Fig. 1). The cadaver is positioned over Leonardo da Vinci's well-known "Vitruvian man", and spectacularly unites the signs of the early modern and the postmodern interest in the anatomization of the human body.

The renaissance of the body may well account for the popularity and revival of early modern English plays that had been ignored or systematically suppressed by the canon. Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*, for example, has enjoyed a growing popularity even in non-English speaking countries since the 1980s, although for centuries it was considered by critics as an error in the canon: an unexplainable perversion of taste, an early and unsuccessful experimentation with the revenge theme. In Hungary, Shakespeare's earliest tragedy has had eight productions in the past thirty years, although it had never been staged in Hungarian before 1978.

The dissective, penetrative inwardness, which makes "Body Worlds" so appealing to the largest postmodern international audience, has also been identified by recent scholarship as a sign of the emergence of the early modern subjectivity at the time of the English Renaissance,[2] and has become an important perspective in postmodern productions and adaptations of Shakespeare and his contemporaries. In what follows, I intend to investigate this growing occupation with the interiority of the human being as a cultural practice that has similar manifestations in both the early modern and the postmodern period because it is a reaction to the same kind of epistemological crisis.

Figure 1. Günther von Hagens, "Body Worlds", "Basketball Player" (1996).[3]

I would like to start out with a unique and revolutionary Hungarian experiment. In the history of Hungarian stage and film adaptations of English Renaissance drama, the anatomical investment was initiated by Gábor Bódy's stage production of *Hamlet*, which was also turned into a film adaptation in 1992.[4] In Bódy's vision, the entire stage is a labyrinthine, magnified representation of Hamlet's brain, with all the cavities, nerves, fibers, and veins of the inside of the skull (Fig. 2-4). During the performance, Hamlet walks through and through the inside spaces of his own material brain stuff, and in this way the production metaphorically connects the inside and outside processes of the quest for self-knowledge. This anatomical interest has been recurring and growing in both Hungarian and international adaptations.
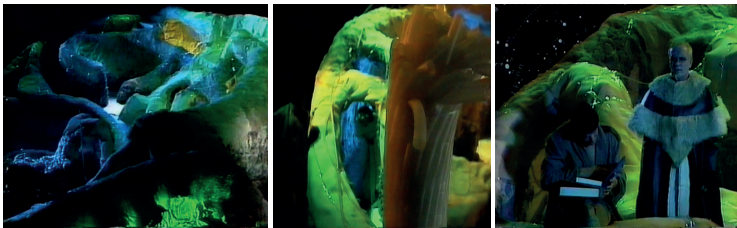
Figures 2 to 4. Gábor Bódy's stage production of *Hamlet* (film adaptation, 1992).

A more recent example of the postmodern affinity for the early modern anatomical interests and representations is an experimental staging of Shakespeare's *Macbeth* by Maladype Theatre, Budapest, first performed in 2013. In a dramaturgical turning point of the performance, Macduff enters the scene and puts a replica of Macbeth's flayed skin into his lap (Fig. 5-6). Contemplating his own skin image, the tyrant appears to arrive at some climactic realization, a point of *anagnorisis.* I consider this representation a very interesting solution in this daring adaptation of the tragedy. My paper relies on the early stages of a research into the cultural semantics that informed Tudor and Stuart understandings of the skin, so aptly picked up by Maladype Theatre for a corporeally sensitive postmodern audience. I maintain that the act of flaying, foregrounded both in early modern and postmodern anatomical representations, is a general metaphor of the attempt to arrive at the substance beyond the show, the depth behind the surface, the reality beneath the appearance of things. It emblematizes the desires and the inward, anatomizing attitudes that are common to both the early modern and the postmodern epistemological crisis.

Figures 5 and 6. Shakespeare's *Macbeth* by Maladype Theatre, Budapest, first performed in 2013.[5]

The image of the skin, to be removed to reveal the truth, proliferates not only in representations of autopsies but also in English Renaissance tragedy, *Hamlet* being a notable example. It emblematizes the scene of an important breakthrough that commences with the decline of two historical periods that suppressed the idea of the corporeal human interiority: with the end of the religiously overdetermined medieval period, and that of the unfinished project of modernity. Let me stay with *Hamlet* to illustrate the gravity of this image with a quote. In the closet scene, in an attempt to instruct his mother, Hamlet employs a visual metaphor of spiritual corruption which, curiously, contains one of the most favored corporeal images of early modern tragedy: the ulcer.

> Mother, for love of grace,
> Lay not that flattering unction to your soul
> That not your trespass but my madness speaks.
> It will but skin and film the ulcerous place,
> Whiles rank corruption, mining all within,
> Infects unseen. (3.4.141-146)

The ulcer in the early modern cultural imagery becomes a metaphor of the innermost infection, the corruption in the depth, which is covered up by the social masquerade of self-fashioning and pretense – by the skin and film Hamlet mentions. At the same time, the curative practice of tragedy, Philip Sidney argues, is exactly in the act of removing this film, breaking the surface, in order to expose the infection. The violation of the social skin of masks aims at making the ulcer bare in both the collective and the individual body. "Tragedy (...) openeth the greatest wounds, and showeth forth the ulcers that are covered with tissue". (Sidney, 2004: 27)

Much recent criticism has dealt with this anatomical imagery in Sidney's poetics. I would like to argue that the emphasis in this line is not so much on the image of the ulcer and the wound. I would rather lay stress on the idea of the tissue: the scalpel of English Renaissance tragedy removes, in an epistemological manoeuvre, the surface layer of our social as well as very corporeal reality to reveal the interiority, the depth.

Looking at it from this anatomical *and* representational point of view, Hamlet is engaged in an attempt at the private level which is also the goal of the tragedy itself on the communal level: to cure the soul, to open the wounds, to remove the concealing tissue. If, however, the skin is the carnal envelope that covers up the body together with its corporeal diseases, what is, we might ponder, the cover on the soul? What is it that envelopes our spiritual essence, if there is any? What is the skin of the soul, what makes the film on the spirit? In the period of the emergence of a nascent early modern subjectivity, amidst the protestant debates about the availability or absence of an innermost spiritual essence of the human being, the question arises with growing intensity.[6]

There is an obsession in the English Renaissance with the skin that covers the depth of things and hides the structuration of some innermost reality from the public eye. Transgression in early modern tragedy is very often not merely a violation of social or political standards and laws, or a mutilation and dissection of bodies, but primarily a transgression that penetrates the surface of things in an *epistemological attempt* to locate the depth behind the surface.

Performance oriented semiotic approaches have explicated the repre-sentational logic of the English Renaissance emblematic theatre, and the various techniques it used to thematise the antagonisms of the constitution of early modern subjectivity. The postsemiotic scrutiny of these techniques has revealed that violence on the Tudor and Stuart stage did not merely function to satisfy the appetite of the contemporary public, an audience that demanded gory entertainment in the public theatre. These representational techniques of dissection participated in a general epistemological effort to address those territories of knowledge that had formerly been hidden from public discourses. The human body, the temple of divine secrets and the model of universal harmony, was undoubtedly one of the most intriguing territories. The *skin* of the human body started to be understood as a general metaphor of the new frontier that started to be tested in the process that I call the early modern *expansive inwardness*: a more and more penetrative testing of the inward dimensions of the human body and the human mind.

Travelling and exchanged body parts, dismemberment, dissolution by poison, self-beheading, torture, macabre spectacle, madness and terror: anatomical images of the body recur in English Renaissance tragedies from *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Titus Andronicus* to *The Revenger's Tragedy, 'Tis Pity She's a Whore* and *The Broken Heart*. The popularity of the public autopsy and the anatomical theatre was second only to the public playhouse by the beginning of the 17th century. The lesson that the emergent modern cultures of Europe learned from such anatomies was that the human body is something uncontrollably heterogeneous and difficult to contain.

The obsession of early modern tragedy with the skin in particular, and its repeated penetration has been investigated by much recent criticism. Maik Goth examines in great length the practices of "the performative opening of the carnal envelope", and he enlists the many instances of killing, hewing, stabbing, dagger-drawing, fighting, butchery as forms of skin-penetration in Renaissance tragedy (Goth, 2012: 141). Indeed, early modern culture stages the "violent but calculated transgression of the outside into the vulnerable interior of the body" to find out, as Norbert Elias would put it, what is the sheath upon the human being, and what is locked up in this container of the *homo clausus*.[7] I would like to add, however, that this skin-penetration is also always a metaphor of the new habits of seeing and inwardness, closely connected to the early modern crisis of death (Neill, 1998: 102-140). It carries an epistemological and semiotic stake in an age when the *homo clausus* is being constituted by the simultaneous and competing discourses of an unsettled medieval world model and an emergent

modernity. Embedded in the typically anatomizing imagery of revenge tragedies, skin penetration foregrounds the incalculable nature of reality as well as the anxiety with which the early modern subject strives to discern what is on the other side of that skin.

Sidney's and Hamlet's ulcers are curiously echoed in Vindice's words in *The Revenger's Tragedy* when he promises to increase the suffering of the Duke by combining physical with mental torture:

> Puh, 'tis but early yet; now I'll begin
> To stick thy soul with ulcers, I will make
> Thy spirit grievous sore: it shall not rest,
> But like some pestilent man toss in thy breast. (3.5.170-173)

The extreme visions of a tongueless Hieronimo, the idea of a Faustus torn apiece by devils, a systematically mutilated Lavinia, a Regan anatomized in vivisection in *King Lear* all mark the relentless anatomization of the body in English Renaissance tragedy. Within this imagery, however, the skin, or more exactly, the losing of skin, the unfilming of the surface deserves special attention. I turn again to *The Revenger's Tragedy* to demonstrate an example:

> (...) Oh, that *marrowless* age
> Would stuff the hollow *bones* with damn'd desires,
> And stead of *heat* kindle infernal fires
> Within the spendthrift *veins* of a dry duke,
> A parch'd and *juiceless* luxur! Oh God, one
> That has scarce *blood* enough to live upon!
> And he to riot it like a son and heir?
> Oh, the thought of that
> Turns my abused *heartstrings* into fret!
> Thou sallow picture of my poisoned love,
> My study's ornament, thou *shell of death*,
> Once the bright *face* of my betrothed lady,
> When life and beauty naturally fill'd out
> These *ragged imperfections*,
> When two *heaven-pointed diamonds* were set

In those *unsightly rings*: then 'twas a *face*
So far beyond the artificial shine
Of any woman's *bought complexion*...
(...) Be merry, merry;
Advance thee, O thou terror to fat folks,
To have their costly *three-pil'd flesh* worn of
As bare as this. (1.1.1-47, emphases mine)

Images of human corporeality abound in Vindice's opening soliloquy. The presenter-revenger literally dissects the visualized image of Gloriana's head and face and arrives at the bare skull. The lethal motion of this skull will generate the anatomization and death of the royal members in the corrupt court. As a matter of fact, Vindice presents a *public and retrospective autopsy* of Gloriana. Characteristically, he concludes the prologue by instructing the skull to transform the enumerated figures of the tragedy into flayed, skinless figures, probably in order to reveal the ulcers that have been growing under their protective dermatological cover.

Within the dramaturgy of these tragedies, the anatomization of body and mind is accompanied by a special double anatomy of the revenger itself to the extent that, on the one hand, an anatomy of adversaries is staged by the revenger, but the revenger's anatomy lesson at the same time gradually turns into his own self-dissection, stripping his personality bare naked to the point of self-loss, at which point it is best possible to act out and master those roles which have been necessitated by the taking up of the task of revenge. "Man is happiest when he forgets himself". (4.4.85) – says Vindice, and the explanation for this seemingly paradoxical *ars poetica* is that the performance of the capacity of the human being to go through endless metamorphoses necessitates the art of self-loss, a self-anatomy which then enables the revenger to carry out the anatomy of his enemies. In other words, in order to master the art of revenge, the revenger has to step outside his own skin.

Tudor and Stuart understandings of the skin went through gradual and significant changes so that, by the beginning of the 17th century, the Galenic porous and defenceless skin changed into a protective shield, a castle that encloses the precious organs and the soul of the human being (Pollard, 2010: 115). However, in his influential monograph on the history of the skin, Stephen Connor argues that at the time of the growing popularity of public anatomy and the dissemination of dissective practices in social theatricality, the skin did not receive more attention than earlier in the Galenic discourses (Connor, 2004: 13).

For the anatomist, it was considered just a dispensable outer layer, a figment that dissection took no interest in. In the light of the dramatic literature and the anatomical imagery of the age, I contest this position. Connor argues that the recurring images of the self-flaying man in the anatomy books are just examples of how, for the anatomist, the skin is to be discarded. I maintain that the persistent presence of the flayed skin, and the epistemological gaze interwoven into the act of self-revelation are indicative of the growing importance of the skin as a revelatory element. Later in the new cultural imagery of modernity, this presence and cultural imagery of the anatomized body will be suppressed and replaced by the abstraction and linguistic performance of the ego. After the anatomical discourses that penetrated the surfaces of the human body with relentless effort in the Renaissance, the human corpus had to be covered up again totally during the beginnings of modernity by a new ideological skin, that is, the discourses of rationalism and the newly fabricated Cartesian ego. This commences, however, only in the eighteenth century, with the rule of the error that had been introduced by Descartes:

> This is Descartes' error: the abyssal separation between body and mind, between the sizable, dimensioned, mechanically operated, infinitely divisible body stuff, on the one hand, and the unsizable, undimensioned, un-pushpullable, nondivisible mind stuff; the suggestion that reasoning, and moral judgement, and the suffering that comes from physical pain or emotional upheaval might exist separately from the body. (Damasio, 1994: 249)

In a historical perspective, then, we are perhaps witness to the process in the early modern period when the anatomical, corporeal reality of the human being is revealed under the skin, but this does not result in a constitutive body – mind binarism: much rather, it grants a greater importance to corporeality than earlier, medieval understandings of the human being. This period leads us over to a new age when the bodily constitution of the human being gradually gets marginalized and forgotten. The post-Enlightenment, self-identical subject is contained and articulated by the new skin which is put on the sovereign individuum by the Cartesian discourse of the noncorporeal, abstracted ego-functioning. After the early modern anatomization, the subject of modernity dresses in a new, non-transparent discursive skin, which will not allow the heterogeneous body to show through.

Macbeth was written and performed in the dissective, revelatory stage of this historical process. What Macbeth needs to realize towards the end of the tragedy, and what is foregrounded with such brutal visuality in Maladype Theatre, is that, behind the skin on the surface, his original identity has been totally disintegrated (Fig. 7). No self-identity, no essence, no human core is left inside him, he has become the ever-growing *ulcer* itself, which has finally been revealed by the anatomical work of the tragedy.

Figure 7. Shakespeare's *Macbeth* by Maladype Theatre,
Budapest, first performed in 2013.

Notes

1. See Gunther von Hagens' Body Worlds, https://bodyworlds.com/wp-content/uploads//2017/09/1498134149_bw_factsnumbers_chjun171.pdf, accessed 12 March 2024.

2. For the voluminous scholarship on the relationship between the body and the emergence of early modern subjectivity, see, for example, Hillman, 2007; Hillman / Mazzio, 1997; Marshall, 2002; Maus, 1995; Neill, 1998.

3. See The Teacher's Amusement Centre, https://sciencefun.wordpress.com/category/gunter-von-hagens/, accessed 12 March 2024.

4. For the cultural contexts of these productions, see Schandl, 2009.

5. Pictures of the production *Macbeth / Anatomy* are provided by courtesy of Maladype Theatre, Budapest. Director: Zoltán Balázs, Macbeth: Ákos Orosz, Macduff: Zoltán Lendváczky. https://www.maladype.hu/en/performances/archive/item/681-macbeth-anatomy, accessed 12 March 2024.

6. I contend that it is possible to examine this history of the interrelationship between the bodily and the spiritual container, the corporeal and the mental skin in the light of Didier Anzieu's famous theory about the skin-ego, which, as the comparison of early modern and postmodern anatomical habits suggests, must have its own historicity (Anzieu, 2016 [1985]).

7. "Is the body the vessel which holds the true self within it? Is the skin the frontier between 'inside' and 'outside'? What in the human individual is the container, and what the contained?" (Elias, 2000 [1939]: 472).

Works cited

Anzieu, Didier (2016), *The Skin-Ego*, New York, Routledge, New translation by Naomi Segal [1985].

Connor, Stephen (2004), *The Book of Skin*, London, Reaktion Books.

Elias, Norbert (2000), *The Civilizing Process*: *Sociogenetic and Psychogenetic Investigations*, Revised edition, Oxford, Blackwell Publishing [1939].

Damasio, Antonio (1994), *Descartes' Error: Emotion, Reason, and the Human Brain*, New York, Putnam's.

Goth, Maik (2012), "'Killing, Hewing, Stabbing, Dagger-drawing, Fighting, Butchery': Skin Penetration in Renaissance Tragedy and Its Bearing on Dramatic Theory", *Comparative Drama*, vol. 46, pp. 139-162.

Hillman, David (2007), *Shakespeare's Entrails: Belief, Scepticism and the Interior of the Body*, Basingstock and New York, Palgrave Macmillan.

Hillman, David / Carla Mazzio (ed.) (1997), *The Body in Parts. Fantasies of Corporeality in Early Modern* Europe, London and New York, Routledge.

Marshall, Cynthia (2002), *The Shattering of the Self. Violence, Subjectivity, and Early Modern Texts*, Baltimore and London, The Johns Hopkins UP.

Maus Eisaman, Katharine (1995), *Inwardness and Theater in the English Renaissance*, Chicago, U of Chicago P.

Neill, Michael (1998), *Issues of Death. Mortality and Identity in English Renaissance Tragedy*, Oxford, Oxford UP.

Schandl, Veronika (2009), *Socialist Shakespeare Productions in Kadar-Regime Hungary: Shakespeare Behind the Iron Curtain*, Lewiston, The Edwin Mellen Press.

Shakespeare, William (1973), *Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*, in Blakemore Evans (ed.) (1973), *The Riverside Shakespeare*, The Houghton Mifflin Company [1601].

Sidney, Philip (2004), *The Defence of Poesy*, in Gavin Alexander (ed.) (2004), *Sidney's 'The Defence of Poesy' and Selected Renaissance Literary Criticism*, London, Penguin, pp. 1-54 [1583].

Pollard, Tanya (2010), "Enclosing the Body: Tudor Conceptions of the Skin", in Kent Cartwright (ed.), *A Companion to Tudor Literature*, Oxford, Wiley-Blackwell, pp. 111-122.

Tourneur, Cyril [Thomas Middleton] (1989), *The Revenger's Tragedy*, ed. Brian Gibbons, The New Mermaids, London and New York [1607].

1.3. Learned Goths and Roman Exports: *Titus Andronicus* and Presentism in the 2010s

Miguel Ramalhete Gomes

Universidade de Lisboa

ABSTRACT

When compared with the use of *Sir Thomas More* in 2016 for pro-refugee purposes, *Titus Andronicus* may instead be read as a form of post-truth, an almost archetypical story in which distrust of the foreigner is proved right, both through its depiction of extreme violence occurring along cultural fault lines and its tenuous temporal placement at an undefined point of the late Roman Empire. From the threat of foreign rapists (echoed in calls to "protect our women", after the 2015-16 New Year's Eve sexual attacks in Cologne), via the Moor that enters the Andronici's house to ask for Titus' hand, to the Gothic army at the gates of Rome, *Titus Andronicus* is packed with anxiety concerning open borders and hostile guests. This chapter proposes a presentist triangulation of three traumatic timeframes: the period of great migrations vaguely represented by the play, the Shakespearean context in which trouble with strangers was both expected and provoked, and our own time, in which *Titus Andronicus* can be read as the type of narrative that could be used by PEGIDA (in English translation, Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamisation of the West) for purposes of spreading fear. The aim is to reconsider the play's representation of threatening mobility while exploring The Smiths' suggestion that, in fact, "barbarism begins at home".

On November 9, 2016, I had to teach a class on *Jane Eyre* at 9:00.[1] I had gone to bed early the night before, assuming the worst. The following morning, I turned on the television before breakfast, expecting that whatever channel I might randomly hit on would be showing what I wanted to know. It did. There they were: the new president of the United States of America and his family celebrating. For once, my students, usually so casual and aloof, seemed stunned and worried,

and we chatted about the election for about half an hour before I turned to "the madwoman in the attic". Later that day, as I scrolled down my Facebook feed, I found generalised shock and genuine surprise. Apparently, several of my friends had not been expecting this outcome. I then posted a quotation from Walter Benjamin's eighth thesis from "On the Concept of History" (1940):

> The tradition of the oppressed teaches us that the "state of emergency" in which we live is not the exception but the rule. We must attain to a conception of history that is in keeping with this insight. Then we will clearly realize that it is our task to bring about a real state of emergency, and this will improve our position in the struggle against Fascism. [One reason why Fascism has a chance is that its opponents confront it in the name of progress as a historical norm]. The current amazement that the things we are experiencing are "still" possible in the twentieth century is *not* philosophical. This amazement is not the beginning of knowledge – unless it is the knowledge that the view of history which gives rise to it is untenable. (Benjamin, 1999: 249)[2]

As Michael Löwy explains, it is important to note that Benjamin is arguing here that most opponents of fascism completely misunderstood it as anachronistic, a blast from the past with no place in a modern society and hence doomed to fade away. They did not understand "the modernity of Fascism, its intimate relation with contemporary industrial-capitalist society". As Löwy adds, "Only a conception without progressivist illusions can account for a phenomenon like Fascism that is deeply rooted in modern industrial and technical 'progress' and was, ultimately, possible *only* in the twentieth century" (Löwy, 2005: 59). And the same might be said about our own contemporary fascism, following hard on the heels of globalisation, of the destruction of industry and of a regulated market in now neoliberal Western economies, with the mass unemployment and hopelessness that it brought about for the working classes. From the point of view of a non-progressivist history, such Fascism as ours may indeed have been impossible before the twenty-first century. However, the fact that this new fascism, like the old, tends to put on display the state's repressive apparatus, thus making its power felt, has given its opposers a visible face to strike at, so that it may be used to address the neoliberal system whose convulsions have made it appear.

My second theoretical point comes from T. S. Eliot, who, in "Tradition and the Individual Talent", wrote of the literary canon that "Whoever has approved this idea of order, of the form of European, of English literature will not find it preposterous that the past should be altered by the present as much as the present is directed by the past" (Eliot, 1999: 15). Eliot is arguing, of course, that the appearance of new works inevitably alters the way older works are read, even though we might nowadays object to his organic understanding of the literary system. Importantly, Eliot uses a word, "preposterous", which means inverting the order of what came before and what came after, corresponding to the figure of "hysteron proteron" (literally signifying "the latter before"). Mieke Bal, for instance, uses the expression "preposterous history" to express just such an inversion, which she explains: "This reversal, which puts what came chronologically first ('pre-') as an aftereffect behind ('post-') its later recycling, is what I would like to call a *preposterous history*" (Bal, 1999: 7).

I would like to slightly alter the scope of Eliot's point to make what might seem a commonplace argument, but one that enables what I will proceed to say: that the introduction of a new context (besides the introduction of a new text) will necessarily alter our previous configuration of past contexts too (besides texts). Within the bounds of this essay, I thus aim to argue that the current refugee crisis encourages us to reconfigure our understanding of Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*, as well as its attendant contexts of production and of reference. This new context may not necessarily bring much that is new to a discussion of this play and its dual context, but it allows us to see the old text/context from a different prism, using a new narrative which comes from our own experience. These opening quotations are thus placed here as the briefest possible theoretical introduction, a rationale for a textual and contextual *presentism*.[3] Indeed, like New Historicism before it, presentism too ought to be understood as a contextualism. It is simply that it deals with a different context, in this instance, our contemporary context for early modern plays, which, in turn, may be used to critique the present conditions that prompted the analysis.

Titus Andronicus falls in a time of hostility against "strangers", the 1590s. As we know from Antony Munday *et al.*'s *Sir Thomas More*, the strangers' economic freedom in a highly regulated market and their geographical mobility became metaphorically associated with a looseness of morals and customs, especially if practised with English women; as we also know, the sexual lives of migrants are nearly always resented. This being said, it may not come as a surprise that the film *Titus*, directed by Julie Taymor in 1999 and considered by many to be one of the finest screen adaptations of Shakespeare in English, was co-produced by

the much-reviled Steve Bannon, better known for having been executive chair of Breitbart News and White House Chief Strategist for Trump. One 2016 piece from *The Paris Review* came back to the story behind the film in the context of the presidential campaign in the US and depicted the affair as "Bannon's obsession with Shakespeare's goriest play" (Weiner, 2016). In it, Rex Weiner suggested that Bannon had been attracted to the play because of its violence, going on to detail his plans for a sci-fi version taking place in outer space.[4] The point, of course, was to ridicule Bannon, but the article spectacularly failed to address another aspect that must surely have appealed to him in Shakespeare's play and maybe even in Taymor's aestheticized version: its brutal confirmation of the narrative of migrant murderers and rapists upon whom deeply gratifying vengeance is then wrought.

Besides the depiction of extreme violence that might have attracted Bannon, it is evident that this violence all occurs along cultural and racial fault lines. Although it is the Romans who open the hostilities with their sacrifice of Alarbus, the play focuses above all on how the foreigners, Goths and Moor, go on a killing and raping spree, often laughing at the results of their crimes. Nevertheless, racial hatred is mutual and pervasive, by Romans (namely Bassianus and Lavinia) towards Goths and Moor, by Goths towards Romans, even in Chiron, Demetrius, and the Nurse's disgust at Aaron's baby. It is also important to bear in mind the play's tenuous temporal placement at an undefined point of the late Roman Empire sometime during the wars with the Goths from the third century onwards. Though Goths became increasingly Romanised, as they were pushed southwards by the invading Huns, they too added to the already impressive mass of peoples who historically overran the Roman Empire of the West, with Visigoths eventually sacking Rome in 410.

Anyone from Southern Europe who begins to learn about German culture will probably be surprised by the term used by German scholars to describe what one once knew as the "Barbarian Invasions": "Völkerwanderung", literally meaning "wandering of the peoples".[5] This is now usually called the "Migration Period". I mention this because such a vivid shift in perspective can be found powerfully dramatized in Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*, which addresses a violent point of transition. It is perhaps not surprising that, in a decade marked by hostility against foreigners, Shakespeare should have written a play alluding to one of the largest and most traumatic migrations in the history of Europe, only a few centuries before but leading to the feudalism whose disruption and dissipation early modern England was experiencing.[6]

On the other hand, *Titus Andronicus* may qualify as an instance of post-truth, an almost archetypical story in which distrust of the foreigner is proved right.[7] If the pro-refugee speech written by Shakespeare for *Sir Thomas More* was used, in 2016 and again in 2018, as an exercise in empathy towards refugees, asking its audience to imagine itself in their shoes, Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* can be partly looked at as a dramatization of anti-immigrant fears and hate.[8] We can find two versions of these narratives in quotations from Trump's campaign, for instance, the first from June 16, 2015, and the second from February 6, 2016:

> When Mexico sends its people, they're not sending their best. They're not sending you. They're not sending you. They're sending people that have lots of problems, and they're bringing those problems with us. They're bringing drugs. They're bringing crime. They're rapists. And some, I assume, are good people.
>
> In the Middle East, we have people chopping the heads off Christians, we have people chopping the heads off many other people. We have things that we have never seen before – as a group, we have never seen before, what's happening right now. The medieval times – I mean, we studied medieval times – not since medieval times have people seen what's going on. I would bring back waterboarding and I'd bring back a hell of a lot worse than waterboarding. (*apud* Gutsche, Jr., 2018: 2)

There seem to be two slippages at work in this last quotation: the most obvious one is the aural suggestion of "evil" in the repetition of "medieval"; the second, which is not there but seems to enable the otherwise arbitrary reference to "medieval times", is a possible connection between "Middle East" and "Middle Ages". Inevitable here, when considering this association between "medieval times" and extreme forms of violence, in the context of North American culture, would be Quentin Tarantino's *Pulp Fiction* (1994), when Marsellus Wallace famously explains how he will avenge himself on his rapist: "I'ma get medieval on your ass".

The perceived threat of foreign rapists is especially topical, since it was echoed in patronising and patriarchal calls to "protect our women", after the 2015-16 New Year's Eve sexual attacks in Cologne were initially covered up by the police, once the testimonials pointed in the direction of North-African migrants and just

possibly refugees who had very recently entered Germany (Author Unknown, 2016; Hill, 2016). This attempt to co-opt gender violence to justify racism was characteristic of several pieces of alarmist news, such as the following two entirely self-explicatory and unbelievably long titles from the *Daily Mail*, both published on 8 January 2016, just days after the news from Cologne: "Migrant rape fears spread across Europe: Women told not to go out at night alone after assaults carried out in Sweden, Finland, Germany, Austria and Switzerland amid warnings gangs are co-ordinating attacks" (Wyke *et al.*, 2016) and "German vigilante group vows to protect women from migrant attackers as 34 suspects are arrested – including three for gang-raping two teenagers" (Akbar / Wyke, 2016). In late 2016 in Freiburg, the rape and murder of Maria Ladenburger by a refugee who had entered Germany the year before, and who had criminal precedents, was equally used to create the impression of a general tendency among refugees, although German officials and the more responsible press did their utmost to decouple the criminal act from the rapist and murderer's origins. Inevitably, a fabricated mass sexual attack in Frankfurt, once more by Arab migrants and once more on New Year's Eve, was reported in 2017 by the German tabloid *Das Bild*, which later apologised and retracted the piece of news (Author Unknown, 2017b). Perhaps faced with an evident insufficiency of shocking criminal behaviour coming from most refugees, a German soldier was later arrested, in April 2017, for planning an attack while pretending to be a Syrian refugee (Author Unknown, 2017a).

To return to my point, *Titus Andronicus* does indeed provide us with a terrifying textbook narrative of how foreign barbarians, after they are brought into the imperial centre, are first oppressed, then welcomed, and finally go on to rape daughters and kill sons, while benefiting from imperial protection. The play might almost be read as wish fulfilment about vengeance on the immigrant, in which, even in a cosmopolitan and ethnically diverse society as the late Roman Empire was, the foreigners are wholly liquidated. If we add to this the Moor who enters the Andronici's house to literally ask for Titus' hand and the Gothic army at the gates of Rome, we can see that *Titus Andronicus* is packed with anxiety concerning open borders and hostile guests. As Trump also said in a rally, "lock your doors, folks" (Engel, 2016: n. p.), in an involuntary echo of another fear-monger's question, namely Iago's question to Brabantio in 1.1 of *Othello*: "Are your doors locked?" (1.1.84).

This essay has so far sketched a triangulation of three traumatic timeframes, corresponding to when the play is set, to when it was written, and to when it is read now: the vaguely represented period of great migrations, the Shakespearean context in which trouble with strangers was both expected and

provoked, and our own time, in which *Titus Andronicus* can be read as the type of narrative that, with its catalogue of horrors and its updatable fantasy of the terrorist immigrant, could be told by the popular German movement PEGIDA (in English translation, Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamisation of the West) for purposes of spreading fear. We can therefore think about *Titus Andronicus* as a representative version of anti-immigrant hate speech; and we can also study it for internal elements that deconstruct this same narrative.

As a reincarnation of the Vice figure from morality plays, Aaron quite sufficiently fulfils the role of the barbaric immigrant, humanised only when tending to his child. The Goths are, however, another matter, as Jonathan Bate has argued in his introduction to the third Arden edition of *Titus Andronicus*. On the one hand, the Renaissance began the work of denigrating what was said to be "gothic", creating a paradigmatic break between a barbaric medieval past, marked by a lack of learning, and the Italian humanists' *rinascita*. On the other hand, Goths were by then also being characterised as a vital force opposed to the decadence of the Romans, after Tacitus' characterisation of the Germanic peoples in *Germania*, meant as a historical and ethnographical document but also as a republican critique of imperial Rome, a republicanism that is later taken up in Elizabethan England (Bate, 2018: 15-21). If we nowadays still imagine manly barbarians effortlessly putting down an effeminate, gender-bending empire, it is partly because of Tacitus' post-truth, that is, his ideological contrast of both peoples.

This mixed heritage is complicated by Shakespeare, who has the Goths rape and cut off Lavinia's tongue and hands, thus outdoing Tereus' rape and mutilation of Philomela in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. As Touchstone reminds us in *As You Like It*, when he says "I am here with thee and thy goats, as the most capricious poet, honest Ovid, was among the Goths" (3.3.5-6), Ovid had been exiled by Augustus in 8 AD to Tomis, by the Black Sea, among the Goths. The way Shakespeare has the Goths repeat the story of Philomela almost seems to suggest that they had in the meantime indeed learnt something from the Roman poet. In fact, besides the Latin lines that they sometimes bring forth (as in Demetrius' two half-lines in 1.1.633 and 635), it is clear that the Goths are acquainted with Latin poetry. This is made explicit in act 4, when they receive a gift from Titus containing weapons and a scroll with Latin verses. Demetrius recites the lines and Chiron at once knows where they are from: "O, 'tis a verse in Horace, I know it well. / I read it in the grammar long ago" (4.2.22-23), although, as Aaron quickly points out, Chiron crucially misses their import.

Naturally, the Romans themselves are also well acquainted with their Ovid, so that it is Lavinia's desperate leafing through the *Metamorphoses* – "TITUS Lucius,

what book is that she tosseth so? / BOY Grandsire, 'tis Ovid's *Metamorphosis*"
(4.1.41-2) – that allows her father to understand her by reading "the tragic tale of
Philomel" (4.1.47).

At first, though, Titus still does not suspect the strangers: "What Roman lord it
was durst do the deed" (4.1.62). His immediate suspicion of a Roman lord, even of
Emperor Saturninus himself,[9] following the historical example of King Tarquin's
rape of Lucrece, is almost touching in its innocence, the least xenophobic
conclusion one could jump to, important here simply in order to be shattered.
Only after their names and acts are revealed by Lavinia does Marcus promise
"Mortal revenge upon these traitorous Goths" (4.1.93), clearly identifying them
as aliens who have betrayed the Romans' hospitality.

Considering the role played by Ovid's *Metamorphoses* here, we can see how
barbarism can be said to be a Roman export, perhaps simply imitated to the
letter by those who have become Romanised. This disturbs the binary opposition
of civilisation at home and barbarism from abroad; taking the lead from a song
by The Smiths, from their 1985 second album, *Meat is Murder*, one might thus
suggest that, in *Titus Andronicus* and elsewhere, instead of coming from abroad,
"Barbarism begins at home".[10] Dealing as it does with parental violence against
their children, the song can be used here as a signifier of a warped educational
process. And, indeed, one of the first acts of violence in the play is Titus' murder
of one of his few remaining sons, Mutius, when he bars his father's way to
cover for the escape of Bassianus and his supporters, after Bassianus seizes
Lavinia (1.1.294-296). This and the sacrifice of Alarbus are, in fact, some of the
last elements of a Roman education of the Goths, who, in the first act, can
still exclaim: "Was never Scythia half so barbarous!" (1.1.134).[11] In this complex
theatrical and historical allusion, barbarism at home in Ancient Rome is said to
exceed that of the nomadic people which, in Marlowe's version, would later yield
Tamburlaine, a device by which the authors of *Titus Andronicus* can also claim to
exceed the barbarism which made Marlowe's play so popular.

Barbarism is thus not imported, but something that is sent out from the
imperial centre into the world. After all, like the Syrians and the Afghans in
contemporary Europe, the Goths only turn up in Rome because Titus has
exported war (and a specific type of Roman culture) to them. And one is therefore
reminded of C. P. Cavafy's "Waiting for the Barbarians", in which, though anxiously
expected and prepared for, "the barbarians have not come. / And some who
have just returned from the border say / there are no barbarians any longer"
(Cavafy, 1992: 18). Those that come through the border, beyond the returning

envoys, can no longer even be called barbarians. Their hoped-for destruction and renewal of a decadent civilisation is a historical trope, not a reality.

Nonetheless, this is a smug conclusion, the deconstruction by the intellectual looking for redemption in Shakespeare, but changing nothing. Indeed, finding "subversion" at all costs may often be a pointless and, worst even, a self-gratifying task. Instead, one may choose to remember that this iconic figure of the barbarian is wished for, namely by anti-immigrant fear-mongers, for allegedly confirming their warnings. It is important for them that, unlike in Cavafy's poem, those identified as barbarians should come from abroad and should be seen to act violently, hence confirming their status as barbarians, so they can be made the objects of aggression. As the last two lines of Cavafy's poem say, "And now, what's going to happen to us without barbarians? / They were, those people, a kind of solution" (Cavafy, 1992: 18). But, knowing as we do about "solutions" in European history, and seeing the European Union paying bordering countries to keep refugees at bay in camps, one can only fear what kind of solution this will end up being.

Notes

2. I am here quoting Harry Zorn's translation, although the one I then used for Facebook was the readily available online version by Dennis Redmond. I have translated the sentence inside square brackets myself, because there is a significant problem in English translations of this thesis, both in Zorn's and Redmond's case. Referring to fascism, Benjamin writes "Dessen Chance besteht nicht zuletzt darin, daß die Gegner ihm im Namen des Fortschritts als einer historischen Norm begegnen" (Benjamin, 1991: 697). Most translators have misunderstood the sentence. Harry Zorn's version, on which the translation used for Michael Löwy's *Fire Alarm* is clearly based, and which I have replaced with my own version, originally reads "One reason Fascism has a chance is that, in the name of progress, its opponents treat it as a historical norm". This muddy formulation, in which it is unclear what "it" refers to, will, however, tend to produce a nonsensical reading, since it seems to imagine the opponents of fascism sheepishly accepting that fascism is a historical norm (a formulation that sounds strange), and moreover doing so in the name of progress, thus pessimistically throwing down their arms and granting fascism its chance to be victorious. However, Benjamin is not saying that fascism is treated as a historical norm and a progressive one at that; he is saying that *progress* is treated as a historical norm, which certainly makes much better sense both conceptually and historically.

We should therefore treat "im Namen des Fortschritts als einer historischen Norm" as a unit in Benjamin's sentence. The problem addressed by Benjamin, and clarified in the sentence that follows this one, is that the opponents of fascism, working as they were within the framework of a conception of history as progress, underestimated fascism because they were incapable of understanding the historical chances of a movement that was not progressive. Hence, they were astonished that such a thing as fascism could appear in the twentieth century. I have, therefore, accordingly changed the translation to reflect this reading, which I believe is the only one that makes sense in the context of the thesis and of Benjamin's work as a whole.

3. On presentism in Shakespeare studies, see, among others: Grady, 1996; Hawkes, 2002; Grady / Hawkes, 2007; Gajowski, 2009; DiPietro / Grady, 2013.

4. In his recently revised edition of *Titus Andronicus*, Jonathan Bate also mentions Rex Weiner's article, but mostly follows Weiner's lead and does not attempt to develop why Bannon should have been interested in this specific play, besides his having optioned Julie Taymor's stage production for the screen (Bate, 2018: 159-160).

5. The term, of course, is composed of two resonant words in German culture: "Volk", a key concept in both German Romanticism and the discourse of nationalism; and "Wanderung", the cult of taking long walks in the countryside, immortalized in Schubert's "Das Wandern" and in myriad images of Germans and Austrians hiking in the country as a form of getting closer to the(ir) land.

6. It is probably also not by accident that, at a time of increasingly massive migrations, though still some years before the refugee crisis, Stephen Greenblatt should have included in his introduction to *Cultural Mobility – A Manifesto* a reflection on the overrunning of Rome at the end of the empire: "In this displacement, of course, the conquerors were merely doing to Rome what Rome itself had long done to those it had subdued" (Greenblatt, 2010: 7). He goes on to quote the Gothic Adolphus, successor of Alaric, who is said to have wished that "the gratitude of future ages should acknowledge the merit of a stranger, who employed the sword of the Goths, not to subvert, but to restore and maintain, the prosperity of the Roman empire" (*idem*: 9; Greenblatt is quoting from Edward Gibbon's own quotation from Orosius, in Gibbon's *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*).

7. Still, as Slavoj Žižek points out in *Against the Double Blackmail: Refugees, Terror and Other Troubles with the Neighbours* (Žižek, 2016: 81-83), it is deeply patronizing to imagine that a migrant cannot also be a criminal, as if the refugee must always remain a victim, and as if the host needed the refugee to remain a victim, always reassuringly less powerful than the host, while eternally grateful for a belittling hospitality.

8. Shakespeare's pro-refugee speech for Anthony Munday et al's *Sir Thomas More* was digitised and made available by the British Library in the Spring of 2016, as part of the commemorations of the 400 years of Shakespeare's death. It was also performed by Ian McKellen at BBC2's "Shakespeare Live!", broadcast on 23 April. Shakespeare's handwritten "plea for humanity", as it was often called in the media, was widely disseminated during the height of the refugee crisis and in the run-up to the Brexit referendum. On the uses of the speech during that period, see Boeschoten, 2016. The speech reappeared again in the media on 20 June 2018, on World Refugee Day, as two separate short films based on More's speech were made public on the day before. One was created by International Rescue Committee and Shakespeare's Globe (https://www.rescue-uk.org/video/strangers-case-shakespeares-rallying-cry-humanity, accessed 12 March 2024), whereas the second one was directed by Peter Trifunovic for BBAShakespeare (British Black and Asian Shakespeare) and the University of Warwick (https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/english/research/currentprojects/multiculturalshakespeare/news/?newsItem=8a17841a6411e8b401642243e1b859b6, accessed 12 March 2024). I have written briefly about the uses of this speech in Gomes, 2020: 240-242.

9. "Or slunk not Saturnine, as Tarquin erst, / That left the camp to sin in Lucrece's bed?" (4.1.63-64).

10. I have previously elaborated on this point in Gomes, 2014: 177-178.

11. Chiron and Demetrius' education also includes the chivalric codes of love which their descendants will make famous during the Middle Ages, when, at the end of the first act, they enter ready to kill each other for their loved one, Bassianus' wife. But it only takes little over twenty lines to get from Chiron's "I love Lavinia more than all the world" (1.1.571) to Demetrius' threatening "What, hast not thou full often struck a doe / And borne her cleanly by the keeper's nose?" (1.1.593-594), that is, from romantic love to the beginnings of a plot to rape Lavinia. Here too the underside of the discourse of chivalric love, with its metaphors of hunting, siege and assault, is quickly revealed, thus showing the barbarism hiding behind the home of romantic love, which assumes the availability of women for the mere fact that they are women: "She is a woman, therefore may be wooed; / She is a woman, therefore may be won; / She is Lavinia, therefore must be loved" (1.1.582-584).

Works cited

Akbar, Jay / Tom Wyke (2016), "German vigilante group vows to protect women from migrant attackers as 34 suspects are arrested – including three for gang-raping two teenagers", *Mail Online*, 8 January, https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3390042/The-fightback-begins-German-vigilante-group-vows-protect-women-migrant-attackers-three-Syrians-arrested-gang-raping-two-teenage-girls.html, accessed 19 March 2024.

Author Unknown (2016), "Cologne sex attacks: Women describe 'terrible' assaults", *BBC News*, 7 January, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-35250903, accessed 19 March 2024.

Author Unknown (2017a), "German soldier posed as Syrian refugee and 'planned attack'", *BBC News*, 27 April, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-39733952, accessed 19 March 2024.

Author Unknown (2017b), "Entschuldigung in eigener Sache Frankfurt: Keine 'mobartigen Übergriffe' an Silvester", *Das Bild*, 14 February, https://www.bild.de/news/inland/news-inland/in-eigener-sache-keine-mobartigen-uebergriffe-50428332.bild.html, accessed 19 March 2024.

Bal, Mieke (1999), *Quoting Caravaggio: Contemporary Art, Preposterous History*, Chicago, The U of Chicago P.

Bate, Jonathan (2018), "Introduction", in William Shakespeare, *Titus Andronicus*, ed. Jonathan Bate, revised edition, London, Bloomsbury, pp. 1-162.

Benjamin, Walter (1991), *Gesammelte Schriften: Band I.2 – Abhandlungen*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann and Hermann Schweppenhäuser, Frankfurt/M., Suhrkamp.

— (1999), *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt and trans. Harry Zorn, London, Pimlico.

Boeschoten, Anne (2016), "Refugees and Anti-Alien Sentiment in *Sir Thomas More* (c. 1600) and the Contemporary Public Debate", BA thesis, University of Utrecht.

Cavafy, C. P. (1992), *Collected Poems*, ed. George Savidis, trans. Edmund Keeley and Philip Sherrard, revised edition, Princeton, New Jersey, Princeton UP.

DiPietro, Cary / Hugh Grady (ed.) (2013), *Shakespeare and the Urgency of Now: Criticism and Theory in the 21st Century*, Hampshire, Palgrave Macmillan.

Eliot, T. S. (1999), *Selected Essays*, London, Faber and Faber.

Engel, Pamela (2016), "Trump on Syrian refugees: 'Lock your doors, folks'", *Business Insider*, 25 April, https://www.businessinsider.com/trump-syrian-refugees-isis-2016-4, accessed 19 March 2024.

Gajowski, Evelyn (ed.) (2009), *Presentism, Gender, and Sexuality in Shakespeare*, London, Palgrave Macmillan.

Gomes, Miguel Ramalhete (2014), *Texts Waiting for History: William Shakespeare Reimagined by Heiner Müller*, Amsterdam, Rodopi.

— (2020), "Presentist Studies", in Evelyn Gajowski (ed.), *The Arden Research Handbook of Contemporary Shakespeare Criticism*, London, Bloomsbury, pp. 233-246.

Grady, Hugh (1996), *Shakespeare's Universal Wolf: Studies in Early Modern Reification*, Oxford, Clarendon Press.

Grady, Hugh / Terence Hawkes (ed.) (2007), *Presentist Shakespeares*, London, Routledge.

Greenblatt, Stephen (ed.) (2010), *Cultural Mobility – A Manifesto*, Cambridge, Cambridge UP.

Gutsche, Jr., Robert E. (2018), "Introduction", in Robert E. Gutsche, Jr. (ed.), *The Trump Presidency, Journalism, and Democracy*, New York, Routledge, pp. 1-15.

Hawkes, Terence (2002), *Shakespeare in the Present*, London, Routledge.

Hill, Jenny (2016), "Cologne attacks put spotlight on Germany's N African migrants", *BBC News*, 13 January, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-35298224, accessed 19 March 2024.

Löwy, Michael (2005), *Fire Alarm: Reading Walter Benjamin's "On the Concept of History"*, trans. Chris Turner, London, Verso.

Shakespeare, William (2006), *As You Like It*, ed. Juliet Dusinberre, The Arden Shakespeare, London, Thomson Learning.

— (2016), *Othello*, ed. E.A.J. Honigmann, with a new Introduction by Ayanna Thompson, revised edition, The Arden Shakespeare, London, Bloomsbury.

— (2018), *Titus Andronicus*, ed. Jonathan Bate, revised edition, The Arden Shakespeare, London, Bloomsbury.

Weiner, Rex (2016), "Titus in Space: Steve Bannon's obsession with Shakespeare's goriest play", *The Paris Review*, 29 November, https://www.theparisreview.org/blog/2016/11/29/titus-in-space/, accessed 19 March 2024.

Wyke, Tom *et al.* (2016), "Migrant rape fears spread across Europe: Women told not to go out at night alone after assaults carried out in Sweden, Finland, Germany, Austria and Switzerland amid warnings gangs are co-ordinating attacks", *Mail Online*, 8 January, https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3390168/Migrant-rape-fears-spread-Europe-Women-told-not-night-assaults-carried-Sweden-Finland-Germany-Austria-Switzerland-amid-warnings-gangs-ordinating-attacks.html#, accessed 19 March 2024.

Žižek, Slavoj (2016), *Against the Double Blackmail: Refugees, Terror and Other Troubles with the Neighbours*, London, Allen Lane.

1.4. Restitutional Shakespeare. Past Concerns and Present Issues

Andreas Mahler
Freie Universität Berlin

ABSTRACT

The Shakespearean oeuvre is full of words like "remedy", "remediate", "restore", or "restitute" that imply the overcoming of a crisis by "healingly" coming back to the old order. This is based on the fantasy that, if only one waits long enough, the wheel of fortune will always "come full circle". Quite a substantial number of important plays, however, demonstrate that this is not the case. This can be seen as a crisis of cyclical temporality, giving way to the idea of linearity that up until now seems to have won the day. The contribution first addresses the phantasm of restitution *in* Shakespeare and discusses its negotiation and questioning in some of his plays. It then goes on to address the aspect of healing *through* Shakespeare in the way his plays are used nowadays in the attempt to bring people such as prisoners or inmates of psychiatric institutions, facing personal or private crises of their own, "back to normal". In a last step, it touches on the current crisis of linearity, with its by now death-dealing phantasms of growth and progress, and addresses the question as to what, in view of the palpable impasses and dead ends of that ideology, Shakespeare might, despite everything, still be able to "do *for us*", politically and epistemologically.

Restitution in Shakespeare

In *The Tragedy of King Lear*, as early as in Act II, a letter from Cordelia, who is banished and in exile in France, already seems to promise, as Kent reads it, "to give / Losses their *remedies*", asking "Fortune" to "smile once more" and "turn thy wheel" (*Lr*, 2.2.161-165).[1] After the scenes on the heath, on coming back from France, "Queen" Cordelia, hearing about Lear's state of mind, immediately asks what she can do

"In the *restoring* his bereavèd sense" (4.4.10), before she calls out: "All blest secrets, / All you unpublished virtues of the earth, / Spring with my tears! be aidant and *remediate* / In the good man's distress!" (16-19) Finally when meeting Lear, she begs: "O my dear father! *Restoration* hang / Thy *medicine* on my lips; and let this kiss / *Repair* those violent harms that my two sisters / Have in thy reverence made!" (4.7.26-29)

Similarly, in *As You Like It*, Rosalind, the banished duke's daughter, towards the end of the play, says: "I have promised to *make* all this matter *even*", and ends her speech by corroborating: "and from hence I go / To *make* these doubts all *even*" (*AYL*, 5.4.18; 24-25), thus offering the "*wise remedy*" (1.1.20-21) initially sought for by Orlando – and also by Duke Senior – against the 'uneven' treatment they have suffered from their brothers. "Then there is mirth in heaven", harmonious Hymen knows, helping Rosalind, "When earthly things *made even / Atone* together". (5.4.97-99) "Atonement", "attunement", being "at-one", are visible/hearable signs of everything being "in accord" again: of everybody being in their "ordinary" place, of all the lands "*restored*" (153), and everybody sharing "the good of our *returnèd fortune*" (163).

Shakespeare's world is full of words like "remedy", "remediate", "restore", or "restitute", that imply (if not conjure) the overcoming of a "crisis" by "healingly" (and "believingly") coming back to the "good old times" "re-storing" the "old" order – which, as a matter of fact, is the only one imaginable in that period: a hierarchy of social classes following the idea of a vertically organised "chain of being" as the rational "will" imposed upon "the" (one and only) world by God as its creator.[2] This world is invariably "guaranteed" by the Christian God who "made" it;[3] and "time" (and, of course, human action in time) may disrupt it and its order, but this same "time" will always somehow, as the cyclical time that it is, "healingly" lead back to the state in which everything is as it should be. "O time", says Viola in *Twelfth Night* facing the confusions caused by doublings and false identities, "thou must untangle this, not I. / It is too hard a knot for me t'untie". (*TN*, 2.2.38-39) What cyclical time ideally does in the end is ("untanglingly") realign, on a par, "father" and "daughter", "brother" and "brother", family member and family member, eventually re-establishing the illusion that "The wheel is come full circle!" (*Lr,* 5.3.173).[4]

This vocabulary of restitution is extremely dense in the works of Shakespeare. Among all the words referring to the notion of re-establishing, not so much a previous but an eternal, or "immutable", *status quo* – words such as "recover", "redeem", "redress", "remediate", "repair", "repeal", "restitute", "restore" –, the *Harvard Concordance to Shakespeare* lists 49 entries for the different forms of "redeem" ("redeem'd", "redeem'st", "redemption"), 30 entries even for a rare word like "redress", and 62 for the word "remedy" alone (without counting

its derivations).[5] As a matter of fact, the word "remedy" appears in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *Measure for Measure*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *As You Like It*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *All's Well that Ends Well*, *Twelfth Night*, *The Winter's Tale*, *King John*, the second part of *Henry IV*, the first and second parts of *Henry VI*, in *Henry VIII*, *Troilus and Cressida*, *Coriolanus*, *Titus Andronicus*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Macbeth*, *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, *Othello*, *Cymbeline*, in *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, as well as in his non-dramatic work.[6]

This does not really come as a surprise. The genres themselves that Shakespeare makes use of seem to be interested in leading back to restitution. Comedies are somehow restitutional "by nature", in the sense that they are bent on celebrating harmony, and order, for their endings to be "happy", the most frequent device, of course, being reintegration through marriage.[7] Tragedies, too, are bent on coming back to the old order, though at the price of (as Cordelia has it) "losses". What they stage is restitution through elimination – if not immediately by killing, then by taking "evildoers" out of the game, such as by banishing them or sending them into exile. The histories, whether they are staged as tragedies (as is *Richard III*), or as comedies (as are parts in *Henry IV* or, explicitly again, its spin-off, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*) have a share in both. In a way, one could even argue that the two tetralogies of Lancaster and York as a whole follow the pattern of cyclical restitution with the first Tudor king Henry VII as their final restitutional "hero", who – after aptly diagnosing that "England hath long been mad, and scarred herself; / The brother blindly shed the brother's blood; / The father rashly slaughtered his own son; / The son, compelled, been butcher to the sire" – eventually sees himself in a position to "*unite* the white rose and the red", which enables him to ensure that "peace lives *again*" (*R3,* 5.8.23-26; 19; 40).

Epistemologically speaking, with regard to the "world picture", this medieval / early modern crave for restitution seems to be a natural consequence of the view of cyclicality already mentioned. In this sense, "disorder" looks as if it were either a tragic or a comic "flaw" to be removed in order for "the world" to be able to get "back to normal": to "what it (invariably) *is*".[8]

Restitution in Crisis

And yet, at times, even in the comedies, the restitution offered by the ending remains tellingly incomplete. In *As You Like It*, melancholy Jaques, being "for other than for dancing measures", refuses to join the celebrations, preferring, with the converted Frederick, a life outside "the pompous court" (*AYL*, 5.4.182; 171).

In *Twelfth Night*, it is the all-too-serious Puritan Malvolio who remains excluded ("I'll be revenged on the whole pack of you"; *TN*, 5.1.365). In *The Merchant of Venice*, it is the "foreigner", if not downright the Jew, who does not fit and will not be (re-)integrated; in *Much Ado*, it is the 'bastard'; and in *Measure for Measure*, it might even be the bride-to-be herself (with Isabella not explicitly consenting to the Duke of Vienna's abrupt and unexpected marriage wish).

This doubt about a complete "restitutability" of order, this kind of early modern skepticism, is even more poignant in some of the tragedies.[9] In *Hamlet*, the eponymous hero is visibly unenthusiastic about his presumptive role of restitutional hero: "The time is out of joint", he says right at the end of act 1, "O cursèd spite / That ever *I* was born to *set it right*!" (*Ham*, 1.5.189-190) And, as a matter of fact, the wished-for restitution never quite comes about. True, Hamlet manages to eliminate Claudius, the presumptive usurper, as well as Laertes, who in turn tries to take (restitutive) revenge against Hamlet for the inadvertent killing of his father (as well as for Ophelia's death). But, even though he eventually does 'set it right' again, Hamlet, doomed to die, does not succeed in establishing himself as king. All he can ask for is "To tell my story" (5.2.291), which, in Horatio's words, turns out to be an unrestitutive jumble "Of carnal, bloody, and unnatural acts, / Of accidental judgements, casual slaughters, / Of deaths put on by cunning and forced cause; / And, in this upshot, purposes mistook / Fall'n on th'inventors' heads" (325-329). Instead of providential wisdom leading to the 'promised end' of 'redeeming' order, all we get is a concatenation of contingencies, with Hamlet as a king in the subjunctive ("For he was likely, *had he* been put on, / To have proved most royally"; 341-342) – and with Fortinbras as an accidentally bystanding benefitter happening to carry on the royal business.[10]

The restitutional cycle is arguably even more under interrogation in *King Lear*. Because what we as audience have to witness is its semantic invalidation, its annulment, right in front of our eyes. In actual fact, Cordelia *does* find the remedy to restore peace between herself and her father. She even does win the battle against her sisters, though, admittedly, only through the mutual elimination of the two, when suddenly, and inappropriately, she dies. With Lear being torn between the diagnosis that "She's dead as earth" (*Lr*, 5.3.260) and the vain hope that, all the same, her breath might stain a mirror indicating that "she lives" (262), Kent, as the most restitution-minded character of the play, who right in the division of the kingdom is the first to admonish Lear in an "unmannerly" (1.1.145) way to "*[r]everse*" (149) his state and to immediately "*[r]evoke*" (165) his gift, vaguely speculates: "Is this the promised end?" (5.3.262), and Lear answers: "This feather stirs; she lives! If it be so, / It is a chance which does *redeem* all

sorrows / That ever I have felt" (264-266). This chance, however, never comes. Cordelia *is* dead after all, and with the news coming that "Edmund is dead" (294), too, the last potential gratification for the restitutional mind would be to see at least Lear re-established as king. And this is precisely what happens: "You lords and noble friends", says Albany, one of the last remaining feudal characters on stage, in imitation of act 1, scene 1, "know our intent. / What comfort to this great decay may come / Shall be applied. For us, we will *resign*, / During the life of this old majesty, / To him our absolute power" (295-299). The word 're-sign' here quite literally signifies "to restitute the signs with all their meanings", which, "happily", means: Lear is king again. And yet, this is precisely the moment – "O, see, see!" (303) – when Lear dies, too (309). The wheel has indeed come full circle, the restitution is complete, but there is no one left to represent the restored order. All that the characters can state is: "The weight of this sad time we must obey; / Speak what we feel, not what we ought to say" (322-323). And what they feel is "woe", not "mirth". There is no restitutional "mirth in heaven", nothing on earth is "even". What the characters – and we, the audience – have to face is nothing but chaos and contingency.

Negotiating the Crisis: Cyclicality into Linearity

Before Hamlet knows that he must act, he must find out which side he is on. If the ghost speaks true, Hamlet is, despite everything, on the safe side and can act in the name of restitution. But if it is an "evil" ghost, it might be leading him into temptation (just as the witches do with Macbeth), and it might precisely make him destroy the order he is trying to restore. This can be seen as a (perspectivised) "double plot".[11] And indeed, Shakespeare has already experimented with such a mutually exclusive double pattern before *Hamlet* – in his *Julius Caesar*.[12] If it were certain that Caesar would turn tyrant, the conspiracy would be legitimate. But as long as this is not certain, the conspiracy would mean a disruption of order. In the one pattern, Brutus would be a restitutional hero saving the republic. In the other, he would be one of the culprits creating chaos – and he would be a threat to the commonwealth.

One potential remedy to solve this dilemma is "fiction". In *Hamlet*, it lies in the arrival of the troupe of players and in Hamlet's idea of letting them stage the doubling game of the *Mousetrap*, which in the end convinces him to the point

of "tak[ing] the Ghost's word for a thousand pound" (*Ham*, 3.2.263-264), with Claudius a little later confessing (to himself and us) his "guilt" (3.3.40). In *Julius Caesar*, the remedy to solve the dilemma of preventive action ("Then lest he may [become a tyrant], prevent"; *JC*, 2.1.28) lies in Brutus's wilful autosuggestive move to "*Fashion* it thus: that what he is, augmented, / *Would run* to these and these extremities; / And therefore *think him as* a serpent's egg, / Which, hatched, *would* as his kind grow mischievous, / And kill him in the shell" (30-34). In *As You Like It*, this faculty of inventing, and 'displaying', scenarios as the basis for action finds itself commented upon by Touchstone's wise insight that "Your 'if' is the only peacemaker; much virtue in 'if'" (*AYL*, 5.4.91-92).

"Fiction" has been defined as an agency that helps us to "identify in distancing", thus opening up an "anthropological dimension" that would otherwise not be accessible to us.[13] This is precisely what seems to be at stake with reference to Claudius. Despite Hamlet's all too obvious protestations that "This play is the image of a murder done *in Vienna* [i.e. not at Elsinore]. *Gonzago* [i.e. not Claudius] is the *Duke's* [not the King's] name, his wife *Baptista* [not Gertrude]" (*Ham.* 3.2.217-219), it is precisely through the fiction of the *Mousetrap* that Claudius begins to face his (willingly repressed) Danish reality. This is no longer restitution *within* a fiction; it is above all restitution *through* a fiction. Like a detective, Hamlet uses the fiction to find out what 'really happened'. He uses it as an instrument to detect some "linear" hidden truth, which means that the agent of truth is no longer a "guaranteeing" God cyclically leading back to what is but, rather, a human individual (such as Claudius or, as for that, Hamlet himself) "realising" through his actions a result that can then be seen as the "reality" realized by him (and corroborated by the observable "facts").[14] This is the early modern epistemological shift from a "theological" closed cyclicality to a "secular", and "empirical", open linearity.[15]

Restitution through Shakespeare

This use of a restitution *through* fiction is not merely a hypodiegetic means of solving an intradiegetic problem – a kind of more or less artistic "explicative" *mise en abyme*.[16] It can above all be seen in stagings of Shakespeare for manifest therapeutic (i.e. extradiegetic or, even more, extratextual) purposes. It seems

most prominent in all those "Shakespeare behind bars" productions that have become an immense focus of interest in recent times.[17] What these productions do is make direct, pragmatic use of the Shakespearean fiction in order to address the inmates' personal predicaments and problems – precisely through the fiction-based amalgamation of identification *and* distance.

In the brothers Taviani's celebrated movie *Cesare deve morire / Caesar Must Die*, which was awarded the 2012 Golden Bear in Berlin, we can see the inmates of the high security section of the Roman prison of Rebibbia come together in order to stage Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* within the context of Fabio Cavalli's prison project *Compagnia di teatro libero*.[18] What we are allowed to witness is a slow, authentic, and sometimes rather painful process of appropriating fictitious roles in which the prisoner-actors "doublingly" and "distancingly" acquire deep insights into what it means to make decisions, to involve other people's lives, and to have to bear the consequences of what one is doing. The most revealing moments in the movie, with regard to acknowledging this (in a kind of extratextual *anagnorisis*), are the "interfaces"[19] when the Roman fiction of the conspiracy and the inmates' prison / pre-prison realities visibly overlap: e.g., when "Cassius" asks "Brutus" to trust him, and one of the bystanders mumbles that this is precisely what got him into prison: "Don't trust anyone, you great actor. I did and look what happened to me!" (*CMD* 00:18:22); or, when the actor of Brutus stops acting because the lines he has to say are "hurtingly" similar to the ones some good friend of his uttered in his presence in a real-life situation in the streets of Naples, with him at the time not believing his friend and denying him the necessary solidarity: "And now it hurts me" (00:28:27-00:30:22); or, when the Italy-born actor of "Caesar" and the Argentina-born actor of "Decius" – on the basis of Decius trying to convince Caesar to come to the forum despite all the warnings regarding the Ides of March – begin to fight out in reality what the two prisoners have so far accumulated during their internment as (tacit) mutual prejudices, accusations, and aggressions: "He's really good at playing the schemer" (00:35:28-00:36:33).

The overall intention of the enterprise looks decidedly restitutional or "redemptive".[20] What seems to be tentatively restored through the acting is the hope for some kind of ordinary "communal life" in society – the return to a socially compatible, communally acceptable, behaviour: a return of the ability to relate 'properly' to others again in society. Through the interfaces, this leads to various instances of "cathartic" recognition, so that, as some captions at the end

of the movie tell us (01:09:34-47), two of the actors begin to write 'confessional' autobiographies, whereas "Brutus", after regaining his freedom, manages to become an actor himself, thus reintegrating himself by turning the idea of 'distancing' for the sake of finding an "identity" into a downright profession. And even still in the "fiction", the actor of "Caesar", one of the book authors, who serves a life sentence, redeemingly, and regrettingly, ends up admitting that he at last begins to realize what it means to him to have lost his freedom, and he finally starts seeing his cell as the "prison" that it is: "Since I got to know art, this cell has become a prison" (01:08:45).

Which Restitution and for Whom?

In a strict sense, however, "restitution" is, as even Shakespeare keeps reminding us, a "promise" (only), an "illusion" – or, as some would say, it is a "utopia".[21] Even the most orthodox medieval Christian belief would not affirm that the wheel "coming full circle" ends at exactly the same place where it has started. This brings me to my last point. Because what Shakespeare "can do for us" is probably much less to give us the hope that "all is well that ends well" than to make us aware of what "restitution" means and what it does not mean. It never, not even in its most cyclical belief, actually really means to come back to the "same". In a cyclical sense, it aims at "renewal". With regard to the prison activities, it means a new chance – a recognition of what has happened, and then a start into a new life and not (as is to be hoped) yet another start into the old life again.

If Shakespeare's problematically "open" plots such as *Hamlet* or *King Lear* – as the "laboratories" or agencies of "negotiation" that they are[22] – show (or 'display') that the "premodern" cyclical belief in restitution is nothing but an illusion, epistemologically (and perhaps unwillingly) to be replaced by an alternative "modern" belief privileging a linear and individual "realisation of a reality", what we are facing today is the (if one likes) "postmodern" crumbling of this up until now rather convincing linear idea of realisation itself.[23] The promises, however, have remained the same. Today's rulers, be their names "Merkel", "Macron", "May", "Trump", "Tsipras", or whatnot, still seem to promise the restitution of economic growth, wealth and progress – mostly through ("realising") phases of intense austerity. They suggest that, despite all feelings of "crisis", they / we will be able to "heal" the felt (or real) "crises" by "redeemingly" making our countries "great" / "rich" / "autonomous" / "homogeneous" "again", and that what mostly

holds the promise is a return to what was – Brexit / Grexit / Czexit, the "return" to some bucolic Bohemia, an ancient "Grecian grandeur", a "merry old England" (that never was).

In a linear system, however, this is all the more difficult. How can one "get back" when all one does is progress? Shakespeare is certainly not the solution but he is definitely a means. Supposing that "Shakespeare" has become one of the most powerful global metonymies for "fiction", and accepting that fictions are media of raising awareness through distance, what Shakespeare can arguably "do for us" is not so much (in an escapist act) to lead us back to the "good old times" but (cognitively and "politically") to force us to take a thorough look at what "restitution" means – and at what it does and what it does not do. Watching, and performing, Shakespeare makes us, once again or still, aware of the fact that a crisis will never be solved by coming back to the old ideas, but that what we need is always definitely something new.

Notes

1. All quotes are from Greenblatt, 1997. For *King Lear*, I quote from the so-called "Conflated Text"; all emphases, unless otherwise indicated, are mine.

2. For a competent and concise introduction to Shakespeare's "world", see Stephen Greenblatt's "General Introduction" in Shakespeare, 1997: 1-76; still one of the (to my mind) best overviews of early modern 'Elizabethan' background knowledge is Elton, 1991, for the "chain of being" and God's role in this, see p. 18 (as well as, classically, Tillyard, 1978).

3. For the (largely medieval and Christian) concept of reality as one "guaranteed" by God, see Blumenberg, 1979: 31-32.

4. For the medieval and early modern fantasm of order as a state of "evenness" among feudal "peers" seen as "brothers", see Mahler, 2005: 182-184.

5. See Spevack, 1973, under the words given above.

6. *Idem*, 1048-1049, s.v. "remedy"; the order of the plays arbitrarily follows the order of the entries.

7. See Northrop Frye's "myth of comedy" in Frye, 1990: 163-186; 206-223 for a similar structuring of tragedy as following the "wheel of fortune". See Warning, 1976: 284 for a more systematic re-development attributing to comedy a "pattern of restitution" ("Restitutionsschema") which, however, remains secondary only in relation to the primary comic elements apt to release laughter.

8. The classical description of this concept of "order" as opposed to a general fear of "mutability" or change is, despite all recent criticism and modifications, Tillyard, 1978: 17-25.

9. For an alternative history of early modern English literature under the auspices of the impact of skepticism, see the seminal book by Lobsien, 1999.

10. See Dollimore, 1989: 83-108 for a discussion in general terms under the heading of a "disintegration of providentialist belief".

11. I take the idea of a "double plot" simultaneously narrating two mutually exclusive stories from the discussions of what he calls "arbitrary narration" in Martínez, 1996; for the idea of perspectivization in drama and, hence, producing two or more points of view on the "same" story, ending up either in a resolvable "closed" or an irresolvable "open perspective structure", see Pfister, 1991: 57-68.

12. For a discussion of Brutus's "restitutional" dilemma of not knowing which story he is in, see Mahler, 2005.

13. For the idea of fiction as a "staged discourse" that, in initiating us "into distancing", is apt to provide us with what the sociologist and anthropologist Helmuth Plessner has called a "gain of anthropological dimension", see Warning, 1980, the quotes on p. 52 (the reference is to Plessner, 1974); for a very similar version of seeing fictionalizing speech acts as agencies of "display", see Pratt, 1977: 132-151.

14. For the early modern / modern concept of seeing reality as the "result of a realisation" or, as can be seen more directly in the staging of the *Mousetrap* for Claudius and his court, as the individual "actualisation of a context", see Blumenberg 1979: 32-33; for an epistemological reading of the *Mousetrap* as an early modern empirical experiment leading to evidence as its result, see Mahler, 1997: 265-267.

15. For a thorough description of what he calls the "translation" of "cyclical-temporal myth-making" into "linear-discrete plot-making" (and the early modern "superimposition" of the two), see, with special reference to *As You Like It*, Lotman, 1979-1980: 163-169, as well as Lotman, 1990: 153-157; for a more detailed account of this, with reference above all to *As You Like It*, *King Lear*, and *Hamlet*, see Mahler, 2016.

16. For the *mise en abyme* as a thematic, explicative, or actional reduplication of the same on another (usually lower) diegetic level, see Rimmon-Kenan, 1983: 92-94; her reference is to Dällenbach, 1977.

17. For the sake of brevity, I restrict myself to focusing on prison productions only, and leave out other comparable uses of Shakespeare such as, e.g., performances in psychiatric contexts or for educational purposes. For the recent interdisciplinary debate on redemptive dramatherapy against redicivism see, among many others, Heard *et al*., 2013; Herold, 2014; Pensalfini, 2016; Nicklin, 2017; with regard to Italy, Tempera, 2017; Cavecchi, 2017; for a similar use of Shakespeare in the field of general education, see "Part 4: What Can We Do with Shakespeare? Education, Participation and Civic Engagement" in this collection.

18. See Taviani / Taviani (dir.), 2012, abbreviation used: *CMD* (I quote from the English subtitles); for a more detailed discussion of the project see Valentini, 2016, the chapter "The Prison House of Italy. *Caesar Must Die*" in Bassi, 2016: 181-201, Tempera, 2017, as well as the interview in Pipolo, 2012.

19. I owe this term to Martin Procházka.

20. For the insight that the actor of "Brutus", Salvatore Striano, in his 2016 autobiography *La tempesta di Sasà* sees "his criminal experiences redeemed through Shakespeare", see Cavecchi, 2017: 6.

21. For a thorough discussion of the concept of utopia, see Vieira, 2010.

22. I owe the idea of the "laboratory" to Kiss, 2010: 8; for the idea of a "negotiation" of contemporary social problems in a context of "aesthetic empowerment", see Greenblatt, 1992: 1-20, esp. pp. 5-7.

23. I am referring once again to Blumenberg 1979; for a fourth concept of reality as one of "resistance", "unavailability" or "contingency" as "*that which cannot be mastered by the self*", see pp. 33-34 (emphasis in the original).

Works cited

Bassi, Shaul (2016), *Shakespeare's Italy and Italy's Shakespeare. Place, 'Race' and Politics*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan.

Blumenberg, Hans (1979), "The Concept of Reality and the Possibility of the Novel" [1964], in Richard E. Amacher / Victor Lange (ed.) (1979), *New Perspectives in German Literary Criticism. A Collection of Essays*, trans. David Henry Wilson *et al.*, Princeton, NJ, Princeton UP, pp. 29-48.

Cavecchi, Mariacristina (2017), "Brave New Worlds. Shakespearean Tempests in Italian Prisons", *Altre Modernità*, vol. 11, pp. 1-21.

Dällenbach, Lucien (1977), *Le Récit spéculaire. Essai sur la mise en abyme*, coll. Poétique, Paris, Seuil.

Dollimore, Jonathan (1989), *Radical Tragedy. Religion, Ideology and Power in the Drama of Shakespeare and his Contemporaries*, London, Harvester Wheatsheaf [1984].

Elton, W. R. (1991), "Shakespeare and the Thought of his Age", in Stanley Wells (ed.) (1991), *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare Studies*, Cambridge, Cambridge UP, pp. 17-34.

Frye, Northrop (1990), *Anatomy of Criticism. Four Essays*, London, Penguin [1957].

Greenblatt, Stephen (1992), *Shakespearean Negotiations. The Circulation of Social Energy in Early Modern England*, Oxford, Clarendon [1988].

— (ed.) (1997), *The Norton Shakespeare*, New York, W.W. Norton.

Heard, Emma Marie / Allyson Mutch / Lisa Fitzgerald / Rob Pensalfini (2013), "Shakespeare in Prison. Affecting Health and Wellbeing", *International Journal of Prisoner Health*, vol. 9, nr. 3, pp. 111-123.

Herold, Niels (2014), *Prison Shakespeare and the Purpose of Performance. Repentance Rituals and the Early Modern*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan.

Kiss, Attila (2010), *Double Anatomy in Early Modern and Postmodern Drama*, Szeged, Jate Press.

Lobsien, Verena Olejniczak (1999), *Skeptische Phantasie. Eine andere Geschichte der frühneuzeitlichen Literatur*, Munich, W. Fink.

Lotman, Jurij M. (1979-1980), "The Origin of Plot in the Light of Typology", *Poetics Today*, vol. 1, nr. 1-2, pp. 161-184.

— (1990), *Universe of the Mind. A Semiotic Theory of Culture*, trans. Ann Shukman, Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN, Indiana UP.

Mahler, Andreas (1997), "Don Quixote, Hamlet, Foucault. Language, 'Literature', and the Losses of Analogism", in Hugo Keiper / Christoph Bode / Richard J. Utz (ed.), *Nominalism and Literary Discourse. New Perspectives*, Amsterdam / Atlanta, GA, Rodopi, pp. 251-268.

— (2005), "'There is Restitution, no End of Restitution, Only not for Us'. Experimental Tragedy and the Early Modern Subject in *Julius Caesar*", in Horst Zander (ed.), *Julius Caesar. New Critical Essays*, New York, Routledge, pp. 181-195.

— (2016), "Shakespeare's Enclaves", in Ina Habermann / Michelle Witen (ed.), *Shakespeare and Space. Theatrical Explorations of the Spatial Paradigm*, London, Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 17-37.

Martínez, Matías (1996), *Doppelte Welten. Struktur und Sinn zweideutigen Erzählens*, Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.

Nicklin, Laura Louise (2017), "'Make Not Your Prisons Your Prisons'. Participant-Percieved Potential Outcomes of a Shakespeare-Focussed Alternative to Juvenile Incarceration in the USA", *Emotional & Behavioural Difficulties*, vol. 22, nr. 1, pp. 2-17.

Pensalfini, Rob (2016), *Prison Shakespeare. For These Deep Shames and Great Indignities*, London, Palgrave Macmillan.

Pfister, Manfred (1991), *The Theory and Analysis of Drama*, trans. John Halliday, Cambridge, Cambridge UP [1977].

Pipolo, Tony (2012), "Doing Time with Shakespeare. An Interview with Paolo and Vittorio Taviani", *Cinéaste*, vol. 38, nr. 1, pp. 42-45 and 59.

Plessner, Helmuth (1974), "Soziale Rolle und menschliche Natur" [1960], in *Diesseits der Utopie*, Frankfort-on-the-Main, Suhrkamp, pp. 23-35.

Pratt, Mary Louise (1977), *Toward a Speech Act Theory of Literary Discourse*, Bloomington, IN, Indiana UP.

Rimmon-Kenan, Shlomith (1983), *Narrative Fiction. Contemporary Poetics*, New Accents, London, Methuen.

Spevack, Marvin (1973), *The Harvard Concordance to Shakespeare*, Hildesheim, Olms.

Taviani, Paolo and Vittorio (dir.) (2012), *Cesare deve morire / Caesar Must Die*, I, KAOS Cinematográfica [new wave films].

Tempera, Mariangela (2017), "Shakespeare behind Italian Bars. The Rebibbia Project, *The Tempest*, and *Caesar Must Die*", in Enza de Francisci / Chris Stamatakis (ed.), *Shakespeare, Italy, and Transnational Exchange. Early Modern to Present*, New York, Routledge, pp. 265-276.

Tillyard, E. M. W. (1978), *The Elizabethan World Picture*, Harmondsworth, Penguin [1943].

Valentini, Maria (2016), "'In Accents Yet Unknown'. Reenacting Caesar's Death in a Roman Prison", *Comparative Drama*, vol. 50, nr. 2-3, pp. 183-194.

Vieira, Fátima (2010), "The Concept of Utopia", in Gregory Claeys (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Utopian Literature*, Cambridge, Cambridge UP, pp. 3-27.

Warning, Rainer (1976), "Elemente einer Pragmasemiotik der Komödie", in Wolfgang Preisendanz / Rainer Warning (ed.), *Das Komische*, Munich, W. Fink, pp. 279-333.

— (1980), "Staged Discourse. Remarks on the Pragmatics of Fiction", *Dispositio*, vol. 5, nr. 13-14, pp. 35-54.

1.5. Time's Up, Tarquin: *The Rape of Lucrece* in the Age of #Metoo

Juan F. Cerdá
Universidad de Murcia

ABSTRACT

The emergence of cultural materialism in the 1980s provoked a substantial reevaluation of Shakespeare's work, as critics felt the ethical need to renegotiate the values and discourses of early modern culture as they circulated in late Western societies. Certain plays, such as *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Titus Andronicus* and *Measure for Measure*, have received especial scrutiny from the perspective of gender. Instead, inhabiting a rather peripheral space within the Shakespeare canon, his poetry has received little attention as much as its resonances are of similar relevance to the concerns of late gender debates.

This chapter extends this presentist reevaluation of early modern literature by examining the poem *The Rape of Lucrece* in the light of current discussions of feminism and gender violence. Shakespeare's treatment of rape – an otherwise central concern of early modern culture – and of Lucrece – a character that also fascinated Geoffrey Chaucer and John Gower amongst others – is here analysed in relation to (post)modern conceptions of feminine empowerment. Ultimately, the question is whether Lucrece's bravery can be taken on by the brave new worlds, peoples, and women of the twenty-first century.

The Rape of Lucrece is currently not amongst Shakespeare's most popular works.[1] It can be argued that 1855 lines of iambic pentameter distributed among 265 septets of steady "rhyme royal" (*ababbcc*) is not the most fashionable format in the Netflix-obsessed late-modern cultural climate of 2019. But this wasn't always the case. Together with numerous editions and praising references by fellow poets, in 1598 Gabriel Harvey annotated in the margin of his copy of Chaucer that "[t]he younger sort take much delight in Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis*, but his *Lucrece* and his tragedy of *Hamlet Prince of Denmarke*, have it in them to

please the wiser sort" (*apud* Hehmeyer, 2013: 140). This illustrates the intellectual depth and popularity with which the poem was perceived at the time. A high regard which contrasts with the marginal position the poem holds nowadays within the Shakespeare canon. Even specifically, within the specialized circles of Shakespearean scholarship, the poem has not fared too well and, as Katharine Eisaman Maus has suggested, such limited attention can be at least partly attributed to how modern critics have "persistently object[ed] to its elaborate rhetoric" (Eisaman Maus, 1986: 66). This is, I believe, an accurate characterization of much of what has been written about the poem. A line of inquiry that is to a large extent exhausted or, at least, outdated since debates about the rhetorical quality of Shakespeare's works have become rare in a research community that now tends not to evaluate, but to historicize Shakespeare's writing.

However, a different approach has kept the poem alive, that is (what I should broadly term) feminist criticism. It is not a surprise that feminism would have something to say about a poem that re-versifies the semi-historical, semi-mythical account of the rape of Lucrece, the virtuous, chaste and beautiful wife of the nobleman Collatine, at the hands of Tarquin, son of the last Roman king: a poem that provides an extensive and intensive representation of the psychological processes involved in a sexual assault; a poem that ends with Lucrece's suicide, the banishment of Tarquin and the rest of the royal family, and the establishment of the Roman republic. Sustained attention to the motivations, processes and consequences of rape make the poem worth revisiting in 2019, a time in which sexual violence – from the Harvey Weinstein scandal to the Spanish "Wolfpack" / "La Manada", just to name two high-profile cases – has taken up a specially relevant space within the preoccupations of late-modern feminism.

Why Did Lucrece Commit Suicide?

Much of what has been written about the poem has had to do with Lucrece, her reaction to abuse and, especially, the motivations and implications of her final suicide. To frame the debate and establish what I see as the three basic strands of criticism regarding Lucrece, we have to go back in time around eleven centuries prior to the writing of the poem, for it was Saint Augustine who in his influential theological/philosophical/political treaty *The City of God* inaugurated a moralistic evaluation of Lucrece's suicide that has influenced later critical reactions to the poem. If she was chaste, why was she killed, wonders Saint Augustine. In his view,

if women keep a clean mind during the sexual aggression, even when raped, "in the witness of their own conscience, they enjoy the glory of chastity" (Augustine, [426 AD] 1871: 30). This is not the case of Lucrece for Augustine, who finds her actions incoherent and explains that in her suicide Lucrece was excessively eager for honour and covetous of glory. Shakespeare's poem reactivated the debate in 1594, and as Sasha Roberts has shown, in the 17th century Lucrece is represented through "contradictory images (...) as both an honourable icon and adulterous sinner" (Roberts, 2002: 107), the latter position being articulated through numerous Augustinian-inspired attacks, which include one by Margaret Cavendish.

It is difficult to gauge the contemporary strength of these "Augustinian criticisms" of the poem, but Katharine Eisaman Maus's article locates the two latest scholarly discussions in the 1960s. It is tempting to assume that Saint Augustine's views are anachronistic in 2019. But as hard as it is to imagine an Augustinian attack on Lucrece's suicide within current gender debates, we should not be too quick to assume that Augustinian values are a thing of the past. As that Christian faith is cemented on the idea that "God created man in his own image" (Genesis 1:27), Christianity assumes that human life is sacred from the moment of its inception and any attempt of any kind to end it is unjustifiable. Christian beliefs on the preservation of life go beyond suicide and are intimately linked to current debates on issues such as euthanasia and pregnancy termination. What we could call "pro-Life ideology" is rooted in perspectives on human life that we could call Augustinian. In other words, although feminism will quickly oppose this view, it is not difficult to accept that Christian-inflected reactions that deem Lucrece's suicide as morally reprehensible may be still available now.

The antagonism between pro-life movements and feminism has been constant since the passing of abortion laws in most Western countries in the late 1960s and 70s (UK: 1967 / US: 1973). But, paradoxically, Lucrece's suicide makes her an uncomfortable heroine for feminism too. Renowned Shakespeareans such as Nancy Vickers (1985) and Coppelia Kahn (1997: 27-45), among others, have expressed their reservations towards Lucrece because of the poem's "belittling image of feminine passivity" (Hyland, 2003: 119). To put it succinctly, this critical position interprets Lucrece not just as a victim of Tarquin's abuse, but also as an accomplice of patriarchy in the way she fails to resist male domination. After the Augustinian perspective, this one reads Lucrece's suicide as an example of victimized, disempowered and inactive femininity. Within this view, it is problematic to regard Lucrece as an icon for the kind of feminism that Vickers and Kahn seem to subscribe to. As Catherine Belsey notes, "critics influenced by

feminism have predominantly seen Shakespeare's Lucrece instead as the victim of patriarchal values, whether the passive object of a struggle between men or in her suicide complicit with masculine misogyny" (Belsey, 2001: 315).

It is the 2001 article that Catherine Belsey establishes a third position towards Lucrece's suicide somehow closer to later feminist standpoints. According to her, Shakespeare is very clear in presenting the "appalling character" of Tarquin's assault, which "impugns the identity of a faithful wife and eradicates the personal sovereignty of a human subject". But instead of reading Lucrece as a victim of a "forcible bodily violation" (*idem*, 329), Belsey sees her as the source of action and agency, as she is responsible for Tarquin's banishment, for the end of Roman monarchy, and for the beginning of the democratic republic:

> Her final victim-ization, rendered by her own hand, is at the same time the ultimate act of self-determination; the object of violence is simultaneously the subject as agent of her own judicial execution (...) By her death Lucrece dissolves her shame, erases the threat of Collatine's lineage, and motivates political action (...) a new political order founded not on possession but on consent. (*idem*, 331)

In her reading of the poem Belsey sides with more recent debates on sexual violence in which feminism is trying to react against the victimization of rape "survivors" (not of rape "victims"). It is an update of the discussion, aspiring to improve the epistemology of rape by emphasizing positive models of female agency and empowerment. Lucrece does not survive but Belsey's reading makes her a martyr for a higher cause. Her death was worthwhile as she is solely responsible for political change, for democracy, for a more equalitarian model of Roman citizenship.

I personally connect better with Belsey's take on the poem, but St. Augustine, Kahn and Belsey share a problem of central importance to late-feminist approaches to rape: their focus on the *evaluation* of the victim's response to the assault, an assessment that is at risk of promoting the hierarchical classification of victims of sexual violence depending on their reaction to the attack. The three perspectives seem to be looking for an answer to the same question: did Lucrece react to Tarquin's assault in the right manner? When it comes to the sexual assault, the poem is very clear and neither St. Augustine, nor Kahn nor Belsey dispute that Lucrece's endurance is exemplary. But the three are judgmental in their approach to Lucrece's response to the assault and perhaps too comfortable in deciding whether her final suicide was the right way to handle the aggression.

From a modern knowledge of post-traumatic disorders, Lucrece's suicide is hardly an enigma, and from this perspective Shakespeare can only be praised for articulating the complexities of a character in such mental distress so richly. But if we can learn anything from a late-modern understanding of sexual violence, it is that, since there is no consent (and not even St. Augustine takes issue with that), whether rape victims fought bravely or froze in terror, or how they carried themselves after the assault should take up a marginal space in the conversation, if any space at all. Thus, my point is that, although in different degrees, Augustinian and feminist readings of the poem (whether they attack or defend Lucrece) have so far provided analyses that tend to perpetuate the scrutiny of the victim. In turn, late feminism advises us not to concentrate on Lucrece, but on the perpetrator.

Why Did Tarquin Rape Lucrece?

In 2019 the question is not anymore "was Lucrece right in killing herself", or "is she a viable model for feminism". Late feminism begs us to go back to the poem and take up Lucrece's question, when she awakes, terrified, as Tarquin has begun the assault, and wonders: "Under what colour he commits this ill" (v. 476). The question then is not "why did Lucrece commit suicide", but "why did Tarquin rape her". In her book of 1998, *Gender and Violence in Contemporary Theory*, Gill Allwood claims that it was around the 1980s that feminist debates about rape started to shift:

> Although the emphasis was still on women as survivors of violence, the 1980s also saw a growing (if still limited) interest in men and masculinity. Feminists had begun to consider the violent man and not just the survivor. Attention was drawn to the ordinariness of rapists and men who are violent in the home, and the notion that there is something different about them was slowly being worn away. (Allwood, 1998: 109)

The first sustained discussion of the issue dates to 1975, with the milestone publication of Susan Brownmiller's *Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape*. There she credits Austrian psychologist Wilhelm Reich as being the first to call attention to the "masculine ideology of rape", but her book stands as the seminal feminist contribution that characterized rape not as an individual but

as a systemic problem. As Alison Healicon has recently argued in *The Politics of Sexual Violence* (2016), up until the '80s and '90s, rape had historically been understood as the manifestation of "isolated incidents resulting from individual pathology rather than a pattern within the wider social and political context" (Healicon, 2016: 5). Since then, the literature on the topic has become growingly abundant. Allwood describes rape as an instrument of social control. Anderson and Doherty characterize rape as being socially produced and socially legitimated (2008). The list goes on to paint a picture of what feminism has come to term *rape culture*, that is, the "culture in which sexual violence is a normalized phenomenon, in which male-dominant environments (…) encourage and sometimes depend on violence against women" (Projanski, 2001: 9). Such claim has gained especial relevance in the last couple of years with the Harvey Weinstein scandal and the resulting proliferation of incidents disclosed by the #metoo movement. Within this perspective of "rape culture", Allwood lists the three "most commonly held beliefs" rejected by feminism: "that rape is due to men's sudden and uncontrollable sexual urges; that rape is always committed by strangers; and that rapists are "mad" or in some way marginal to "normal" society" (Allwood, 1998: 125).

If we look at Shakespeare's poem from a late feminist approach to rape, the result is problematic. From this perspective, the problem is not, as Kahn suggested, that Lucrece is too passive, but that Tarquin's abuse is represented as a case of lustful insanity. As Belsey reminds us, "in accordance with a metaphoric commonplace of the period, passion enslaves the desiring Tarquin" (Belsey, 2001: 323). And the problem is not just that the rhetoric of the impassioned slave is recurrent in the poem, but that throughout the over 700 lines that Shakespeare dedicates to Tarquin and his inner process, the poem provides a picture of an out-of-line sociopath, unable to control his sexual urges: "My will is strong", Tarquin says, "past reason's weak removing" (v. 243). Within this perspective, the poem facilitates a psychoanalytical reading, as Belsey has remarked:

> The poem's image of Tarquin beside himself, slave to an insatiable desire beyond the reach of Law, is strangely Lacanian three hundred and fifty years *avant la lettre*. In a manner that closely resembles Jacques Lacan's doomed, desiring subject, in command of everything but its own desire (…), the king's son, dissatisfied with what he already possesses, wants precisely what, because it is forbidden, will destroy him and all he already has. (Belsey 2001: 323)

A psychoanalytical reading of the poem, like this one, can be disappointing for feminism because a Lacanian interpretation would attribute Tarquin's abuse to the *nature* of the human psyche and would fail to frame the poem within the bigger picture of the *culture* of rape, its ideological motivations and political ramifications. As French sociologist Welzer-Lang argues, "the fact that men choose exactly when and whom they hit demonstrates that their behaviour is both intentional and conditioned and that violence is not due to a loss of control" (*apud* Allwood, 1998 121), but Shakespeare's portrayal of Tarquin, inflamed with Lucrece's beauty, falls within the stereotype of the uncontrollably mad rapist that feminism has been resisting in the last few decades. A reading of Tarquin as prey to his untameable passion shuts down the social and institutional dimension of rape. And if we give credibility to Tarquin's explanations of his motives and passions, as Shakespeare's rhetoric promotes, we give in to the individualization of the problem, which disconnects Tarquin's violence from the larger patriarchal culture that feminism demands us to inspect. Perhaps at this point we can take on again the old attack against the poem's rhetoric. But from a feminist perspective, the complaint would not be that the lines are too elaborate but that they are misdirected. To give an example, that instead of making Lucrece blame Tarquin's assault on the "Night", "Opportunity" and "Time" for almost two hundred lines, Shakespeare could have dedicated those long rhetorical passages to exploring the social mechanisms that provoked the attack and led to her suicide.

Before I close my discussion, it is important to acknowledge that, if we look past the sociopathic portrayal of Tarquin, the poem offers plenty of opportunities to comment on the larger patriarchal system that Shakespeare depicts. For example, the poem assumes that the essential physical and mental weakness of women are gender-related; through mercantile rhetoric and metaphors of possession Lucrece is continuously objectified and subdued to an ownership power-struggle between her father, her husband and, ultimately, her aggressor; and both Belsey and Hyland have provided convincing arguments on how at the end of the poem Brutus, who will become a leader of the Republic, takes political advantage of Lucrece's suicide. Still, I contend that the portrayal of Tarquin is problematic in the way it erases the ideological foundations of rape. In a late feminist perspective, *The Rape of Lucrece* understands rape as an isolated, extraordinary incident, characterized by contingent and deranged passion, and not as the endemic social, political, and cultural problem that the #metoo scandals are a clear example of.

I believe that many of the feminist perspectives I have presented in the discussion are to a large extent complementary and that, rather than excluding each other, together they constitute a crucial body of contributions within the

critical history of the poem. But, in 2019, in the age of #metoo, late-modern feminism is especially sensitive to de-politicised understandings of rape, which are still very much in circulation. So, let me close the discussion with an anecdote. In the recent Spanish presidential race, a news comment by Cayetana Álvarez de Toledo, congressional candidate of the Partido Popular illustrates my point. She said:

> Enough with instrumentalizing the pain of victims and women. Conjugal violence is not a political crime. There is no macho organization devoted to killing women. There is no ideology behind conjugal violence. There is no organization that says "let's kill women". (Álvarez de Toledo, 2019)
> [Basta ya de instrumentalizar el dolor de las víctimas y de las mujeres. La violencia de pareja no es un crimen político. No hay una organización de machos que se dedique a matar a mujeres. No hay ideología tras la violencia de pareja. No hay una organización que diga 'matemos a las mujeres'" (my translation)].

This paper explores how *The Rape of Lucrece* has provided problematic responses, even within feminist criticism, by evaluating and overemphasizing Lucrece's suicide. And then I have shifted the debate towards Tarquin and warned that Shakespeare's treatment of rape may portray a de-politicised understanding of gender violence, a perspective that would promote views like the one expressed by Cayetana Álvarez. Feminism, I am sure, will continue to shape and be shaped by Shakespeare's works and, in the case of this congresswoman, I am not too worried, as I do not think her ideology welcomes much debate, just as I do not think she reads much Shakespeare.

Notes

Works cited

Allwood, Gil (1998), *French Feminisms: Gender and Violence in Contemporary Theory*, London, UCL Press.

Álvarez de Toledo, Cayetana (2019). "Álvarez de Toledo acusa a Sánchez de instrumentalizar el dolor de las mujeres", *La Vanguardia*, 25 April 2019.

Anderson, Irina / Kathy Doherty (2008), *Accounting for Rape: Psychology, Feminism and Discourse Analysis in the Study of Sexual Violence*, London, Routledge.

Augustine, Aurelius (1871), *The Works of Aurelius Augustine, Bishop of Hippo, Vol. 1., The City of God*, Edinburgh, T&T Clark.

Belsey, Catherine (2001), "Tarquin Dispossessed: Expropriation and Consent in 'The Rape of Lucrece'", *Shakespeare Quarterly*, vol. 52, nr. 3, pp. 315-335.

Brownmiller, Susan (1975), *Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape*, New York, Fawcett Columbine.

Eisaman Maus, Katharine (1986), "Taking Tropes Seriously: Language and Violence in Shakespeare's *Rape of Lucrece*", *Shakespeare Quarterly*, vol. 37, nr. 1, pp. 66-82.

Healicon, Allison (2016), *The Politics of Sexual Violence: Race, Identity and Feminism*, London, Palgrave.

Hehmeyer, Jeffrey Paxton (2013), "Heralding the Commonplace: Authorship, Voice, and the Commonplace in Shakespeare's 'Rape of Lucrece'", *Shakespeare Quarterly*, vol. 64, nr. 2, pp. 139-164.

Hyland, Peter (2003), *An Introduction to Shakespeare's Poems*, London, Palgrave.

Kahn, Coppélia (1997), *Roman Shakespeare: Warriors, Wounds, and Women*, London, Routledge.

Projanski, Sarah (2001), *Watching Rape: Film and Television in Postfeminist Culture*, New York, New York UP.

Roberts, Sasha (2002), *Reading Shakespeare's Poems in Early Modern England*, London, Palgrave.

Shakespeare, William (2002), *Complete Sonnets and Poems*, ed. Collin Burrow, London, Penguin.

Vickers, Nancy (1985), "'The Blazon of Sweet Beauty's Best': Shakespeare's *Lucrece*", in Patricia Parker and Geoffrey Hartman (ed.), *Shakespeare and the Question of Theory*, London, Routledge.

1.6. Educated Shrews: Shakespeare, Women's Education and Its Backlash

Larisa Kocic-Zámbó

Szegedi Tudományegyetem / University of Szeged

ABSTRACT

Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* is read within a larger context of the, so called, shrew narratives, focusing primarily on women's education and literacy. It thus goes beyond the simple redemptive effort of rendering Shakespeare's contested play palatable in light of feminist criticism. The author highlights some overlooked details of the play (especially when compared to the text of *A Shrew*) inferring proto-feminist ideas at odds with its overall plot and reception. It is also worth noting how early adaptations of the play omit these details. Finally, by juxtaposing these details with other early modern texts on women's education, the chapter shows how these issues were and still are crucial to our perception of otherness and discriminations based on sex, and how these ultimately seep into our perceptions of current crises.

Although *The Taming of the Shrew* and its many adaptations have enjoyed a ceaseless popularity on stage,[1] its critical reception has always been tinted with embarrassment if not outright condemnation. In his introduction to the Arden's edition Brian Morris reminds us that the play provoked an unprecedented response during Shakespeare's own lifetime. In Fletcher's *The Woman's Prize; or, The Tamer Tamed* (ca. 1611) the original plot is inverted and Petruchio, the male protagonist of Shakespeare's play, is widowed and tamed by his new wife Maria, perhaps offering a corrective[2] to what Pepys, writing of *The Shrew* in 1667, deemed "a mean play" (Morris, 1981: 89). In her introduction to *The New Cambridge Shakespeare* edition Ann Thompson goes so far as to assume a "positive conspiracy of silence" of the critics between 1830s and 1950s (and beyond), who opted to censor the play "by omission", or, if forced to deal with the play, would

admit the problem, "attempting to excuse the author" (Thompson, 2003: 25). It seems almost inevitable that the final critical blow to *The Shrew* should come from feminist readings, claiming it off and beyond redemption. As summarized by Paul Yachnin: "it can no longer be said to be a work of literature which might be saved in one way or another by virtue of the presence of a knowing author; instead, it is of the nature of a joke whose spirit has long since vanished, the dead letter of an outmoded misogynist culture" (Yachnin, 1996: par. 23).

However, recent enquiries into various manifestations of shrew narratives, like the ones in *Gender and Power in Shrew-Taming Narratives, 1500-1700*, edited by David Wootton and Graham Holderness, are extending the semiotic and chronological range of the term *shrew* and its uses, arguing the insufficiency of attempts "to locate, within a single play-text, fixed and consistent views on matters of gender and sexuality, when the reader is confronted by a much more diverse body of cultural production, often inter-related in conversational or dialogue form as are *The Taming of the Shrew* and *The Tamer Tamed*" (Holderness, 2010: 9). As such, they aim "to recuperate Shakespeare's play and its associates for new kinds of historically and politically-informed readings" (*ibidem*). Several of these studies, not just in the collection mentioned above, start by observing that the word *shrew* was initially a gender-neutral term, applicable to both men and women (e.g. Madelaine, 2010: 71; Pikli, 2010: 235; Kamaralli, 2012: 3); and while they acknowledge Shakespeare's application of the term to Petruchio, some are quick to note how in Shakespeare's other plays the term is reserved to female characters only (Kamaralli, 2012: 3, 3n8)[3] or how Shakespeare's plays, being "inalienable part of English Cultural memory, canonised and thus stabilised the first meaning of the 'shrew' as a forward woman or wife, up to our day" (Pikli, 2010: 238).

My own attempt at broadening the scope of the play's historical and political reading will revisit the concept of shrewishness with a special focus on learning and education. As such, it will pay just a modicum attention to the doubtlessly most problematical issue of the play, namely, the interpretation of Katherina's final speech/sermon.[4] Instead, I will highlight a detail of the play related to the education of Bianca and Katherina, explore it within the broader context of early modern education of women, and its connection to shrew-narratives, arguing that the taming of the female shrew can be seen as a backlash response to her learning. Ultimately, I will pursue the lingering echoes of the taming topos in our contemporary concerns related to women's right and education, and their implication on contemporary attitudes toward otherness.

> Tranio: Faith, he is gone unto the taming-school.
> Bianca: The taming-school? What, is there such a place?
> Tranio: Ay, mistress, and Petruchio is the master,
> That teacheth tricks eleven and twenty long,
> To tame a shrew and charm her chattering tongue.
> (4.2.54-58)[5]

Although the above quotation and Petruchio's soliloquy come quite late (4.1.175-198), the audience and the reader are already groomed by the title of the play to embrace the taming *ars poetica* and famous falconry analogy as the centrepiece (Morris, 1981: 250). Not only does the sololoquy provide a framework (besides the Induction) for much of the plot in the main part of the play, but it also explains Petruchio's over-the-top insistence at the end of the play to "show more sign of her [Katherina's] obedience, / Her new-build virtue and obedience" (5.2.118-119), although he has clearly already won the wager in that his wife was the only one of the three to heed her husband's call. The ostentatious display of Katherina's submissiveness, her rounding up of the absent wives and her public sermonizing to them – so galling to female audiences/readers/critics and uncomfortable to many male ones – is the very proof of Petruchio winning not just the bet but his self-proclaimed challenge at the end of his soliloquy: "He that knows better how to tame a shrew / Now let him speak: 'tis charity to show" (4.1.197-198). The irony of his words evoking the solemnization of matrimony is that his taming intention, instead of providing a "iust cause, why they may not lawfully be ioned together" (Morris, 1981: 251 n198), is perceived as a private matter, the grievance of which (particularly on the part of the wife) should be dealt with in private if not out of the public eye. The charity to show is therefore aimed at other husbands, seeking to tame their unruly wives, but more importantly, it is an ostentatious display of bragging rights for Petruchio, the master of his taming-school.

However, Petruchio's method is far from being unique, as it is both followed and preceded in contemporary writings on shrew-taming. While the two authors I am about to reference in the following sections use the term *shrew* in reference to men and women alike, there is a notable difference in the method applied in taming the former and the latter.

In John Taylor's *A iuniper lecture with… the authors advice how to tame a shrew, or vex her* (1639), the advice to husbands reads:

If you perceive her to increase her language, be sure you give her not a word, good or bad, but rather seeme to slight her, buy doing some action or other, as singing, dancing, whistling, or clapping thy hands on thy sides; *for this will make her vex extremely, because you give her not word for word* (...) but if all will not serve that you can doe, to stop her rage, but she will thus every day claomour, then I wish you to buy a Drum into your house, and locke it up in some private roome or Study, that shee may not come at it, and when she doth begin to talke aloft, doe then begin to beate a loud, which shee hearing, will presently be amazed, hearing a louder voice than her owne, and make her forbeare scolding any more for that time. (Taylor, 2005: 226-229; my emphasis)

The principal aim described above is the vexation and unbalancing of the wife by "not giving her word for word", which Petruchio resolves to accomplish by subverting all of Katherina's claims (2.1.168-180, the succeeding banter scene, and their subsequent interactions in Act IV). The effect is amply summarized by Curtis' words about Katherina: "she, poor soul, / Knows not which way to stand, to look, to speak, / And sits as one new risen from a dream" (4.1.171-173) – or from a nightmare more likely. And while in *A iuniper lecture* there is no direct suggestion that physical violence should be used, the implications of beating a drum are quite clear, even without the accompaniment of one of the suggested ditties, "Dub a dub [the sound of the drum], kill her with a Club, / Be thy wives Master: / Each one can tame a shrew, but he that hath her" (Taylor, 2005: 230-231).[6]

A similar behaviour is described in Erasmus' marriage counsel, one of his most popular colloquies, translated into English and published in 1557 as *A Merry Dialogue Declaring the Properties of Shrewd Shrews and Honest Wives*.[7] The colloquy is a dialogue between two married women, Eulalia and Xanthippe, and although the latter's name is in reference to Socrates' notoriously querulous wife (and the epitome of shrewishness),[8] the principal shrew of the dialogue is Xanthippe's husband.[9] When Eulalia asks how Xanthippe's husband reacts to her brawls, her response describes a behaviour reminiscent of Petruchio's, albeit with dubious results:

Eulalia: What does he do all this time?
Xanthippe: Do? Sometimes he sleeps, the lazy lout. Occasionally he just laughs; and at other times grabs his

104

guitar, which has hardly three strings, and plays it as loud
as he can to drown out my screaming.
Eulalia: That infuriates you?
Xanthippe: More than I could say. At times I can hardly
keep my hands off him. (Rummel, 1996: 133)

Here too, the husband does not respond to his wife's complaint (which,
according to the context, is due to his lazy and drunken ways), but rather behaves
in a way that vexes her and sometimes results in mutual blows. This short
exchange between the women serves as an introduction to Eulalia's art of taming
a shrewish husband which highlights a radical difference from taming a shrewish
wife: first, it should be kept secret, contrary to the women-shrew taming which,
apparently, should be advertised and proclaimed far and wide; second, the
animal imagery it employs reveals a hierarchical dynamic diametrically opposed
to the falcon taming analogy used in Petruchio's speech.

Xanthippe: But tell me please, by what arts you drew your
husband to your ways.
(...)
Eulalia: I'll tell you, then, but only if you'll keep it secret.
Xanthippe: Of course.
Eulalia: My first concern was to be agreeable to my husband
in every respect, so as not to cause him any annoyance. I
noted his mood and feeling; I noted the circumstances too,
and what soothed and irritated him [made him a shrew],[10]
as do those who tame elephants and lions or suchlike
creatures that can't be forced.
Xanthippe: That's the sort of creature [beast] I have at home.
Eulalia: Those who approach elephants don't wear white,
and those who approach bulls don't wear read, because
these beasts are known to be enraged by such colours.
Likewise tigers are driven so wild by the beating of drums
that they tear their own flesh. And trainers of horses have
calls, cluckings, pattings, and other means of soothing
mettlesome animals. How much more fitting for us to
use those arts on our husbands, with whom, whether we
like or not, we share bed and board for our entire lives.
(Rummel, 1996: 134-135)

These two differences are substantial and could prove critical in our revaluation of Katherine's final speech. Secrecy and physical strength, affecting the hierarchical dynamics between the sexes, are interrelated. Erasmus' marriage counselling colloquy makes it abundantly clear that the taming of man-shrews is done under the pretence of submission. Consequently, the taming "must" remain a secret because it conceals the manipulative aspect of obedience and servitude, sustaining the appearance of male intellectual supremacy. But why is this perceived as a must? Frances Power Cobbe noted as early as 1878 that "the [verbal] sparring may be all very well for a time, and may be counted entirely satisfactory *if they get the better* [i.e., the men]. But then, if by any mischance the unaccountably sharp wits of the weaker creature should prove dangerous weapons, there is always the club of brute force ready to hand in the corner" (2004: 113). Cobbe wrote this when musing about the popular appeal of wife-torturing narratives, *The Shrew* included (*idem*, 112), and perceived the amusement of (presumably male) listeners to stem from a secure knowledge that, should all else fail in a match of eloquence, the possessor of the superior physical strength can always resort to violence to win the argument.

The taming of a man is therefore *plus ratio quam vis*, a fact that must be concealed to avoid the *ultima ratio* of clubbing. This is hardly a reassuring or empowering prospect, not just from a 21st-century perspective, but from a 16th-century one too, as evinced by Xanthippe's exclamations in response to Eulalia's advice: "I had leuer be slayne…" [I'd rather be dead] or "I could not abyde it" [I can't stand it] (Erasmus, 2004). Thus, Erasmus undermines the "natural" argument, namely, that the given hierarchical construction of marriage is a mirror of Nature's order, or better yet, an ordination by God, for it seems neither natural nor just to women who are subjected to it.[11] Railing against it, like Xanthippe and Katherina do, seems more natural. "My tongue will tell the anger of my heart, / Or else my heart concealing it will break, / And rather than it shall, I will be free / Even to the uttermost, as I please, in words" – exclaims Katherina in her vexation (4.3.77-80). And yet, at the end both Xanthippe and Katherina acquiesce to a different approach, namely, showing obedience.

Indeed, critics have often concluded that Katherina's final speech cannot be meant for real, interpreting it either as a foil to best Petruchio or as a collusion with Petruchio to best the others (Kahn, 1981: 104-118; Karmalli, 2012: 89-110; Schaub, 2015: 225-242). The play is truly Shakespearean in that it refuses to give a conclusive ending as there is a sense of lingering wonder at the end of the play, expressed by Lucentio's final sentence, inviting readers and audiences alike to puzzle over the outcome: "'Tis a wonder, by your leave, she will be tam'd so"

(4.2.190). Did the shrew learn to be shrewd? Is she merely appropriating the techniques Petruchio employed in her own taming? For certainly Katherina has no Eulalia to advise her; as a matter of fact, she is the only Shakespearean heroine without a female ally or a friend throughout the play.

At this point I would like to turn to Katherina's and, by proxy, Bianca's education because it has an important role beyond the one emphasized by Thompson, namely, to provide "opportunity for all the comic disguising of the sub-plot" and allowing the contrast between Bianca's "spurious education" by her would-be-suitors and Kathrina's by Petruchio to play out (2003: 34). Thompson is quick to exclude Baptista Minola from the Shakespearean father figures who are personally invested in the teaching of their daughters, contrasting him with the father of Portia in *The Merchant of Venice*, of Miranda in *The Tempest* and of Helena in *All's Well That Ends Well* (32-33). And yet there are small details in the play, such as the topics Batista allows and encourages his daughters to learn, that set him and them well apart from the practice of the age.

The main plot starts with Lucentio's arrival at Padua, the "nursery of arts" and his pronounced ambition, fickle as it will soon prove to be, to "breath and haply institute / A course of learning and ingenious studies" (1.1.8-9). Given this setting, the opportunity for the subplot's comic disguise is Baptista asking Bianca's erstwhile suitors, Grumio and Hortensio, to recommend tutors for his daughters. "[F]or I know she [Bianca] taketh most delight / In music, instruments, and poetry, / Schoolmasters will I keep within my house", adding that "to cunning men / I will be very kind, and liberal / To mine own children in good bringing-up". (1.1.92-99). Morris makes no remark on this, while Thompson merely notes that "[s]uch objects [music, instruments and poetry] would be studied by a very few aristocratic women in Shakespeare's time" (2003: 71). The extent of Baptista's "liberal", that is free of convention, approach to his daughter's education is his ready acceptance of the tutors themselves who are far from being mere music and poetry teachers (and here I do not mean the fact of them being in disguise). Namely, Petruchio introduces Hortensio / Litio to Katherina as "[c]unning in music and the mathematics, / To instruct her fully in those sciences, / Whereof I know she is not ignorant" (2.1.55-68). The pairing of music and mathematics is remarkable in and of itself, for although girls were encouraged to learn music (particularly singing, dancing, and perhaps playing an instrument), the aim was to be cultivated for the benefit of domestic entertainment, and they were seen (even nowadays) more as performers than composers / producers (Cohen, 1997: 17-36; Barna, 2017: 1-21).[12] However, music in Shakespeare's time was still classified by theoreticians as a branch of mathematics, and in this capacity,

it would eventually contribute to the emergence of the Scientific Revolution in the 16th and 17th centuries. It was Kepler who argued for elliptical planetary orbits "as relieving the music of the spheres from dull monotony" producing "scale passages and chords to replace the sustained tones that would inevitably result from perfectly circular motions" (Drake, 1992: 5). As such, mathematics was deemed as a highly unfitting subject for female students, whose realm of knowledge, especially following protestant humanism, revolved around the domestic sphere of virtue and housewifery (Aughterson, 1995: 163). Similarly, while women were not barred from poetry either as readers or occasionally as authors themselves (although cautioned against romances that would furnish them with false ideals), their study was conducted in vernacular literature and often restricted to biblical texts for their virtue's sake. Latin education, let alone Greek, "among non-noble women was rare enough that it was remarked – 'learned beyond their sex,' the saying went", as Natalie Davis remarks (*apud* Sowards, 1982: 88).[13] Therefore, it is indeed remarkable that in *The Shrew* Grumio presents Cambio (Lucentio in disguise) as a tutor to the Minola daughters, describing him as a "young scholar, (…) cunning in Greek, Latin, and other languages" (2.1.78-82). Even more so, as Grumio's present is complimented by the additional material gift of a "small packet of Greek and Latin books" by Tranio (posing as Lucentio).

The educational titbits of the Minola sisters, introducing the sub-plot, are particularly remarkable if compared to the anonymous play *A Pleasant Conceited Historie, called The Taming of a Shrew*, arguably a variation of *The Shrew*. The main plot's setting is similar: the location is Athens, home to "*Platoes* schooles and *Aristotles* walkes", but this is as far as education is referenced. Aurelius' (Lucentio's equivalent in *A Shrew*) has no academic ambition in visiting Athens, he is there to meet with his friend Polidor (a semi Hortensio character), and in order to infiltrate Alfonso's home (Baptista's equivalent) he will disguise himself as "a Merchants sonne of *Cestus*, / That comes for traffike [business] unto *Athense* here" (1594). Nor is there any occasion for education in David Garrick's severely cut and rewritten appropriation, *Catherine and Petruchio* (1756), admittedly the most popular adaptation of *The Shrew*, which has for almost a century and half supplanted Shakespeare's play altogether. A comedy in three acts, it completely omits the subplot of the tutors, except for a short music-master scene for the sole purpose of displaying Katherine's temper. Indeed, most of the stage adaptations leave out the scope of Katherina's and Bianca's learning as an unimportant detail and yet, to me, it seems the most unique feature of Shakespeare's play.

Not the least because of Shakespeare's reputation, courtesy of Ben Jonson, of having "small Latin and less Greek", which should definitely make the reader

appreciate Shakespeare's sense of self depreciating humour, especially when remembering Portia's offhanded dismissal of her English suitor in *The Merchant of Venice*: "He hath neither Latin, French, nor Italian, (...) He is a proper man's picture, but alas, who can converse with a dumb show?" (1.2.62-65). But apart from offering tickling incongruity, the details about Katherina's education provide a more sinister take on Petruchio's taming school, namely, seeing it as a backlash to women's liberal education. This interpretative possibility is of course nowhere explicitly stated in the play itself, however, it is implied in its broader historical contexts. The relation of women's education to shrew-taming can be better understood in the light of another colloquy of Erasmus and its echoes in a later educational treatise by Bathsua Makin.

Erasmus' *The Abbot and the Learned Lady* (1524) is a dialogue on the benefits/disadvantages of reading and whether it constitutes the source of a pleasurable/good life between Antronius, a worldly abbot, and Magdalia, an erudite woman. Although Erasmus is far more set upon ridiculing the ignorant abbot, Antronius, than advocating the education of women modelled after Magdalia, the opening dialogue is worth quoting at some length for its stance on books in Latin and Greek:

> Antronius: What furnishing do I see here?
> Magdalia: Elegant, aren't they?
> Antronius: How elegant I don't know, but certainly unbecoming both to a young miss and a married woman.
> Magdalia: Why?
> Antronius: Because the whole place is full of books.
> Magdalia: Are you so old, an abbot as well as a courtier, and have never seen books in court ladies' houses?
> Antronius: Yes, but those were in French. Here I see Greek and Latin ones.
> Magdalia: Are French books the only ones that teach wisdom?
> Antronius: But it's fitting for court ladies to have something with which to beguile their leisure.
> Magdalia: Are court ladies the only ones allowed to improve their minds and enjoy themselves?
> Antronius: You confuse growing wise with enjoying yourself. It's not feminine to be brainy. A lady's business is to have a good time.
> (...)

Magdalia: Shrewd abbot but stupid philosopher! Tell me: how do you measure good times?

Antronius: By sleep, dinner parties, doing as one likes, money, honours.

(...)

Magdalia: What if I enjoy reading a good author more than you do hunting, drinking, or playing dice? You won't think I'm having a good time?

Antronius: *I* wouldn't live like that.

Magdalia: I'm not asking what *you* would enjoy most, but what *ought* to be enjoyable.

Antronius: I wouldn't want my monks to spend their time on books.

Magdalia: Yet my husband heartily approves on my doing so. But exactly why do you disapprove of this in your monks?

Antronius: Because I find they're less tractable; they talk back by quoting from decrees and decretals, from Peter and Paul.

Magdalia: So your rules conflict with those of Peter and Paul?

Antronius: What *they* may enjoy I don't know, but still I don't like a monk who talks back. And I don't want any of mine to know more than I do. (Rummel, 1996: 174-175)

Since this dialogue ridicules the wilful ignorance of Antronius, Erasmus also ridicules the commonplace objections against women's liberal learning, here voiced by the abbot: learning for wisdom's sake is not a feminine endeavour, because they are not fit for it to begin with, and should they engage in it they will end up "less tractable" and shrewish, for they will "talk back" – like the monks reading Latin – and not docilely follow imposed authority. They might even end up knowing more than their alleged superiors and, hence, becoming unable to marry (or be controlled in the case of the monks). The issue of eligibility emerges from Bathsua Makin's *An Essay To Revive the Antient Education of Gentlewomen*, in which she advocates a broader education for women, not restricted to the management of domestic chores, providing a list of prominently learned women in subjects deemed beyond their ken and answering the most common objections against women's education, the first being that "[if] we bring up our Daughters

110

to Learning, no Person will adventure to Marry them", seconded by the objection that "[they] will be proud, and not obey their Husbands; they will be pragmatick, and boast of their Parts and Improvements" (1673).[14] Both aforementioned texts, as well as *The Shrew* in my reading, reveal the double standard whereby cunningness is perceived as a shrewd quality in men and as shrewishness in women. Both words, *shrew* and *shrewd* have, in fact, the same etymological origin from, most likely, Middle English *schrewen* ("to curse") implying "evil, wicked person", and it is hard to resist inferring an intertextual connection with the Garden of Eden, where Eve's transgression in pursuit of knowledge resulted in a curse and an often cited reason why all her female descendants should be perceived to be cursed by their very nature, while the same pursuit of knowledge will be seen as cunning bravery in men and an ambition to be admired (despite its explicit connection to satanic hubris).

Nor should this sex-typing of shrew and shrewd be seen as a practice belonging to an outmoded misogynistic culture. One only needs to remember the coverage of the 2016 US presidential election and the way media (political preferences notwithstanding) referenced Hilary Clinton as opposed to Donald Trump. Though published in 1981, Shirley Morahan citing the paper of student Sasha Tranquili on the word *shrewd* still rings true:

> Women who have been called shrewish, step forward. Let your voices drum quietly, ceaselessly, on those men who stay out all night drinking and carousing, who take your hours of work in the home for granted, who eat your food without thanks or compliment, who fill you with babies and leave you with the responsibility of raising them, who work you into old age and demand that you be young, who push you and prod you to the point of anger and then call you "Shrew!"
> Women were not always shrews. Not until the middle of the sixteenth century was the word shrew ascribed specifically to women. Originally, and as early as the mid-thirteenth century, any evil person, one who stole or was a trickster was considered a shrew. How easily the slipping has been, from shrewd-evil in the thirteenth century to shrewd-clever by the eighteenth century, a forked definition to the benefit of man.

> The man, the trickster, now is considered clever, insightful and therefore admirable; he is shrewd. But the woman who is sharp with her mind and therefore her words is not admirable. She is a shrew. She has forgotten her place. She must be reconditioned, or she will be a weight the man does not deserve, an embarrassment he must suffer. I tell you, the word shrewd has come forward in time to be woman's punishment and man's reward. It is time for the next definition. (Morahan, 1981: 105-106)

Finally, I should probably qualify my earlier statement about Petruchio's taming school being a backlash to women's liberal education. It is not Petruchio's taming *per se*, but the whole setting that "necessitates" it. Namely, when using the term backlash, I am deliberately evoking Susan Faludi's seminal work *Backlash: The Undeclared War against American Women*, first published in 1991, in which she showcases the vengeful response of the media to the positive advancements of feminism in the 1970s – women's education included. In the present context, the most telling example of that backlash would be the recurring rhetoric of how "'the hard-core feminist viewpoint' (…) has relegated educated [female] executives to solitary nights of frozen dinners and closet drinking" (Faludi, 2006: 4). In other words, their education and success in professional life amounts to nothing as they "end up without love, and their spinsterly misery would eventually undermine their careers as well" (*idem*, 22). A similar argument was launched at the outset of the women's movement, when a marriage study was making "rounds in 1895, asserting that only 28 percent of college-educated women could get married" (63). Faludi summarizes this aspect of the backlash as follows: "The arguments were always the same: equal education would make women spinsters, equal employment would make women sterile, equal rights would make women bad mothers" (*idem*, 92). So, the passages referencing the Minola sisters' education, the insistence on Katherina's shrewishness, which is often stated by other characters in the play and rarely displayed,[15] *is* the backlash itself to which Petruchio's taming is merely the redress.

I would argue that, as "twentieth-century feminism had the good effect of restoring the full text" (Schaub, 2015: 234) of *The Shrew*, it is perhaps time for the 21st-century Shakespeare scholars, feminists included, to shift their focus from Katherina's last speech and facilitate a performance that does not exclude the educational titbits but, rather, highlights them as different, relevant interpretative possibility of the play, perhaps even by updating the tutoring subject range to

include STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) subjects – the Greek and Latin of our age. Most importantly, I would argue for the responsibility of myself and my colleagues to problematize these issues instead of merely attempting the recuperation of Shakespeare's good name (and our investment in teaching his works) from misogynistic charges, by acknowledging that Shakespeare's work too is vested in a continuous myth of transcending/ overarching values preferring the institutionalisation of certain interpretations, and given the complicated relation of literature and ideology, and the collusion of criticism with ideology, one should not shy away from the fact that the bard was (and presumably will be in the future) evoked as a cudgel at the service of reactionary and/or misogynistic ideas.

Notes

1. Brian Morris warns that claiming a ceaseless theatrical popularity for *The Shrew* might be an exaggeration because "for nearly two hundred years it was supplanted on the stage by adaptations, altered and partial versions, and its stage history cannot be said to have been an uninterrupted triumphal progress" (Morris, 1981: 88). However, his observation, though true, is not peculiar to *The Shrew* and therefore hardly conclusive. As noted by Fiona Richie and Peter Sabor, all of Shakespeare's plays "were adaptations of the originals by Restoration dramatists", achieving longevity well into the early 19th century (2012: 4-5; for more detail see Davidson, 2012), and while there were revisions and substantial shortenings of *The Shrew*, particularly of Kate's concluding speech, none of those revisions subvert the play to the level of surviving Romeos and Juliets, and happy ending King Lears.

2. Anna Bayman and George Southcombe claim that Fletcher was rejecting Shakespeare's ending by referencing Kate in his play as untamed – haunting the dreams of Petruchio, so that he would "start in's sleep, and very often / Cry out for cudgels, cow-staves, anything, / Hiding his breeches, out of fear her ghost / Should walk and wear 'em yet" (I.i.31-6) –, so they interpret this rejection as something that "may have been shared by some of Shakespeare's original audience" (Bayman / Southcombe, 2010: 19).

3. Also, Kamaralli does not seem to be taken by Holderness and Wootton's open-ended argument that a diverse body of cultural production (i.e. shrew-taming narratives) would challenge the audience's fixed and consistent view of gender and sexual dynamics in Shakespeare's plays because, as she argues, by the time Shakespeare wrote his plays, "the shrew was as familiar a theatrical archetype as the tyrant, the lover or the clown, so audiences would have been primed by convention to identify her, particularly when watching comedies, which most often made use of this figure" (2012: 3; 2010: 71). I agree with her assessment, particularly in light of Stott's definition of traditional comedy as a "plot driven" play in which characterization is "usually subordinated to the demands of the plot, and therefore more effectively realized with stereotypes and one-dimensional characters than anything approaching the realistic portrayal of human emotions" (2005: 40). The comic effect relies, therefore, on recognizable character types – e.g. Petruchio as the protype of the jovial wife-beater Mr. Punch – and on the temporary subversions of social stereotypes. This of course begs the question as to whether the punch line is equally amusing to those portrayed on the receiving end of the joke (Garner, 1988; Carlson, 1998: 91-2).

4. Kamaralli calls it "the crux of every argument about this [*The Shrew*] play" (2012: 93).

5. All quotations are from William Shakespeare, 1981.

6. See the enduring significance of the drum beating topos as marker of marital problems in John Gay's *Trivia: Or, the Art of Walking in the Streets of London* (1730): "Here rows of drummers stand in martial file, / And with their vellom thunder shake the pile, / To greet the new-made bride. Are sounds like these / The proper prelude to a state of peace?" (II.17-20).

7. Among other humanistic sources David Bevington and David Scott Kastan indicate Erasmus' marriage colloquy as a possible source for *The Shrew* in order to distance it from misogynistic extremes of other possible sources (Bevington / Kastan, 2005: 217). A more extreme narrative is *A Merry Jest of a Shrew and Curst Wife Lapped in Morel's Skin, for her Good Behaviour* (c. 1550-1560), in which the husband beats his wife till she bleeds, wrapping her in the flayed and salted skin of his old horse, Morel. The similarity to Shakespeare's play is that here too the father has a younger, meeker daughter, whom he favours over his eldest, shrewish daughter, and will have the first married only after he gets rid of the latter. The difference, apart from the existence of a mother figure, is that the shrew wife of *A Merry Jest* is identified as such by her violent, mean attitude towards the servants, a behaviour mirrored in *The Shrew* not by Katherine but by Petruchio in Act IV (also the very reason he is named a shrew in the play). Something else worth noting is that the jest throws the challenge of a superior taming method: "He that can charm a shrewd wife / Better then thus, / Let him come to me, and fetch ten pound, / And a golden purse" (Amyot, 1844: 91).

8. Indeed, the famous chamber-pot incident is recorded in *A iuniper lecture* too: "beware that shee doe not meete with you as Xantippe the wife of Socrates, did meet with him: for after hee had endured her railing & bitter words for two or three hours together, and slighted her by his merry conceits, she studying how to bee revenged of him, as he went out of his house she poured a Chamber-pot on his head, which wet him exceedingly; whereupon he presently said, I did think that after so great a clap of Thunder, we should have some shower of raine, and so past I off merrily" (Taylor, 2005: 227).

9. This is somewhat obscured by the fact that in the modern translation the male application of the term vanishes completely. For example, "I obserued his appetite and pleasure I marked the tymes bothe whan he woulde be pleased and when he wold be all by shrwed" (Erasmus, 2004) is rendered as "I noted his mood and feeling; I noted the circumstances too, and what soothed and irritated him" (Rummel, 1996: 134). In quoting Erasmus' *A Merry Dialogue,* I will occasionally resort to the English translation of 1557 (2004) for the obvious reason that it was the version readily available to Shakespeare and his contemporaries, and for the word use I intend to highlight.

10. The modern translation by Craig Thompson obfuscates the gender-neutral use of the word *shrew*, for in the 1557 English translation it reads as indicated in the parenthesis.

11. I am particularly fond of Erasmus for Xanthippe's scepticism in response to the theological underpinnings of her friend's advices (Rummel, 1996: 133). Better yet for Shakespeare because, as Thompson notes among the positives features of his approach, he blissfully avoids "that other principal weapon of the shrew-tamer or male supremacist: theology" (2003: 28).

12. I am grateful to Barna for drawing my attention to this continued gendered binary dynamic in the contemporary (punk and indie) music scene.

13. Antronius, the abbot from Erasmus' colloquy *The Abbot and the Learned Lady* (1524), will also claim that the "public agrees with me, because it's rare and exceptional thing for a woman to know Latin" (Rummel, 1996: 177).

14. Makin references Erasmus' colloquy twice in her *Essay*, the first time highlighting the underlying motive (fearmongering) that objects to women's education: "He gives her one Answer to all this, *That Women would never be kept in subjection if they were learned*; (...) Doubtless if that generation of Sots (who deny more Polite Learning to Women) would speak out, they would tell you, If Women should be permitted Arts, they would be wiser than themselves (a thing not to be endured) then they would never be such tame fools and very slaves as now they make them; therefore it is a wicked mischievous thing to revive the Ancient Custom of Educating them" (Makin, 1673).

15. After all, as Kamaralli also notes, "Katherine speaks a paltry 8 percent of her play's line" (2012: 90) and even those are mostly provoked instances.

Works cited

Amyot, Thomas (ed.) (1844), *The Old Taming of A Shrew, upon which Shakespeare founded his comedy, reprinted from the edition of 1594, and collated with the subsequent editions of 1596 and 1607*, London, Shakespeare Society.

Aughterson, Kate (ed.) (1995), *Renaissance Woman: A Source Book. Construction of Femininity in England*, London, Routledge.

Author Unknown (1594), *A pleasant conceited historie, called The taming of a shrew As it was sundry times acted by the Right honourable the Earle of Pembrook his seruants*, London / Ann Arbor, MI, Text Creation Partnership, 2009, https://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebo/A13358.0001.001?view=toc, accessed 19 March 2024.

Barna, Emília (2017), "Változás és kontinuitás egy budapesti underground zenei világban a műfaj-esztétika, ízlés, technológia és alkotómunka viszonyrendszerén keresztül" ["Change and continuity in the Budapest underground music world through the relationship between genre aesthetics, taste, technology and creative work"], *Társadalmi Nemek Tudománya Interdiszciplináris eFolyóirat*, vol. 7, nr. 1, pp. 1-21.

Bayman, Anna / George Southcombe (2010), "Shrews in Pamphlets and Plays", in David Wootton and Graham Holderness (ed.), *Gender and Power in Shrew-Taming Narratives, 1500-1700*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 11-28.

Bevington, David / David Scott Kastan (2005), "Shakespeare's Sources", in *The Taming of the Shrew* by William Shakespeare, New York, Bantam, pp. 215-237.

Carlson, Susan (1998), "The Suffrage Shrew: The Shakespeare Festival, 'A Man's Play,' and New Women", in Jonathan Bate / Jill L. Levenson / Dieter Mehl (ed.), *Shakespeare and the Twentieth Century*, Newark, U of Delaware P / London, Associated UP, pp. 85-102.

Cobbe, Frances Power (1878), "Wife-torture in England", in Susan Hamilton (ed.) (2004), *'Criminals, Idiots, Women, and Minors': Victorian Writing by Women on Women*, 2nd edition, Peterborough, Broadview Press, pp. 111-143.

Cohen, Sara (1997), "Men Making a Scene: Rock Music and the Production of Gender", in Sheila Whiteley (ed.), *Sexing the Groove: Popular Music and Gender*, Abingdon / New York, Routledge, pp. 17-36.

Davidson, Jenny (2012), "Shakespeare Adaptation", in Fiona Richie / Peter Sabor (ed.), *Shakespeare in the Eighteenth Century*, Cambridge, Cambridge UP, pp. 185-203.

Drake, Stillman (1992), "Music and Philosophy in Early Modern Science", in Victor Coelho (ed.), *Music and Science in the Age of Galileo*, Dordrecht, Springer, pp. 3-16.

Erasmus, Desiderius (2004), *A Merry Dialogue Declaring the Properties of Shrowde Shrews and Honest Wives*, Project Gutenberg [1557], http://www.gutenberg.org/files/14282/14282-h/14282-h.htm, accessed 19 March 2024.

Faludi, Susan (2006), *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against American Women*, 15th Anniversary Edition, New York, Three Rivers Press.

Garner, Shirley Nelson (1988), "*The Taming of the Shrew*: Inside or Outside of the Joke?", in Maurice Charney (ed.), *"Bad" Shakespeare: Revaluations of the Shakespeare Canon*, London, Associated UP, pp. 105-119.

Gay, John (1730), *Trivia: or, the Art of Walking the Streets of London*, 3rd edition, London, 1730.

Holderness, Graham (2010), "Introduction", in David Wootton / Graham Holderness (ed.), *Gender and Power in Shrew-Taming Narratives, 1500-1700*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 1-10.

Kahn, Coppélia (1981), *Man's Estate: Masculine Identity in Shakespeare*, Berkeley / Los Angeles, U of California P.

Kamaralli, Anna (2012), *Shakespeare and the Shrew: Performing the Defiant Female Voice*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan.

Madelaine, Richard (2010), "'He speaks very shrewishly': Apprentice-training and The Taming of the Shrew", in David Wootton and Graham Holderness (ed.), *Gender and Power in Shrew-Taming Narratives, 1500-1700*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 70-83.

Makin, Bathsua (1673), *An Essay To Revive the Antient Education of Gentlewomen, in Religion, Manners, Arts & Tongues. With an Answer to the Objections against this Way of Education* (London, Printed by J. D. to be sold by T. Parkhurst, https://digital.library.upenn.edu/women/makin/education/education.html, accessed 10 April 2024.

Morahan, Shirley (1981), *A Woman's Place: Rhetoric and Readings for Composing Yourself and Your Prose*, Albany, State University of New York Press.

Morris, Brian (1981), "Introduction", in William Shakespeare, *The Taming of the Shrew*, ed. Brian Morris, The Arden Shakespeare, London, Methuen, pp. 1-149.

Pikli, Natália (2010), "Across Cultures: Shakespeare and the Carnivalesque Shrew", *European Journal of English Studies*, vol. 14, nr. 3, pp. 235-248.

Richie, Fiona / Peter Sabor (2012), "Introduction", in Fiona Richie and Peter Sabor (ed.), *Shakespeare in the Eighteenth Century*, Cambridge, Cambridge UP, pp. 1-17.

Rummel, Erika (ed.) (1996), *Erasmus on Women*, Toronto, U of Toronto P.

Schaub, Diana J. (2015), "'Tis Charity to Show': Shakespeare's Kindly Art in *The Taming of the Shrew*", in Andrea Radasanu (ed.), *In Search of Humanity: Essays in Honor of Clifford Orwin*, Lanham, Lexington Books, pp. 225-242.

Shakespeare, William (1981), *The Taming of the Shrew*, ed. Brian Morris, The Arden Shakespeare, London, Methuen.

Sowards, Jesse Kelley (1982), "Erasmus and the Education of Women", *Sixteenth Century Journal*, vol. 3, nr. 4, pp. 77-89.

Stott, Andrew (2005), *Comedy*, New York / London, Routledge.

Taylor, John (2005), *A iuniper lecture With the description of all sorts of women, good and bad: from the modest to the maddest, from the most civil, to the scold rampant, their praise and dispraise compendiously related. Also the authors advice how to tame a shrew, or vexe her*, Ann Arbor, MI / Oxford (UK), Text Creation Partnership [1639], http://name.umdl.umich.edu/a13461.0001.001, accessed 19 March 2024.

Thompson, Ann (2003), "Introduction", in *The Taming of the Shrew (The New Cambridge Shakespeare)* by William Shakespeare, Cambridge, Cambridge UP, pp. 1-49.

Yachnin, Paul (1996), "Personations: *The Taming of the Shrew* and the Limits of Theoretical Criticism", *Early Modern Literary Studies*, vol. 2, nr. 1, paras. 1-31.

1.7. Mrs Shakespeare's New Face(t)s

Paola Spinozzi

Università degli Studi di Ferrara

ABSTRACT

The existence of Shakespeare's wife has been reconstructed, imagined, interpreted, and questioned. Creative and critical narratives drawing upon and simultaneously producing different forms of knowledge about her can be classified as: 1. legal documents; 2. poems; 3. plays; 4. novels; 5. scholarly criticism. Each rendition exhibits a paradox. Anne Hathaway's life, perhaps hardly meaningful *per se*, acquires significance thanks to its impact on Shakespeare's life, creativity, and productivity. Assumptions, biases and limited historical data about Hathaway have been used to illuminate personal circumstances and public facts concerning Shakespeare, to support romanticised or disparaging ideas about their marriage, to gather evidence of an initial connection and gradual estrangement, to cast a value judgement on her hypothetical degree of literacy, to reflect on early modern social norms, to reinforce canonical or feminist critical interpretations.

Intergeneric and intertextual dynamics emerge from different forms of narrativization. Among them, the battle of the critics featuring Germaine Greer and Stanley Wells shows that in the twenty-first century the biography of Mrs Shakespeare and her imagined identities disclose metacritical enquiries into the intricacies of Shakespeare scholarship.

Life Writing as Rewriting and Remediation

Life writing generates intertextuality and metacriticism. Revealing extraordinary events, generating new narratives, offering bold counternarratives, revising previous approaches: whatever the raison d'être for new renditions of a life may be, it is certain that each new version adds intertextual layers and poses metacritical questions. The transformation of a famous life into a compelling

narrative revolves around the biographer's ability to blend documentary resources with counterfactual speculations and personal opinions. If the life re/written belongs to the closest relative or friend of a famous author, extra levels of complexity are added to the amalgam of fact and fiction. The shift of focus from an acclaimed life to an ordinary one may be interpreted as an act of deconstruction and relativization of the author's identity or as a form of magnification through multiple vantage points. Life writing thrives on crisis generated by a constant negotiation of perspectives and positionings which simultaneously relativize and disseminate the author.

The wife of William Shakespeare stands out as an emblematic case of crisis, encompassing more fictional than factual versions of her life. Her precarious status as the ordinary spouse of an extraordinary man has inspired alternative narratives that reclaim her identity while interrogating her husband's canonization. Conjuring up her perspective brings her to narrative life, shows intertextual intricacies across her and her husband's existence, and feeds metacritical questions about alternate histories of her life.

What do we know about Shakespeare's wife? How do we know about her? Why do we want to know? "The family. The cottage. The age difference. The pregnancy. The children. The second best bed. The grave. We know so little about Anne Hathaway, but it hasn't stopped us from speculating about her life for the past 300 years" (Bogaev, 2018). In fact, scarce knowledge and strong preconception have produced polarized views. Delving into the life of Mrs Shakespeare involves examining heterogeneous sources as well as understanding why she has been often condemned and rarely magnified by creative writers, scholars, and readers. Her life has been treated as a strange work of art in literary genres and a divisive object of research in literary criticism. Different approaches and appropriations call attention to the ways in which what is known has been understood and portrayed and what is less known has been imagined. The intricate biographical mesh formed by historical sources, fictional representations, and critical interpretations raise aesthetic and ideological issues about life, art, and life writing.

Poets, playwrights, novelists, and scholars conjure up variegated face(t)s, simultaneously historical and fabricated, intricately biased and idiosyncratic. Katherine West Scheil's *Imagining Shakespeare's Wife: The Afterlife of Anne Hathaway* (2018) clarifies why her approach as a cultural historian requires imagination: "No one Anne emerges (...), but instead, we will encounter a multitude of Annes, in conjunction with their equally fictive Shakespeares" (Scheil, 2018: 15).

Starting from the assumption that creative and critical narratives are intertwined, sources of knowledge about Shakespeare's wife will be classified as:

1. legal documents; 2. poems; 3. plays; 4. novels; 5. scholarly criticism. Two novels and a critical work will be examined as forms of rewriting and remediation with a focus on intergeneric and intertextual dynamics.

Legal Documents

It is widely acknowledged that in November 1582 an eighteen-year-old William Shakespeare married a twenty-six-year-old Anne Hathaway, expecting their first child who would be born six months later. Age difference and pregnancy have been mentioned to suggest that the wedding was planned by her family and forced on him, yet evidence is missing. An entry dated 27 November 1582 in the bishop of Worcester's register records that a license was granted to William Shakespeare for his marriage to Anne Whateley of Temple Grafton. The key entry, on folio 43v, reads: "It*em* eodem die si*m*ilis emanauit li*cenci*a inter W*ill*el*mu*m Shaxpere et Annam Whateley de Temple grafton" ("Also on the same day a similar licence was issued between William Shakespeare of Stratford and Anne Whateley of Temple Grafton") (Bearman, 2018a). A marriage bond dated 28 November 1582 states that there was nothing to prevent William Shakespeare and Anne Hathaway's marriage from taking place, and the bishop of Worcester, who issued the marriage license, would be safeguarded from any future possible objections. Being an original document, the marriage bond appears to be more reliable than the register entry, which is a later copy. Fulk Sandells and John Richardson, relatives of Hathaway from Stratford, signed a financial guarantee of £40 for the wedding (Bearman, 2018b).

Poems

The couplet "'I hate' from hate away she threw, / And saved my life, saying 'not you'" in Shakespeare's Sonnet 145 is notoriously believed to allude to Anne Hathaway.

> Those lips that Love's own hand did make
> Breathed forth the sound that said 'I hate'
> To me that languish'd for her sake;
> But when she saw my woeful state
> Straight in her heart did mercy come,
> Chiding that tongue that ever sweet

119

Was used in giving gentle doom,
And taught it thus anew to greet:
'I hate' she alter'd with an end,
That follow'd it as gentle day
Doth follow night, who like a fiend
From heaven to hell is flown away;
'I hate' from hate away she threw,
And saved my life, saying 'not you.'
(Shakespeare, 2007: 355)

The pronunciation of the words 'hate away' in the Elizabethan age can be interpreted as a pun on 'Hathaway'. Likewise, "And saved my life" sounds indistinguishable from "Anne saved my life". However, the claim that the poem was composed in 1582, when Shakespeare was eighteen years old, and the plausibility of the pun have been debated (Gurr, 1971: 221-226). The biographical value of the poem varies depending on whether it is interpreted as Shakespeare's attempt at portraying Anne Hathaway as a woman he doted on.

Whether Mr and Mrs Shakespeare experienced romantic love for each other has been a captivating topic. In the collection *The World's Wife: Poems* (1999), dedicated to the wives of eminent men, Carol Ann Duffy evokes Mrs Shakespeare, Mrs Midas, Mrs Aesop, Mrs Darwin, Mrs Sisyphus, Queen Kong, Mrs Quasimodo, the Devil's Wife, Frau Freud, blending myth and history. In the sonnet "Anne Hathaway" Duffy builds up a lyrical narrative on the material and immaterial significance of the "second best bed" mentioned in Shakespeare's Will. According to medieval common law in England, one third of the husband's estate would be inherited by the wife, even in the absence of a specific reference in the will. While wives were often mentioned, usually in terms of affection and trust, and made executrix, no affectionate address to Hathaway can be found in Shakespeare's will and the second bed is the only specified bequest to her. As the best bed would be offered to staying guests, the "second best bed" is likely to have been the actual marriage bed, the one they shared as man and wife. In Duffy's poem the bed is conjured up as a source of delight and cherished as a memento of passionate love.

'Item I gyve unto my wief my second best bed...'
(from Shakespeare's will)
The bed we loved in was a spinning world
of forests, castles, torchlight, cliff-tops, seas

120

where he would dive for pearls. My lover's words
were shooting stars which fell to earth as kisses
on these lips; my body now a softer rhyme
to his, now echo, assonance; his touch
a verb dancing in the centre of a noun.
Some nights I dreamed he'd written me, the bed
a page beneath his writer's hands. Romance
and drama played by touch, by scent, by taste.
In the other bed, the best, our guests dozed on,
dribbling their prose. My living laughing love –
I hold him in the casket of my widow's head
as he held me upon that next best bed.
(Duffy, 2015: 256)

While the best bed provides comfort and is best suited for ordinary actions and talks, the second bed is meant for pleasure and creativity. A piece of furniture thus becomes a synecdoche for lovemaking, in which "romance and drama" are ignited by verbal ingenuity and nurtured by the senses. The final couplet is a hymn to sensual love and fond memories circulating im/materially between their bed and her head.

Examining the trajectory of Anne Hathaway's life for four hundred years, Scheil notes that the bed bequeathed to her "embodies both the sexual and domestic sides of this famous wife, linking her physically to Shakespeare and to the domestic life that likely kept her in Stratford for the duration of her life" (Scheil, 2020: 25). Compensating for the scarcity of documentary sources, that bed becomes a polysemous semiotic object: it is symbolical, inspiring poetic appropriations, as it is physical, carrying the weight of ideological interpretations.

Plays

Canadian-born playwright and screenwriter Hubert Osborne imagines that the newly widowed Anne Hathaway meets her old rival, Mistress Anne Whateley, in *The Shakespeare Play: A Drama in Rhythmic Prose* (c. 1911) and its sequel *The Good Men Do: An Indecorous Epilogue* (1917). Age and gender issues emerge through a focus on the women in Shakespeare's life, from Anne Hathaway and their daughters Judith and Susanna to Mistress Anne Whateley, the one he truly loved.

In *The Good Men Do* a confrontation arises between Hathaway and Whateley, both significantly older than Shakespeare, when Whateley vents her frustration by openly accusing Hathaway:

> ANNE. Meddled! I? [*Relishing the thought of her past conquests.*] 'T was he that did the meddling. With honied words made me forget my maiden modesty; and when he 'd wrought the wrong, 't was right that he should save me from disgrace.
> MISTRESS WHATELEY. Made you, Anne! Do not lie unto yourself. Made you! He a lad of seventeen and you a grown woman!
> ANNE [*flaring up*] A grown woman! She taunts me with my age!
> MISTRESS WHATELEY. You tricked him into marrying you knowing that he did not love you. You made no home for him who loved the little niceties of life, but made him live in squalor. You drove him from you by your nagging tongue to taverns and low company. Your jealous tantrums made banishment a happy liberty! (Osborne, 1917: 52)

Emotional details boost the story and serve artistic purposes: on the one hand Shakespeare's love life captures the attention of wide audiences, reinforcing the idea that his genius thrives on personal events transmuted into creative writing, on the other Shakespeare's legacy supplies an artistic capital widely used by creative writers to promote their own art.

An ageing, melancholic Shakespeare, worried about money in his Warwickshire home in 1615 and 1616, is the protagonist of Edward Bond's *Bingo: Scenes of Money and Death* (1973). Exploring the idea of a problematic relationship between Shakespeare and Hathaway, Bond represents his last days, suggesting that he and his wife had become estranged, and their daughter Judith resented his treatment of her mother. American actress-writer Yvonne Hudson's long solo show *Mrs Shakespeare. Will's First and Last Love* (1989) focuses on the friendship Anne and Will were able to develop after being separated by dramatic events and on her sympathetic attitude towards his infatuations and possible adulteries. Like Duffy in her sonnet, Hudson attaches a positive symbolic meaning to the bed bequest, the only place where Anne felt she possessed William. *Mrs Shakespeare. Will's First and Last Love* explores the condition of a woman who looks after a house

without a husband and delves into her emotional sphere, expressing sympathy for her husband's world as she quotes sonnets and soliloquies. New narrative material in the twenty-first century explores Shakespeare and Hathaway in the very last stages of their existence: Canadian playwright Vern Thiessen dedicates his one-woman piece *Shakespeare's Will* (2005) to Anne Hathaway on the day of her husband's funeral. While combining details of her personal life with dramatic twists, the poetic monologue also claims a place as a historical document about women's lives in Elizabethan England.

Novels

Mrs Shakespeare attracts creative writers, especially those who draw upon sentimentality and sensationalism to fabricate fictional biographies in which historical facts are peripheral. Karen Harper's *Mistress Shakespeare*, published in 2009, and Arliss Ryan's *The Secret Confessions of Anne Shakespeare*, published in 2010, deserve attention as contemporary expressions of popular literature investing in Shakespeare's love interests.

   Both titles play with mystery and expectations. *Mistress Shakespeare* alludes to a woman who may or may not be his wife, *The Secret Confessions of Anne Shakespeare* points to mysterious events that have been brought to light. Cover images and reviews offer clues to understanding the genesis and intended audience of both.

Karen Harper, *Mistress Shakespeare*, 2009

Karen Harper is a *New York Times* and *USA Today* bestselling writer of books published in foreign languages and the recipient of the Mary Higgins Clark Award for 2005. Born in 1945, for thirty-five years she lived in Columbus, Ohio, and periodically in Naples, Florida; after teaching English at the Ohio State University, she started writing novels in 1984 and gained popularity as a prolific author of historical and contemporary fiction blending suspense, mystery, and romance. The Maplecreek series, the Home Valley series, and the Cold Creek series are formed by 10 suspense novels altogether published between 1996 and 2014; the Queen Elizabeth I series comprises 9 historical mystery novels published between 1999 and 2007; 23 standalone novels appeared between 1999 and 2020, the year of her death.

The choice of contemporary Amish communities and Tudor England as favourite settings are the main reasons for Harper's success as a writer of popular literature. Her focus on historical British women indicates her ability to satisfy an appetite for stories that are left untold in scholarly books.
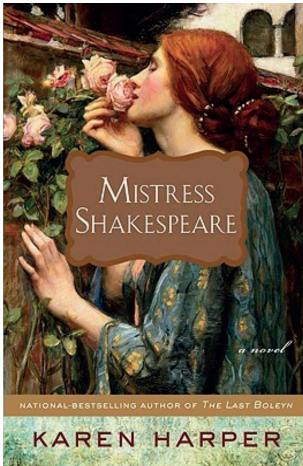
Mistress Shakespeare, New York, New American, 2009.

Shakespeare's Mistress, London, Ebury, 2011.

Mistress Shakespeare, the British edition published in 2009, and *Shakespeare's Mistress*, the American edition published in 2011, feature sentimental and sensational cover images. The former shows John William Waterhouse's lavish painting *The Soul of the Rose* (1910), the latter presents a young lady in a Tudor costume and introduces a tantalizing question: "Is the dark lady of the sonnets William's secret wife?". Only the lower part of her face is visible; eyes and forehead are cut off from the picture, alluding to the mysterious identity of Shakespeare's beloved mistress.

Harper's website offers an enticing presentation of the plot, which revolves around the idea that Anne Whateley is real, and Shakespeare truly loved her. Harper indicates two main reasons why this lady must have existed. First, the discrepancy between Anne Whateley of Temple Grafton and Anne Hathaway from Stratford is too strong, which points to the existence of both. Second, the presence of Fulk Sandells and John Richardson is ambiguous: the role of sureties who should take responsibility for the outcome of the wedding sounds weak, instead they may have well exerted a function of control and enforcement:

MISTRESS SHAKESPEARE is the real story of Shakespeare in love.

All fiction – and real life – is about 'what if?'

What if the record of the marriage bond previous to and in the same 1582 registry (still in existence) between Anne Whateley of Temple Grafton and William Shakespeare indicates that Will loved and wed another woman before he married Anne Hathaway? A later entry links him to "Anne Hathway [sic] of Stratford in the Dioces [sic] of Worchester maiden". The earlier Whateley entry can hardly be a mere slip of the pen, for not only the last names but the women's villages are different. As Germaine Greer says in her recent nonfiction book, *SHAKESPEARE'S WIFE* (about Anne H.), if the Whateley/Shaxpere marriage bond is a scribal error, it's really an odd one.

Will's marriage to Anne H. was what we would call a "shotgun" wedding, not unusual for the time, but it may well not have been voluntary on his part, for it was enforced by two friends of the bride's family, who put up a goodly sum to produce Will for the ceremony. What if the famous "second best bed" in Shakespeare's will was given to Anne H. because he and Anne W. had the first best bed at their Blackfriars Gatehouse in London – a property he made certain did not go to his wife or daughters in his will.

So – what if Anne Whateley was really the love of his life, the dark lady of his sonnets, his inspiration and muse? What if you read their story, then decide for yourself?

(For a look at the Shakespeare/Whateley marriage license (in Latin, with the usual loose Elizabethan spellings) go to http://home.att.net./~mleary/positive.htm.

If you would like to hear the music to a song with the words by Will Shakespeare, one that fits the era and theme of *MISTRESS SHAKESPEARE*, try artist Emilie Autumn – O Mistress Mine – Listen free at www.last.fm/music/Emilie+Autumn/_/O+Mistress+Mine (Harper, 2006-2011).

Harper invites readers to become empowered and enjoy the novel by developing their own conjectures. In order to do so, she suggests they become acquainted with authentic documents, providing links which must have worked initially, but have not been updated and are thus no longer available. She also publicizes contemporary fairy pop singer Emilie Autumn, whose genres encompass classical, dark cabaret, electronica, industrial, new age, and folk.

All the reviews point to a bestselling book by a bestselling author whose strength lies in the ability to re/produce the Elizabethan and Jacobean culture, blending truth-likeness, intensity, and sentiment.

> *Mistress Shakespeare* was selected by *Womans* [sic] *Day Magazine* in June 2009 as one of the Best 10 Summer Beach Reads.

> This intoxicating, fictionalized memoir of Shakespeare in love is a romantic roller coaster rich with vivid details reminiscent of *Romeo and Juliet.*
> — *Womans* [sic] *Day magazine*

> Karen Harper has written a riveting tale of intrigue and passion that plunges the reader straight into the complex heart of Elizabethan England. Rich with details and drama, *Mistress Shakespeare* is a story Shakespearean fans will love.
> — Deanna Raybourn, author of *SILENT ON THE MOOR*

> Told in first-person by Anne Whateley, this fictional memoir is a touching perspective of the life of William Shakespeare told by his soul mate and life-long love. Expertly researched and woven with the pageantry of Elizabeth and Jacobean history, this author has given us a rare glimpse of real persons from history, turning their lives into narratives that will entertain and delight the most discriminating readers.
> — *Fresh Fiction*, on-line review

[Harper] has a great knowledge of the way that people acted and spoke back then, and her characters never feel overly modern. Maybe Harper was an Elizabethan in a previous life?
— *Historical Fiction*, on-line review

Everyone knows William Shakespeare – or thinks they do – yet few know the woman who inspired so many of his greatest works. A richly satisfying novel that recreates Elizabethan London at its riotous, unruly best.
— Susan Holloway, author of *The King's Favourite* (*ibidem*)

The Best 10 Summer Beach Reads is a list produced by a magazine dedicated to food and recipes, health and fitness, life, sex and relationships, thus well suited for summer holidays. Entertainment is the major achievement, highlighted in all reviews, which praise the coexistence of (much) imagination and (some) objectivity: "fictionalized memoir of Shakespeare", "the complex heart of Elizabethan England", "lives into narratives that will entertain and delight", "great knowledge of the way that people acted and spoke back then". Reviewers concur that Harper thoroughly studied the Elizabethan and Jacobean Age and developed a unique ability to reproduce the atmosphere of London, the language, the cultural habits and emotional turmoil of the people. In the last endorsement the author of another historical fiction hyperbolically suggests that Harper has been endowed with the gift of authenticity and with other supernatural powers that allow her to penetrate the life of the woman who was the muse of Shakespeare.

Arliss Ryan, *The Secret Confessions of Anne Shakespeare*, 2010

Arliss Ryan, born in 1950, holds a Phi Beta Kappa B.A. degree in English from the University of Michigan and lives in St. Augustine, Florida. In January 2017 she and her husband moved aboard their 35' sailboat Corroboree and began a circumnavigation of the globe, which she has documented in her blog "The Old Woman and the Sea".

The Secret Confessions of Anne Shakespeare is her third novel, published by New American Library and Penguin Books in 2010. The choice of historical fiction allows her to tackle the question of Shakespeare authorship from the perspective of

romance. Compared to the US edition of *Mistress Shakespeare*, the cover image of *The Secret Confessions of Anne Shakespeare* is even more allusive and tantalizing: the virginal beauty of a young lady in a generic Renaissance garb is captured while she is engrossed in writing, oblivious to the outside world. Sheltering and imprisoning her, the window grid also symbolizes her impossibility to come out as an author, while the roses make sure that the aesthetic titillation is felt by the reader.

The Secret Confessions of Anne Shakespeare, New York,
New American Library, 2010.

Living as a widow in Stratford-upon-Avon in 1623, Anne Hathaway is lying in bed, quickly deteriorating. While her granddaughter Lizbeth reads aloud from Shakespeare's plays, Anne reveals that he is not the only author. Ryan recounts how Anne Hathaway followed Will to London to support his decision to become an actor. His career as a professional writer developed mainly thanks to Anne's support and contribution to writing. Far from being a country girl who beguiles him, she stands out as a resourceful woman with extraordinary artistic creativity, sharp intellect, and acute practical sense. She is an author in her own right, but her talent must remain hidden. It is their secret collaboration that makes Will the most celebrated playwright in Elizabethan England. The relationship between Mr and Mrs Shakespeare is presented as a sort of posthumous compensation: owing to the lack of equal opportunities, she did not become famous, but at least she was able to make the most of her talent by building up a successful partnership.

While *Mistress Shakespeare* thrives on romantic speculations about Shakespeare's love life, *The Confessions of Anne Shakespeare* tests the limits of

historical fiction as a genre by combining romance and the question of authorship. Ryan's use of the first-person narrative to envision how Anne Hathaway would deal with gender issues generates a post-modern stream of consciousness in which the predicaments of the protagonist sound all too similar to the problems with which contemporary women find themselves constantly confronted.

Ryan's skill in combining macro- and micro-stories is evident in the fictionalization of the first encounter: Anne ponders on the first manifestations of erotic tension, elaborates on the socio-economic advantages and dangers of marriage, mentions the religious controversies following Henry VIII's Act of Supremacy and explores the prospect, less feasible after the schism, of becoming a nun.

> I admit the thought of a lover, or rather a husband, was on my mind. I would soon be twenty-six, a prime age to wed, and Duck's push had a hint of impatience to it… Yet when my brain played over the likely candidates, my heart remained strangely empty. I did not fancy any of the local bachelors, though one or two had come calling. Even less did I incline toward the widowers and the taking on of their children as my stepmother had done. I knew I did not possess her gifts of patience or nurture. It frightened me to admit I might not make a good mother at all. But whomever I wed, he would expect me to bear him a brood, and the idea of childbirth sent a cold shudder along my spine. My mother had died of it and a dozen more wives I could name. You may call me lily-livered, but I would not have been unhappy to have proven barren.
>
> I had reached the secluded place where the brook pools into a large pond, surrounded by reeds and overhung by willows, dragonflies buzzing above the lily pads. Catching my reflection in the dappled water, I pictured beside it the faces of various eligible men and heaved a glum sigh. Too bad that our late fornicating monarch Henry VIII, in breaking with the church of Rome, had dissolved the monasteries and religious houses; if we were still Catholic, I would at least have had the option of becoming a nun. It might have well suited me, for in a company of sisters I could have had a brisk and purposeful life, tending gardens

or supervising the kitchen or managing the daily affairs. I could have muttered whatever prayers were required. The more I envisioned it, the greater pity it seemed to have missed out. (Ryan, 2019: 28-29)

Then she utters the very famous line from *Hamlet*, "Get thee to a nunnery!", which many readers will be pleased to recognise. Finally, they see each other and immediately start flirting. These self-reflexive moments of erotic arousal, religious critique and flirtatious banter are historically implausible, each of them sounding fictionally construed and narratively superimposed. Yet their tone is pleasant, and the effect is entertaining.

Codified notions of femininity and individual eccentricity generate a mismatch that resonates through the whole narrative. In spite of the great confession, which has the potential to change history, nothing changes, not only because times were not ripe for the genius of Anne Shakespeare, but because her attitude is traditional and conservative, expressing self-denial, support, and subservience. Ryan's perspective is only apparently and superficially feminist.

Reviewers stress the boldness of Ryan's imagination, which allows her to access Hathaway's private thoughts and public aspirations, desires and predicaments.

> This story is a fantastic view of life in the theatre, and one woman's struggle to maintain her family; her attempt to keep the love for her selfish husband; and, understand the remarkable stories that are piling up inside her own head…. After reading this, you'll not only applaud Anne Shakespeare, but you'll also give Arliss Ryan a standing ovation for a job well done.
> — Feathered Quill Book Reviews

> An entertaining and admirable novel that offers a surprising reinterpretation of Will Shakespeare's wife, Anne Hathaway, who shares, and helps shape, his dream.
> — Sandra Worth, author of *The King's Daughter: A Novel of the First Tudor Queen*

> This is a book to savor! The cover screams 'young adult' but looks are deceiving in this case, as it is a very mature, well-written story and absolutely plausible…
> — Historical-fiction.com (Arliss, 2019)

Hathaway's "struggle to maintain her family; her attempt to keep the love for her selfish husband", the ways in which she "shares, and helps shape, his dream", the "absolutely plausible" story show that ultimately the novel works as a form of normalization and neutralization of femininity and female autonomy. However, within the normative parameters of the genre, Ryan's focus on confessions of authorship may be seen as bold, especially if compared to Harper's preference for pure romance. Indeed, Harper's endorsement of Ryan's novel highlights "controversial", "daring", and even shocking features:

> Controversial and clever, daring and detailed, *The Secret Confessions of Anne Shakespeare* out shocks any modern day tell-all. Anne, the feisty and dynamic narrator, gives us an in-depth view of her own life and of Queen Elizabeth's England. The novel is as sweeping and insightful, tragic and comic as some of the bard's own plays.
> — Karen Harper, national bestselling author of *Mistress Shakespeare* and *The Queen's Governess*
> (Ryan, 2010: flyleaf)

The paratactic sequence of adjectives – "controversial and clever, daring and detailed", "feisty and dynamic", "sweeping and insightful, tragic and comic" – shows Harper's appreciation of Ryan's imaginative ability. Authors of fictional biographies of Shakespeare's wife share a specific kind of intertextuality.

If renditions of Mrs Shakespeare were classified according to the reliability of the sources, historical documentation would be placed on top of the list, scholarly biographies and literary criticism in the middle, fictional representations at the bottom. However, a hierarchical classification would be precarious, because different approaches to life writing pursue different aims, especially if the subject is a woman whose husband is one of the most popular writers in the world. While filling the historical gaps may be one of many goals pursued by the authors, truth, accuracy, objectivity, authenticity, reconstruction, conjecture, ambiguity, bias, preconception, projection, and fictionalisation form a spectrum of perspectives through which the scarcely documented life of someone married to someone who became world-famous comes to be understood. How biographers would like a life to be known is entwined with how they would like that life to have been lived.

Literary Criticism

Taking sides in favour of Anne Hathaway or Anne Whateley, literary critics have struggled to achieve a balance between evidence and interpretation. In *The Man Shakespeare and His Tragic Life Story* (1909) the Irish writer, journalist and publisher Frank Harris elaborates on Shakespeare's involvement with the two of them. He intended to marry Whately [sic], but when Hathaway's family realised his intentions, they obliged him to marry her instead: "Clearly Fulk Sandells was a masterful man; young Will Shakespeare was' forced to give up Anne Whately, poor lass, and marry Anne Hathaway, much against his will. Like many another man, Shakespeare married at leisure, and repented in hot haste". (Harris, 1909: 358). On the other hand, Stanley Wells's entry "Whately, Anne (Anne Whateley)" in *The Oxford Companion to Shakespeare* (2005) specifies that the name of Shakespeare's bride according to the marriage licence was "almost certainly the result of clerical error" (Wells, 2005: 185). The popular assumption that Shakespeare came to dislike his wife should also be considered as widely conjectural.

Stereotypes about Hathaway are the core concern of Germaine Greer's lengthy *Shakespeare's Wife* (2007). In deconstructing prejudices and received opinions, she constructs her own ideological discourse, one that targets canonical scholars of Shakespeare and exposes their gender bias. She rejects the uncritical plainness of the assumption that Mrs Shakespeare was not able to read, let alone appreciate her husband's work, based on the fact that illiteracy was shared by most women at the time:

> Scholars desirous of separating Shakespeare from his pesky wife have taken for granted that all her life she could neither read nor write. They want her, need her to have had no inkling of the magnitude of her husband's achievement.

> Of course most of the women in his world had little or no literacy, but the commonness of the condition does not change the fact: it is entirely possible that Shakespeare's wife never read a word that he wrote, that anything he sent her from London had to be read by a neighbour and that anything she wished to tell him – the local gossip, the health of his parents, the mortal illness of their only son – had to be consigned to a messenger.

Greenblatt can see no one to help Ann keep in touch with her husband beyond an Elizabethan version of a courier service. He imagines that any letter of Shakespeare's would have to have been read by a 'neighbour'.

If Shakespeare wrote at all, he would have written as Richard Quiney did, to a kinsman or a close friend, who had the duty of reading the letter to his wife and of penning her response. Abraham Sturley used to sign himself off to Quiney as writing 'at your own table in your own house', with Elizabeth Quiney beside him, virtually dictating what he was to write.

At least one of Shakespeare's brothers was fully literate and should have kept Shakespeare informed of the health of his parents. Ann's brother could read and write, as could her elder daughter Susanna.

Ann did not have to depend on the kindness of strangers or on professional messengers, who did not exist. Early modern letters were not private, but designed to be read aloud, in company. Truly intimate matters were deemed unsuitable for a letter.

Certainly it is possible, even entirely possible, that Ann could not read. It is also possible, given the absolute absence of evidence to the contrary, that she was blind. She may have been illiterate when Shakespeare met her, and he may have spent the long hours with her as she watched her cows grazing on the common, teaching her to read. (Greer, 2007: 51-52)

Greer rejects Stephen Greenblatt's assumption that women's illiteracy should be taken for granted, disparaged, and exposed as a form of social disability. The value judgement he casts on the epistolary correspondence between Mr and Mrs Shakespeare is seen as a methodological flaw: why claim that they were obliged to adopt a plain and neutral register, based on the assumption that someone had to be specially summoned to act as reader since she almost certainly could not read? Greer claims that it was perfectly normal to write plain letters that would circulate among family and friends. Relatives would easily read and write for each other, and the social stigma would not be an issue.

Greer's discourse on Mrs Shakespeare thrives on the deconstruction of what she defines as the biased view of other famous Shakespearean scholars. However, her critique of other critiques is so vehement that it seems to be her major goal, partly overshadowing the significance of her biographical study. Her forcefulness ultimately backfires, instilling the doubt that Mrs Shakespeare may be a pretext for interrogating the methods and intentions of other scholars. In this sense Stanley Wells' polemical review of *Mrs Shakespeare*, published on *The New York Review of Books* in 2008, is hardly unexpected and his reasons for retaliating sound convincing:

> When I heard that Germaine Greer was embarking on a biography I was skeptical of what seemed likely to be a tenuous enterprise. There are serious gaps in our knowledge of Shakespeare himself, and facts about the woman he married are even harder to come by. Though Greer makes no use in *Shakespeare's Wife* of the fictions I have mentioned, she is nevertheless much concerned with what she sees as fictions masquerading as truth in what claim to be biographical writings about Shakespeare (or the Bard, as she is all too apt to call him). Ann, she considers, has had an unjustifiably bad press at the hands of (mainly male) biographers such as Anthony Burgess, Anthony Holden, and Stephen Greenblatt, and her book offers characteristically pugnacious challenges to what she sees as received opinion. Drawing on her own research in the archives of the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust on the place of women in Elizabethan society, she makes use of the techniques and skills of a social historian and, to a lesser extent, a genealogist. (Wells, 2008)

Since Greer targets and accuses male biographers, Wells targets and accuses her of criticising and even disparaging their biographical work by default, rather than on the basis of strong arguments. Indeed, the patronising attitude she believes they display when tackling the topic of Shakespeare's wife becomes her own fixation:

> *Shakespeare's Wife* is an example of an emerging subspecies of Shakespearean biography. Other examples are James Shapiro's *A Year in the Life of William Shakespeare, 1599* (2005)

and Charles Nicholl's *The Lodger* (2008). They approach Shakespeare's life story partially or obliquely, and they may be all the more illuminating than cradle-to-grave accounts for doing so. Greer's book opens up new perspectives in offering alternative hypotheses to many of the all-too-easy assumptions about Shakespeare's wife and his relationship to her. Greer is often unnecessarily, stridently, and self-defensively combative. She ends with a gratuitous insult to those whom she derides as "the Shakespeare wallahs" who "have succeeded in creating a Bard in their own likeness, that is to say, incapable of relating to women", as if she herself were not a Shakespeare wallah. But this is an important book in the challenges that it poses to received opinion. It will have a permanent and beneficial effect on attempts to tell the story of Shakespeare's life. (*ibidem*)

Wells appreciates Greer's determination to interrogate common knowledge and truisms about Shakespeare and his wife, recognising that there is critical work to do. This battle of the critics reveals that Shakespeare's life and relationships incorporate methodological and ideological negotiations and raise issues about canonical and feminist approaches. In the twenty-first century the biography of Mrs Shakespeare has become the catalyst for metacritical enquiries into the intricacies of Shakespeare scholarship.

Contemporary Face(t)s

Embodiments of Hathaway acquire new face(t)s in contemporary cinema. *All Is True*, the 2018 British fictional historical film directed by Kenneth Branagh and written by Ben Elton, presents a plausible story of Shakespeare (Branagh) during the last three years of his life. After living alone in London for many years, in 1613 the Globe Theatre burned down, and he returned to Stratford. In 1616, the year of his death, Anne Hathaway (Judy Dench) and their daughters Susanna (Lydia Wilson) and Judith (Kathryn Wilder) gather to present him with a surprise. Anne and Judith have learnt to read and write thanks to Susanna who taught them and also found the marriage certificate of her parents, allowing Anne, who had only been able to sign with an "X", to write her signature. At his funeral, the three of them recite the song "Fear No More" from *Cymbeline* and are now all able to read.

While offering an in-depth portrayal of Shakespeare's home life and an elegiac happy ending, *All Is True* ticks all the boxes on a fact-checking list and shows commitment to gender equality by addressing the issue of women's education and emancipation in the early modern age. Ben Elton's script reiterates the bias that Anne Hathaway was illiterate but also lays emphasis on emancipatory intergenerational dynamics. Hathaway gaining literacy thanks to her daughter Susanna offers a view of Mrs Shakespeare that is as bold as it is pacifying and reaffirms the ambivalent nature of her imagined identities.

Works cited

All is True (2018), Directed by Kenneth Branagh, Written by Ben Elton, Produced by Tamar Thomas and Ted Gagliano, Distributed by Sony Pictures Classics.

Bearman, Robert (2018a), "Entry in the Bishop's register concerning the marriage of William Shakespeare and Anne Hathaway", in *Shakespeare Documented. An online exhibition documenting Shakespeare in his own time*, https://shakespearedocumented.folger.edu/exhibition/document/entry-bishops-register-concerning-marriage-william-shakespeare-and-anne-hathaway, accessed 19 March 2024.

— (2018b), "The Shakespeare Marriage Bond", in *Shakespeare Documented. An online exhibition documenting Shakespeare in his own time*, https://shakespearedocumented.folger.edu/exhibition/document/shakespeare-marriage-bond, accessed 19 March 2024.

Bogaev, Barbara (2018), "Imagining Shakespeare's Wife", Interview with Katherine West Scheil, 18 September, *Folger Shakespeare Library*, https://www.folger.edu/podcasts/shakespeare-unlimited/shakespeares-wife/, accessed 19 March 2024.

Bond, Edward (1973), *Bingo: Scenes of Money and Death*, London – New York, Methuen.

Duffy, Ann Carol (1999), *The World's Wife: Poems*, London, Picador.

— (2015), *Collected Poems*, London, Picador.

Greer, Germaine (2007), *Shakespeare's Wife*, London, Bloomsbury.

Gurr, Andrew (1971), "Shakespeare's First Poem: Sonnet 145", *Essays in Criticism*, vol. XXI, nr. 3, April, pp. 221-226, doi.org/10.1093/eic/XXI.3.221.

Harper, Karen (2009a), *Mrs Shakespeare*, London, Ebury Press, www.penguin.co.uk/books/1089048/shakespeare-s-mistress/9781448116164.html, accessed 19 March 2024.

— (2009b), *Mrs Shakespeare*, New York, G.P. Putnam's Sons, penguinrandomhouse.com/books/302411/mistress-shakespeare-by-karen-harper/, accessed 19 March 2024.

— (2006-2011), *Karen Harper*, karenharperauthor.com/mistress_shakespeare.html, accessed 19 March 2024.

Harris, Frank (1909), *The Man Shakespeare and His Tragic Life Story*, New York, Mitchell Kennerley.

Hudson, Yvonne (1989), *Mrs Shakespeare. Will's First and Last Love*, yhudson0.wixsite.com/mrsshakespeare, accessed 19 March 2024.

Osborne, Hubert, and Laurence Eyre (1982), *The Shakespeare Play: A Drama in Rhythmic Prose*, Washington, Library of Congress [1911].

— (1917), *The Good Men Do*, in Rachel Lyman Field, Hubert Osborne, Eugene Pillot, William L. Prosser (1923), *Plays of the 47 Workshop*, New York, Brentanos.

Ryan, Arliss (2010), *The Secret Confessions of Anne Shakespeare*, New York, New American Library.

— (2023), *Arliss Ryan. Writer*, arlissryan.com/books, accessed 19 March 2024.

Scheil, Katherine West (2018), *Imagining Shakespeare's Wife: The Afterlife of Anne Hathaway*, Cambridge, Cambridge UP.

— (2020), "The Second Bed and the Legacy of Anne Hathaway", in Katherine Scheil and Graham Holderness (ed.), *Shakespeare and Biography*, New York – Oxford, Berghahn Books, pp. 25-37.

Shakespeare, William (2007), "Sonnet 145", in Carl D. Atkins (ed.), *Shakespeare's Sonnets: With Three Hundred Years of Commentary*, Cranbury, Associated University Presses, p. 355.

Thiessen, Vern (2005), *Shakespeare's Will*, Toronto, Playwrights Canada Press.

Wells, Stanley (2005), "Whately, Anne (Anne Whateley)", in *The Oxford Companion to Shakespeare*, Oxford, Oxford UP.

— (2008), "Mistress Shakespeare", *The New York Review of Books*, vol. 55, nr. 6, 17 April, nybooks.com/articles/2008/04/17/mistress-shakespeare/, accessed 19 March 2024.

1.8. "No. I don't think I am me. Not any more": Sacrificing the Self in Utopia

Meegan Louise Clark
Freie Universität Berlin

ABSTRACT

Locked in the double envelopment of an aging society and an overpopulated planet, the question of sustainability and allegiance on the individual level to a greater community is inescapable. Alarmist statements frequently suggest the verifiable extinction of specific nationalities, such as in Germany and Japan, leading to the proliferation of reactionary extreme right-wing institutions. The question of individual identity and responsibility in relation to larger entities, such as the nation state, and on a larger scale, humankind, has been fertile ground for utopian literature. Invested in redressing specific contemporary deficiencies, Utopias establish communal projects, attained by structural shifts in society with heavy implications for the individual. Is it possible to view a willing sacrifice of individual identity in favour of a communal one as a way of reclaiming agency in crises? The chapter explores how early modern writers, such as Thomas More, Francis Bacon and Tommaso Campanella, and Dennis Kelly's television show *Utopia* (2013--2014) approach the relationship between self and greater collective, showing how utopian literature as a frame of thought enables us to interrogate how we might be able to achieve a sustainable equilibrium between I and Us – and if we should.

Introduction

Throughout Utopian literature there has been a strong focus on the relationship between the individual and larger communities of varying scale. According to Davis, the aim of Utopia is "the reconciliation of limited satisfactions and unlimited human desires within a social context" (Davis, 1983: 36). The impetus for conceptualising

Utopia is often a perceived inadequacy in the resolution experienced in reality, in effect a crisis of the social contract on some level; consequently, these narratives are frequently embedded in the interstices of contemporary debates.[1] Traditionally, the proposals to redress this relationship seemed to give utopias either an anarchistic or archistic frame, with neither being particularly desirable; the former too free, the latter too repressive (Pohl, 2010: 21-52). What effectively became negated, or absolved arguably, is the individual and the perceived agency of the individual within the given context of a society. Whilst early modern Utopias – such as Thomas More's *De optimo reipublicae statu deque noua insula Utopia libellus vere aureus, nec minus salutaris quam festivus*[2] and Francis Bacon's *New Atlantis*[3] – deny any unwillingness to conform to these societies, the aspects of struggle, reluctance and often sacrifice of those living in utopias came increasingly into the fore, evident in Dennis Kelly's postmodern television series *Utopia* (2013-2014),[4] as certain underlying assumptions of utopia were called into question.

Thus, critical utopias were born, self-reflexive, ambiguous and with no claim to perfection (Vieira, 2010: 10), encouraging the interrogation of underlying assumptions and critical engagement with the present (*idem*, 23), with the potential "to *change the way we think*", as Sargisson would suggest (Levitas / Sargisson, 2003: 17). On the one hand, the question of agency has become even more critical, with Suvin demanding utopianism to provide this (Suvin, 2003: 187); on the other, it is often now conceived as an impossibility in the face of globalisation, with Levitas questioning the transformative potential of Utopia, consigning it to the microcosm (Levitas / Sargisson, 2003: 16, 23; Jendrysik, 2015: 41). However, it will be posited here that the act of a willing sacrifice of individual identity in favour of a communal one, as can be found particularly in critical utopias, can be viewed as a method of a perceived reclaiming of agency in crises.

"Ye Are Not Your Own" (1 Corinthians 6:19): Thomas More and the Individual

Greenblatt predominantly frames *Utopia* as Thomas More's attempt at resolving the personal moral dilemma of accepting the King's invitation to join his service (Greenblatt, 1980: 12-13, 31-33, 56-58). However, it was clearly geared towards a European audience (Cave, 2008: 7), as its prefatory letters by eminent contemporary humanists and publication history attest to. More wrote it presumably between mid-July 1515 and September 1516, against the backdrop of humanist debates and continental commotions, such as the Italian Wars. Contemplating whether to join

the King's service (Hexter, 1965: xv, xxvii-xli), he published it in Louvain in 1516, in Paris in 1517, and a more definitive version in Basel in 1518. Numerous reprints and vernacular translations appeared by 1551.

The reproaches levelled against societal injustices and deficiencies are numerable and varied. Accordingly, the topics that More touches upon are tinged with concerns regarding culpability, governance, accountability and ability, far beyond the private/public dichotomy of his own being.[5] Furthermore, the trans-European audience is explicitly acknowledged: "(...) so [Hythlodaeus] rehearsed not a few points from which our own cities, nations, races and kingdoms may take example for the correction of their errors" (More, 1965: 55), and leaves few countries exempt from direct or indirect critique. Yet the practicality of the notions put forth rests on the conceptualisation of the individual in a social context.

In More's fiction the emphasis on the utility of the individual in relation to the community, and on the willing collusion, aligned with natural inclination, of the citizens of Utopia to conform to the archistic structures is remarkable. Greenblatt notes, the underlying movement of the text is of a "steady constriction of an initially limitless freedom" (Greenblatt, 1980: 40). The curtailment of individuation[6] is achieved by homogenisation (*idem*: 39-41), and a culture of honour and shaming whilst under neigh perpetual observation (*idem*, 47-54). Further restrictions are set in the conditional needs of the Utopian society, always prevalent, to the degree that it may be questionable to what extent any individual need or desire may arise, or rather any sense of inherent self.[7] Even the plurality of opinion, be it political or religious, is strictly monitored and structured; the first in its spatial arrangement, as any deliberation of politics outside of the designated forum "is a capital offence" (More, 1965: 125),[8] and the second by exclusion. If an individual vocally advocates a superiority of a religion, they are banished or enslaved for public incitement (*idem*, 219). Atheists, though, are not considered human: "(...) they do not regard him even as a member of mankind, (...) so far are they from classing him among their citizens whose laws and customs he would treat as worthless if it were not for fear" (*idem*, 221).

However, this passage leads us to a sticking point in More's text that is of particular relevance to the question of self: Are the Utopians capable of conceiving of humanity in the abstract? And in turn, are they able to differentiate themselves as individuals from that greater unit? Davis distinguishes the two books of More's work by the hierarchies of interest promoted in the respective parts; in the first, self-interest which is dominant in Europe, and in the second, the common interest which prevails in Utopia (Davis, 2010: 35). However, the Bible proffers conflicting views as to which interest ought to take precedence, in regard to salvation (*idem*,

38). It is further complicated by the precept of original sin (Pohl, 2010: 57) and the question of the ability to fully exercise free will, which was arguably impaired as a result of the Fall (Kenyon, 1983: 352-357, 370). Kenyon concludes that no harm or infraction was perceived in limiting the Utopians' choice of behaviours, in light of the salvation to be gained should Utopia be implemented in a real context, which would already entail an important superseding choice, namely, to create Utopia (*idem*, 369-370). Baker-Smith (1991: 170) and Davis (1983: 39, n. 81) rather suppose an absolution of moral choice altogether. Nevertheless, these readings are rooted in the premise that the Utopians are capable of conceiving themselves in isolation, *in the same manner* that the Europeans of Book I are, where self-interest flourishes. The reason this question is of relevance ought to be clear: If the Utopians cannot self-identify, then no oppression or comprehension of an imposition of will is possible. If they are capable of self-identification, then to what extent, as this would implicate the degree of self-interest that could potentially be generated.

In truth, the answer provided by More is inconclusive. When describing the Utopians' study of logic, he touches upon the concept of second intentions:

> In fact, they have discovered not even a single one of those very ingeniously devised rules about restrictions, amplifications, and suppositions which our own children learn in the *Small Logicals*. In addition, so far are they from ability to speculate on second intentions that not one of them could see even man himself as a so-called universal – though he was, as you know, colossal and greater than any giant, as well pointed out by us with our finger. (More, 1965: 159)

Despite the ironic tone and possible disregard for the concept of second intentions (Surtz / Hexter, 1965: 437-438), the question of their ability to abstract between the individual and humankind (Bruce, 1999: 223-224) is obfuscated due to this. On the one hand, it would seem to imply they cannot ("so far are they from ability"), but on the other hand, the split itself seems highly doubted, both by the fact that the Utopians have not mastered this, which would imply, by humanist logic, the deduction to be unnatural and thus a contrivance of erring Europeans, or "a self-regarding irrelevance" (Baker-Smith, 1991: 179), despite Hythlodaeus' assertion of accepted common knowledge; and due to the metaphor of the "giant" and the act of self-anointment ("pointed out by us with our finger"), implying possibly an excessive imposing ego, suggested to be something universal, but is

not – the idea being exposed as nothing more than a vanity rooted in inflated pride. Then again, elsewhere, More evinces that the Utopians are very much capable of abstraction, apart from dehumanising atheists, namely in their dealings with the Zapoletans, whose eradication achieved by carrying out Utopian wars would make them "the greatest benefactors to the human race if they could relieve the world of all the dregs of this abominable and impious people" (More, 1965: 207-209).

These segments also expose the deep-rooted transnational contemporaneity of the text in its satiric approaches to educational debates, the Italian Wars and Swiss mercenaries. The irony of describing European treaties as "holy and inviolable" upheld "partly through the justice and goodness of kings, partly through the reverence and fear of the Sovereign Pontiffs" (More, 1965: 197) in the wake of the Popes Julius II and Alexander VI would have been immediately apparent, as is the similarity between the Zapoletans and Swiss mercenaries, as remarked in the margins (More, 1965: 207; Surtz, 1965a: cliii; Hexter, 1965: l). Surtz also draws particular attention to parallels with Italian humanist discourse in general, noting the recent activities of the Lateran Council that would have drawn English attention (Surtz, 1965a: clxxii-clxxviii).

It might be surmised that the Utopians were conceived by More to be capable of differentiating between Utopians and Non-Utopians, but that within the Utopian community itself, this distinction is less clear. As Greenblatt argues, the destruction of the individual, however, is to be desired in this text (Greenblatt, 1980: 41) as it produces "a powerful sense of relatedness" (*idem*, 47)[9] rather than any sense of singular selfhood within the society, which is discouraged, and a more encompassing self-perception encouraged, as noted by Hythlodaeus: "Thus, the whole island is like a single family" (More, 1965: 149). Additionally, the society imposes an "enforced unity" (Jendrysik, 2015: 34), however the desired pinnacle, of course, is the voluntary denial of self in favour of others, providing no self-harm occurs (which would impair the utility of the individual):

> (...) unless a man neglects these advantages to himself in providing more zealously for the pleasure of other persons or of the public, in return for which sacrifice he expects a greater pleasure from God – but otherwise to deal harshly with oneself for a vain and shadowy reputation of virtue to no man's profit (...) – this attitude they think is extreme madness and the sign of a mind which is both cruel to itself and ungrateful to nature (...). (More, 1965: 179)[10]

143

Of course, as soon as a difference between self and others is perceived, the potential for self-interest as a destructive force emerges. Yet, as we have also noted, although More conceived of the Utopians as being capable of this discernment, it is implied that the Individual, in the more abstract and embodied sense, is not perceived or even perceivable (as noted in their inability to comprehend second intentions)[11] – the question remains if this is by choice or by nature. If one decides this is not by choice, then this in turn would lead us to the questions as to whether human nature can change, and, if so, then how, and at what cost? It is noteworthy to mention here, that it is Hythlodaeus' inability to disregard his own inclinations, regardless of his family, that prevents him into entering any court, irrelevant of the (in)efficiency, as such self-sacrifice is too high a cost for him: "(…) As for my relatives and friends, (…) I am not greatly troubled about them, for I think I have fairly well performed my duty to them already" (More, 1965: 55) and "As it is, I now live as I please (…)" (*idem*, 57). It is also ironic as he professes the Utopian way of life, where this behaviour would be presumably abhorred, to be the best and "(…) the only one which can rightly claim the name of a commonwealth" (*idem*, 237). Accordingly, it is presumably his European capacity to discern between himself and universal humankind, by means of his education in the *Small Logicals*, that blinkers him from ever being able to fully live in Utopia or bring it about.

The tone More generally adopts though, is of felicitous complicity and individual freedom to pursue happiness within guiding constraints laid down to optimise production and the chances of salvation, and where Utopians perceive themselves as an extension of one another, where no-one is beholden unto themselves. This would comply with Freeman's reading of the books and their composition, reconciling the text with More's life (Freeman, 1992: esp. 308-309) but would also be iterated in the parerga, where Busleyden writes of More as "Regarding yourself as born not for yourself alone but for the whole world (…)" (More, 1965: 33) which might very well encompass the general ethos of Utopian living.

"As We See Fit": Splitting the Self and Role in Francis Bacon

Bacon, however, does not take up the underlying radical tendencies of More's work, in regard to the suppression of individual and itself by social negation, but rather plays a tune of outward conformity. Despite partially touching upon the topics raised by More, but more ostensibly engaging in issues of structuring scientific

endeavours and their relation to power,[12] Bacon's *New Atlantis* seems to be driven by the latter and is concerned far more with worldly comfort than spiritual. Published posthumously in 1627 (Price, 2002: 1-2, 23, n. 2),[13] it is preceded by a prefatory note, claiming the unfinished "fable" contained "a model or description of a college instituted for the interpreting of nature and the producing of great and marvellous works for the benefit of men (…)" (*New Atlantis*, 1627: 127). Concerning itself primarily with knowledge production, transmission, and application (Colclough, 2002: 67-72),[14] rather than encompassing a European-scale systemic societal crisis as More perceived, the narrative itself is much more contained. This shift in focus might account for some peculiar dissonances that riddle the text,[15] yet it may also just be a further opening of the tension between individuals and their community that More seemed at pains to explain away.

This does not mean that *New Atlantis* has no interest in other contemporary issues or those limited to England. For example, Jowitt (2002) astutely contextualises *New Atlantis* in relation to Bacon's shifting relationship to James I and his colonial policies, in addition to the spectre of 'the Jew' in politics. Also, with regard to colonial issues, Irving (2006) stresses Bacon's underlying anxiety whilst linking it to his concerns on knowledge, and Lux (2014) draws attention to the relevance of China in *New Atlantis*.

Bensalem is formally archistic but belies, as Weinberger has skilfully shown (Weinberger, 1976, 2017), an anarchistic underbelly. Whereas More constantly seems to open up limitless freedom only to restrict considerably (Greenblatt, 1980: 40), Bacon seems to do the exact opposite, most notably in regard to Bensalemite concerns about murder, prostitution, and the exacerbation the Adam and Eve pools pose (Weinberger, 1976: 881-882). The duality, or split, of seeming (role) and being (self), seems to pervade the Bensalemite society.[16] This is explicitly signalled when the visitors' fate is to be revealed by a stranger who introduces himself thus, "*I am by office* governor of the House of Strangers, and *by vocation I am* a Christian Priest; and therefore am come to *you* (…), *both as strangers and* chiefly as *Christians*" (Bacon, 1857: 135; emphasis added). Although vocation might quite simply refer to a prior training, it could also imply a calling, a distinction that would be fostered by enforcing a duplication of labels unto the Europeans, one denoting a public perception ("strangers") and another pertaining to a more internal dimension of their identities ("Christians"). It is this tenuous relation that seems unsettling in the text, especially when applied to their societal structure. Bierman considers the political power as being separate from the House of Salomon (Bierman,1963: 500), possessing "isolation and autonomy" (*idem*, 496) despite their activities taking place everywhere (*idem*, 498), essentially the State being "an almost foreign body of which

they are scarcely a part" (Reiss, 1973: 93); contrarily though, it is an institution driven by individuals (*idem*, 92) who are only subject to their own restraint and morality which may restrict their pursuits (Weinberger, 1976: 881-885). Pohl justly contends, "They are indeed the true rulers of the Atlantan society" (2010: 61) and, given the extent of their interests and potential for manipulative intercessions,[17] Weinberger's speculation of mass manipulation via psychedelics ought not to be dismissed entirely as misplaced modern conjecture (Weinberger, 2017: 151).

What follows then is two parallel existing societies, Bensalem – a monarchy and patriarchy adapted to longer lifespans, their society obscured, and a "fellowship" (Bierman, 1963: 500, 497) of I's, the roots of their individuality presumably based on merit, but subject only unto themselves, who assume an almost occult quasi-stewardship of the former, revealing and concealing "as *we* think fit" (Bacon, 1857: 165; emphasis added). Between the first lack of identity due to a collapse into a faceless mass, roles and functions their only descriptors, and the second lack due to a superior nebulous "we", the constituents described similarly with a degree of inclination visible in their pursuits, the impression conveyed is of the insignificance of any and all individuals and their selfhood, the choice of volition irrelevant in face of self-perpetuating dynamic of discovery, wherein morality (and arguably personality) poses an obstruction to total knowledge. Weinberger also perceives a Bensalemite irreverence for morality (Weinberger, 1976: 881; 2017: 144). The aspect of perpetuity is arguably also evident in the feast of the Tirsan, promoting a vision of asexual perpetual existence, the mother kept out of sight or mind (Bacon, 1857: 149).

"No. I don't think I am me. Not anymore" (*Utopia*, 2:6): Positivizing Eradication

Dennis Kelly's television show *Utopia* (2013-2014) revolves around the questions More raised as to whether human nature can change, and, if so, then how, and at what cost, with an inversion: set in contemporary British society, where self-perception is utterly undoubtable, it is the ability to participate in any larger sense of self beyond immediate embodiment that is scrutinised. The individual is at once all-compassing, yet therefore perceived as completely irrelevant, embedded in a set of seemingly self-perpetuating machinations of power, both political and capitalist – not unlike Bacon's utopia of continual discovery. As in Bacon's piece, it is also replete with shadowy parallel structures, simultaneously on the outside but essentially above, who operate and influence the highest levels of politics, the economy and

society, though unelected and unaccountable, officially non-existent, and unfettered by policy, the necessity of transparency, or national borders, incumbent only unto goals they themselves define. What starts out as a group of fans of a graphic novel, all outcasts of a kind, searching for a sequel manuscript, quickly spirals into being caught up in a conspiracy, their adversaries a collective known only as The Network, seeking to impose sterility onto the majority of humanity as to ensure the future of humanity on the cusp on an eco-pocalypse. We have been living in a dystopic utopia since the onset of modernity, it would seem to argue.[18]

With morality spinning on a gyroscope of conflicting interests to a countdown of a species-level self-annihilation and irrevocable implosion, the individuals are at once thrust into the midst of a situation where their actions may have an immediate impact: averting the release of a sterilising virus. Yet their involvement is almost coincidental, constantly placing them on the back foot, hence their preoccupations are determined by immediacy and propinquity, initially limited to survival. Accordingly, they provide an inadequate response to the adversaries' greater objectives, governed by long-term global forethought, engaging primarily with the threat of the sterilising virus rather than the issues of overpopulation and consequent ecological, energy and food supply crises The Network seeks to address.

Each and every one of the characters is overwhelmed at one point or another, if not constantly by the personal ethical and moral ramifications of the situations they are faced with, and to a certain extent the resultant implications at large. Wilson Wilson is a particularly interesting figure in this regard. He is introduced both driven by an extreme sense of self-interest, evident in his refusal to dress in blue, by which the group had intended to identify one another when meeting in real life for the first time, as "[I] don't look good in blue", and as being excessively possessive of his personal details, to the point of having blotted himself from all digital history (*Utopia*, 1:1), revealing a nihilistic drive compounded in his narcissism, with an almost paranoid, schizoid grasp on reality.[19] Nevertheless, he simultaneously longs to belong to a community, evinced in his online forum presence, and is yet unable to, due to lacking social decorum and an almost amoral willingness to embrace blunt facts of reality.[20] It is the latter trait that increasingly comes to dominate, quickly adapting to engage in violence, wherefore it ought not to surprise us, when he is converted, for lack of a better term, to The Network's cause, by Letts' and later Milner's relentless speeches on the state of the environment (*idem*, 1:5; 2:4). Despite grappling with the violence the choice inflicts, the spoon in season 2 increasingly symbolising his victimhood, lack of agency and his semblance of self as Wilson Wilson,[21] he ultimately sacrifices that Self – in wilfully killing Lee, when otherwise unnecessary (*idem*, 2:6), in order to regain agency in the communal

identity of The Network with the role of Mr Rabbit;[22] to act in a manner he deems moral in the grand scheme of time, to exert influence in a problem that he would otherwise only be subject to. He is very aware of the implications and his own moral stance, neither fully agreeing nor disagreeing with The Network: "We should at least think about it (…) because if they are right and we stop them, what does that make us?" (*idem*, 1:5) but also: "Losing that much life is never acceptable. But losing some is. (…) I promise you, I'll be better than her" (*idem*, 2:6).

Conclusion

As I have attempted to outline, the works investigated provide different takes on the relationship between the individual and society; they are essentially reimaginings redressing failures of the societies the authors lived in. More tries to maintain both a sense of self-identity whilst sacrificing it in part in favour of a communal identity, resulting in an extended self that may not be entirely natural, in order to achieve salvation, yet not succumbing entirely to predestination or resignation. According to Greenblatt his crisis was located in a perception of a world of madness (1980: 14-16); an envisioned collapse or rather harmonious reconciliation of the private and public distinction, by means of relinquishing a possessive self-perception, was More's answer.[23]

Bacon, however, produces a split between seeming (role) and being (self), akin to More's dichotomy between the private and public, in order to address the crisis of a restriction of scientific endeavour, whilst the self though is either disavowed or else sacrificed on the altar of knowledge-worship in order to be unencumbered by morality, as Weinberger speculates (Weinberger, 1976: 881-885). Nevertheless, a degree of self, as a constitutive part of a restricted "we", remains or is regained by means left deliberately obscure. Also of note is the openness towards intervening in human nature in order to achieve the necessary disposition.

Wilson Wilson, of Kelly's *Utopia*, also operates with the distinction between role and self that Bacon used but sacrifices anything he may have considered his self in order to regain agency within a role that offers an identity within a species-identification, in light of the burgeoning crisis of overpopulation. Contrary to Jendrysik's assertion that "[i]n all utopias, individual political activity is reduced to exit" (Jendrysik, 2015: 37), here Wilson Wilson embraces the obliteration of self and actively engages in the maintenance of our critical utopia; it is the implication of this action and the dystopic tendencies it reveals that is unsettling.

However, in truth, the choices proffered in these Utopias between self-repression with a resignation of agency and self-sacrifice in order to perceive an attainment of agency, when faced with crises, are by no means comfortable. It is Bacon's legacy, though, the willingness to intervene in the construction of human nature, as explored by a number of post- and transhumanist authors, that is proving more fruitful for Utopian literature as means of envisioning alternative relationships between the Self and larger units, or to make the transition more palatable; with biochemical tweaking of aggression, for example, or by means of technologies that may bring about more compromising hive minds or swarm intelligences. It is these science-fiction speculations that maintain the spirit of Utopia and would be exceedingly engaging to explore in their precise manifestations, as they continue to force us to ask: What makes us human? What do we want to become? How? And, at what cost? But they also enable us to not only interrogate how we might be able to achieve a sustainable equilibrium between the I and Us – but whether we should. With recent investment in technologies of neural interfacing by companies such as Neuralink and Kernel,[24] these projects need to be addressed now in their inception, as the far-reaching implications for the social contract hold an extreme potential for generating systemic and fundamental crises that will undoubtedly exceed traditional national borders as we currently conceive them.

Notes

1. However, it is difficult to impress the importance of not viewing Utopian literature as purely reactive, didactic, or as ephemeral, by rooting it too specifically in the respective contexts of genesis. This would diminish the constructive, transformative, and imaginative aspects of the particular texts. See Davis, 1983: 12-19; Vieira, 2010: 18; Moylan, 1986: 6-8.

2. All subsequent quotations are from More, 1965.

3. All subsequent quotations are from Bacon, 1857.

4. All subsequent quotations are from *Utopia*, 2013-2014. Hereafter cited as *Utopia* parenthetically in the text with references to the seasons and episodes.

5. My contentions against Greenblatt's reading echo Yoran's: there is no necessity to reduce the text to a psychoanalytic reading, which arguably diminishes the project's scope of engagement (Yoran, 2010: 173, 176-177), particularly regarding issues related to international cooperation, peace, and war.

6. The only outlets, such as gardening, reveal a desire for it, as this exposes a competitive streak in the society (Jendrysik, 2015: 35). It extends to children being seen as resources to be distributed if they choose to pursue another craft (More, 1965: 127), families as means of expansion (*idem*, 137) and death as a communal concern, wherefore permission must be granted in euthanasia (*idem*, 187). See Spinozzi, 2016, on the utilitarian approach to life in Utopia and for greater elaboration. Arguably the only distinctions that remain are sex and marital status.

7. Baker-Smith also raises this question (1991: 224). An example of conditional needs is when the State determines which profession ought to be pursued if an individual is proficient in more than one craft (More, 1965: 127).

8. This is supposedly to prevent conspiracy from fermenting amongst the representatives, by means of transparency. However, it could equally be seen as a form of preventing any larger congress of likeminded people, particularly ones that might forcefully disagree with communal decisions.

9. It is a modification of Hexter's "patriarchial familialism" (1965: xli), due to the differences in conceptualising family life (Greenblatt, 1980: 42-44).

10. Their founder would be an embodiment of this perceived virtue, as Baker-Smith notes that Utopus was completely "self-denying; (… and) legislates himself out of existence", rejecting his absolutist potential (1991: 153). See Baker-Smith also on the combinations of theories of pleasure that reconcile self-sacrifice, solidarity, and the afterlife (1991: 174).

11. Baker-Smith explains that a modern conception of the Individual distorts More's Utopia to be perceived as more totalitarian than his contemporaries might have (1991: 221).

12. Bierman notes More's silence regarding the establishments of scientific institutions and endeavours (1963: 494). See also Bierman, 1963; Blodgett, 1931; Reiss, 1973.

13. *New Atlantis* is considered as complete in this text, in line with Weinberger's reading (1976: 869-872, 882-885; 2017: 133-134).

14. Counter to Colclough's dismissal of other readings, which he argues "ask[s] the *wrong* questions of the work" (2002: 62), when focusing on the text's silence regarding social structures, I consider these approaches equally valid and not exclusive.

15. The narrative itself a very paradox given the Bensalemite laws enforcing secrecy (Weinberger, 1976: 873).

16. Pohl calls them Atlantan (2010: 61).

17. Of especial note is the ancillary material denoting their goals: "Exhilaration of the spirits, and putting them in good disposition" (Bacon, 1857: 167).

18. See Philip Carvel's speech (*Utopia*, 2:1).

19. His deep conviction of conspiracy theories and defence of the graphic novel as "opening a door … to reality" (*Utopia*, 1:1).

20. He blatantly admits to not expecting Ian to be black (*Utopia*, 1:1) and seems romantically interested in Becky at times.

21. Problematically, he is almost overly inscribed with symbolic signifiers even upon introduction, reflected both in his duplicated name, the t-shirt he wore initially bearing a stag on it – the relationship between animals and death is intriguingly subtle, but seems to function as harbingers in season 1. His repeated conversion; physical inscriptions of violence; and relationships to Arby and Milner, which figure as inverted mirrors; his colour coding and audio cues would be well worth a more thorough analysis, as would the symbolic significance of his right eye being removed.

22. Interestingly, when inflicting the Chinese character upon his body – a scar associated with Mr Rabbit –, the act bears a momentary resemblance to the Japanese act of Seppuku (*Utopia*, 2:6), yet again inscribing himself with symbolic significance and negating the counterargument of an imposed Self, as his action avows to a deep degree of self-reflexivity.

23. Greenblatt would assert that this relinquishment does not fully occur (1980: 56-58), but his subject is More rather than the Individual in *Utopia* proper.

24. See Metz, 2017; Mitchell, 2017; Author Unknown, 2017.

Works cited

Author Unknown (2017), "The case for neural lace: Elon Musk enters the world of brain-computer interfaces", *The Economist*, 30 March, https://www.economist.com/science-and-technology/2017/03/31/elon-musk-enters-the-world-of-brain-computer-interfaces, accessed 12 April 2024.

Bacon, Francis (1857), *New Atlantis*, in James Spedding / Robert L. Ellis / Douglas D. Heath, ed., *The Works of Francis Bacon*, Vol. 3, London, Longman and Co.

Baker-Smith, Dominic (1991), *More's Utopia*, London and New York, Harper Collins Academic.

Bierman, Judah (1963), "Science and Society in the *New Atlantis* and Other Renaissance Utopias", *PMLA*, vol. 78, nr. 5, pp. 492-500.

Blodgett, Eleanor D. (1931), "Bacon's *New Atlantis* and Campanella's *Civitas Solis*: A Study in Relationships", *PMLA*, vol. 46, nr. 3, pp. 763-780.

Bruce, Susan (1999), "Explanatory Notes: Utopia", in Susan Bruce (ed.), *Three Early Modern Utopias: Utopia, New Atlantis and The Isle of Pines*, Oxford and New York, Oxford UP, pp. 213-231.

Cave, Terence (2008), "Introduction", in Terence Cave (ed.), *Thomas More's Utopia in Early Modern Europe: Paratexts and Contexts*, Manchester and New York, Manchester UP, pp. 1-13.

Colclough, David (2002), "Ethics and Politics in the *New Atlantis*", in Bronwen Price (ed.), *Francis Bacon's New Atlantis: New Interdisciplinary Essays*, Manchester and New York, Manchester UP, pp. 60-81.

Davis, J. C. (1983), *Utopia and the Ideal Society: Study of English Utopian Writing 1516-1700*, Cambridge, Cambridge UP.

— (2010), "Thomas More's *Utopia*: Sources, Legacy and Interpretation", in Gregory Claeys (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Utopian Literature*, Cambridge, Cambridge UP, pp. 28-50.

Freeman, John (1992), "Discourse in More's *Utopia*: Alibi/Pretext/Postscript", *ELH*, vol. 59, nr. 2, pp. 289-311.

Greenblatt, Stephen (1980), *Renaissance Self-Fashioning. From More to Shakespeare.* Chicago and London, The University of Chicago Press.

Hexter, J. H. (1965), "Introduction: Part I", in Edward Surtz / J. H. Hexter (ed.), *The Complete Works of St. Thomas More: Utopia*, Vol. 4, New Haven and London, Yale UP, pp. xv-cxxiv.

Irving, Sarah (2006), "'In a pure soil': Colonial Anxieties in the Works of Francis Bacon", *History of European Ideas*, vol. 32, nr. 3, pp. 249-262.

Jendrysik, Mark (2015), "Fundamental Oppositions: Utopia and the Individual", in Clint Jones and Cameron Ellis (ed.), *The Individual and Utopia: A Multidisciplinary Study of Humanity and Perfection*, Farnham, Surrey, Ashgate, pp. 27-43.

Jones, Clint / Cameron Ellis (2015), "Introduction", in Clint Jones and Cameron Ellis, *The Individual and Utopia: A Multidisciplinary Study of Humanity and Perfection*, Farnham, Surrey, Ashgate, pp. 1-8.

Jowitt, Claire (2002), "'Books will speak plain'? Colonialism, Jewishness and Politics in Bacon's *New Atlantis*", in Bronwen Price (ed.), *Francis Bacon's New Atlantis: New Interdisciplinary Essays*, Manchester and New York, Manchester UP, pp. 129-155.

Kenyon, Timothy (1983), "The Problem of Freedom and Moral Behaviour in Thomas More's *Utopia*", *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, vol. 21, nr. 3, pp. 349-373.

Levitas, Ruth / Lucy Sargisson (2003), "Utopia in Dark Times: Optimism/Pessimism and Utopia/Dystopia", in Raffaella Baccolini and Tom Moylan (ed.), *Dark Horizons: Science Fiction and the Dystopian Imagination*, New York and London, Routledge, pp. 13-27.

Lux, Jonathan E. (2014), "'Characters reall': Francis Bacon, China and the Entanglements of Curiosity", *Renaissance Studies*, vol. 29, nr. 2, pp. 184-203.

Metz, Cade (2017), "Elon Musk Isn't the Only One Trying to Computerize Your Brain", *WIRED*, 31 March, wired.com/2017/03/elon-musks-neural-lace-really-look-like, accessed 12 April 2024.

Mitchell, Robin (2017), "How Elon Musk's Neuralink and Bryan Johnson's Kernal Are Bridging the Biological-Digital Gap", *All About Circuits*, 4 June, allaboutcircuits.com/news/elon-musk-neuralink-bryan-johnson-kernal-bridging-biological-digital-gap, accessed 12 April 2024.

More, Thomas (1965), *Utopia*, in Edward Surtz and J. H. Hexter (ed.), *The Complete Works of St. Thomas More: Utopia*, Vol. 4, New Haven and London, Yale UP.

Moylan, Tom (1986), *Demand the Impossible: Science Fiction and the Utopian Imagination*, New York, Methuen.

Pohl, Nicole (2010), "Utopianism after More: the Renaissance and Enlightenment", in Gregory Claeys (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Utopian Literature*, Cambridge, Cambridge UP, pp. 51-78.

Price, Bronwen (2002), "Introduction", in Bronwen Price (ed.) *Francis Bacon's New Atlantis: New Interdisciplinary Essays*, Manchester and New York, Manchester UP, pp. 1-27.

Reiss, Timothy J. (1973), "Structure and Mind in Two Seventeenth-Century Utopias: Campanella and Bacon", *Yale French Studies*, vol. 49, pp. 82-95.

Roggen, Vibeke (2008), "A Protean Text: *Utopia* in Latin, 1516-1631", in Terence Cave (ed.), *Thomas More's Utopia in Early Modern Europe: Paratexts and Contexts*, Manchester, New York, Manchester UP, pp. 14-31.

Spinozzi, Paola (2016), "Acerba illa vita velut carcere atque aculeo. Health or Death in More's *Libellus vere aureus:* Early Modern Thought and Contemporary Debate", *Utopian Studies*, vol. 27, nr. 3, pp. 586-600.

Surtz, Edward / J. H. Hexter (1965), "Commentary", in Edward Surtz / J. H. Hexter (ed.), *The Complete Works of St. Thomas More: Utopia*, Vol. 4, New Haven and London, Yale UP, pp. 255-570.

Surtz, Edward (1965a), "Introduction: Part II", in Edward Surtz / J. H. Hexter (ed.), *The Complete Works of St. Thomas More: Utopia*, Vol. 4, New Haven and London, Yale UP, pp. cxxv-clxxxi.

— (1965b), "Introduction: Part III", in Edward Surtz / J. H. Hexter (ed.), *The Complete Works of St. Thomas More: Utopia*, Vol. 4, New Haven and London, Yale UP, pp. clxxxiii-cxciv.

Suvin, Darko (2003), "Theses on Dystopia 2001", in Raffaella Baccolini / Tom Moylan (ed.), *Dark Horizons: Science Fiction and the Dystopian Imagination*, New York and London, Routledge, pp. 187-200.

The Bible. Authorized King James Version with Apocrypha (1997), ed. by Robert Carroll and Stephen Prickett, Oxford and New York, Oxford UP.

Utopia (2013-2014), created by Dennis Kelly for Channel 4, directed by Marc Munden and Rebekah Wray-Rogers, written by Dennis Kelly and John Donelly. Season 1 and 2 aired from 15 January 2013 to 12 August 2014.

Vieira, Fátima (2010), "The Concept of Utopia", in Gregory Claeys (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Utopian Literature*, Cambridge, Cambridge UP, pp. 3-27.

Weinberger, Jerry (1976), "Science and Rule in Bacon's Utopia: An Introduction to the Reading of the *New Atlantis*", *The American Political Science Review* vol. 70, nr. 3, pp. 865-885.

— (2017), "On Bacon's New Atlantis", in Jerry Weinberger (ed.), *New Atlantis and the Great Instauration* [2nd Edition], Chichester, Wiley Blackwell, pp. 133-157.

Yoran, Hanan (2010), *Between Utopia and Dystopia: Erasmus, Thomas More, and the Humanist Republic of Letters*, Lanham, Md, Lexington Books.

Politics and Crisis

2.1. "Tott'ring Fortune / Who at her certain'st reels": Shakespeare's Politics of Chance

Mirka Horová

Univerzita Karlova / Prague

ABSTRACT

This chapter discusses Shakespeare's politics of chance by tracing the subversive potential of Fortune in selected history plays. It first lays out the medieval model of the wheel of fortune and its moral implications before summarising the particulars of early modern depictions of Fortune, where the Classical, pre-Christian attributes of the goddess regain prominence after centuries of clerical suppression. From this early modern iconography, reflected in Renaissance books of emblems, the emergent moment of uncertainty and chance is traced in Shakespeare's drama. From an overview of his use of the word "fortune" and its particular gendering (Fortune as a fickle woman wreaking havoc), key examples of the use of Fortune ranging from the comedic to the elegiac are identified in his history plays, related in each case to moments of political, existential, and ethical crisis. Since the concept of Fortune is necessarily tied to theories of time, the chapter also addresses Shakespeare's use of Fortune as a vehicle of change in a humanist perspective, where one's life is tied to Fortune but where Fortune, too, may be, to a certain degree, influenced by human action. This discussion is anchored in Lucretian *clinamen* on the one hand, and Machiavelli's notions of *virtù* and *occasio* on the other. The coda focuses on the unforeseen contingencies of Fortune in our own recent history, tied to the first year of the Trump presidency (2016-2017).

Practice dwindling. A mighthavebeen. Losing heart.
Gambling. Debts of honour. Reaping the whirlwind. (...)
Weathercocks. Hot and cold in the same breath.
Wouldn't know which to believe.
— Joyce, "Aeolus", *Ulysses*

Orléans: O seigneur! Le jour est perdu. Tout est perdu!
Dauphin: Mort de ma vie! All is confounded, all!
Reproach and everlasting shame
Sits mocking in our plumes! O méchante fortune!
— Shakespeare, *Henry V*, Act IV, Scene 5

Every man shift for all the rest, and let / No man take
care for himself, for all is / But fortune.
— Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, Act V, Scene 1

The title quotation, deeming fortune symptomatically deceptive even as one reaches the "certain'st" summit of success, comes from the closing scene of the late, contested collaborative play *The Two Noble Kinsmen* (5.4.20-21).[1] Their debatable provenance aside, the lines serve as more than an apt epigraph for our "darker purpose", capturing the "reeling", unpredictably subversive moment of Fortune. The very concept of Fortune, in her various classical, medieval and early modern permutations, has served as a philosophical or religious template of coming to terms with the moment of crisis and its aftermath. Fortune's wheel, the iconic *rota fortunae* made eminent in the many emblematic representations, duly and unfailingly revolves in the medieval model, with the figure of the goddess enthroned or standing by the wheel, her hand firmly on its handle, featuring the implacable four stages of the never-ending cycle of all things, commonly signified by the metaphor of the ascending and diminishing figure of the king: *regnabo – regno – regnavi – sum sine regno* [I shall reign – I reign – I reigned – I do not reign, literally "I am without reign"].

This medieval model of Fortune – exemplified by the figure of the goddess controlling the wheel, yet ideologically subsumed under Christian dogma, transformed into a symbol of the imperfections of the post-lapsarian world, overseen by an omnipotent Christian God, bringing about, with implacable, steady rhythm, the ups and downs that befall all living things, represented in turn by the ascending and descending moment on the wheel – is still present

in much of Shakespeare's work. As Phyllis Rackin recapitulates, "the medieval model for describing the progress of human life in time was the wheel of fortune, an endlessly recurrent cycle of rising and falling, designed to show the transience of earthly glory" (Rackin, 1990: 6).

However, this medieval model is increasingly challenged in the early modern period by the revival of the ancient, classical attributes of Fortune – represented by a figure of a blindfolded (naked or sparsely dressed) woman balancing walking or standing on a revolving stone sphere, often suspended in the air. In this model of Fortune taken up and developed by early-modern visual art,[2] the cosmic role of the goddess is exemplified by attributes highlighting hazard and precarious vicissitudes – in other words, the impending moment of imbalance on the revolving sphere upon which the goddess walks or rests. In fact, the image of a "blind woman standing on a round stone", "a ball of fortune" (Robinson, 1946: 214),[3] echoes all the way back to the ancient Greek goddess Tyche, symbolising *kairos* (opportunity or propitious moment, later reconfigured as *occasio*). Revolving across time in recurring iconographic representations, as Daniele Maiano attests in his recently published book on the representation of Fortune in archaic and republican Italy: "In later literary evidence, Fortuna is occasionally represented as standing in precarious balance on a spherical boulder to represent her instability" (Maiano, 2018: 21).[4] This representation of Fortune is different from both the earlier Roman model of the goddess Fortuna steadily steering, holding a *gubernaculum* [rudder] or carrying a cornucopia, or indeed the medieval figure of the enthroned but otherwise disempowered Fortuna controlling her wheel as a kind of moral clockwork – "an assistant of the Christian God, she no longer stood for pure arbitrariness, but rather for the decrepitude of all that is worldly" (Brendecke and Vogt, 2016: 2). This re-emergent *contemptus mundi* directly linked to Fortune connects the Stoic tradition of frowning upon worldly ambition with the later, specifically Christian, moral philosophy. Looking back and channelling the pagan iconography, Fortune is once again increasingly prone to "reeling" and "tott'ring" in the emergent early-modern reinterpretation of the universe which re-employs older classical models of the goddess's attributes and paraphernalia.

We shall now briefly address some of the intricacies of Shakespeare's ample and varied use of Fortune before moving on to specific examples in his political dramas and history plays to discuss the aesthetic effects and ethical repercussions of attributing political intrigue and war strategy to elements of contingency. This ongoing research seeks to uncover wider implications of Shakespeare's conceptualisation of Fortune, discussed in relation to the crises unfolding through diplomacy, intrigue and war as well as to traditional,

providential models of history, and, finally, to explore parallels in relation to the crises of political representation in our current times.

Shakespeare uses the word "fortune" nearly four hundred times (375 times, to be exact – 328 simply as "fortune", forty-seven times in the genitive, and twice in the Latinate form of "Fortuna", with a considerable dose of panache in each case: Pistol's devil-may-care "*Si fortuna me tormenta, spero me contenta*" in the final scene of *Henry IV, Part Two*, and Armado in *Love's Labour's Lost*, who remarks flippantly on the "*fortuna della Guerra*").[5] By comparison, Ben Jonson uses the word "fortune" or its genitive form only 121 times in his plays. War and the sea were the traditional domains of the ancient goddess Fortuna, as Armado's and Pistol's lines, uniquely aligned in linguistic kinship in their Italian and mongrel mix of Romance languages, respectively, rather neatly attest to. As Michael Witmore expounds,

> Fortune, the pagan goddess and poetic abstraction [and its] resurgence in early modern iconography and poetic imagery has been extensively documented over the course of this century. Gendered female because of her unpredictability, Fortune presided as a deity over the seas and war but could also be invoked as the cause of any outcome that could not be predicted in advance. (…) Fortune assumes the narrative position of an agent or actor who can be credited with events that have no immediate organizing cause. (Witmore, 2001: 23)

In a typically patriarchal gendering, Fortune is fickle and unreliable, hence, or indeed because, "a woman". And these gendered aspects are naturally copiously exploited in Shakespeare's work – from the many intricate examples of Fortune's calumny, she is deemed "a strumpet" (*Hamlet*, 2.2.231), "outrageous" in her torturous metaphorical "slings and arrows" (*Hamlet*, 3.1.75), irredeemably "*méchante*" (*Henry V*, 4.5.6), or, perhaps more interestingly yet, she is "the false huswife" whose "wheel" Cleopatra threatens to "break" in her epic outrage at Antony's untimely death (*Antony and Cleopatra*, 4.15.13).[6]

Gendering aside, Fortune in Shakespeare functions as a trope symbolising the inscrutability, contingency, and the unavailing arbitrariness of existence, called upon in moments of crisis – political, existential, and ethical. While images of Fortune in Shakespeare are often tied to comedic elements, they are seldom straightforwardly comical – in this respect we might recall, for instance, Feste's

famous acerbic remark to Malvolio, channelling the inexorable retributive potential of Fortune in the dour determination of time, which somewhat darkens the ending of that festive comedy: "and thus the whirligig of time brings in his revenges" (*Twelfth Night*, 5.1.372-373). From the tragic spectrum of Shakespeare's oeuvre, we might recall Margaret's fateful reprimand to the murderous exploits of Richard III: "Thus hath the course of justice whirl'd about / and left thee but a very prey of time" (*Richard III*, 4.4.105-106).

While in both the examples above "Fortune becomes the instrument of retributive justice" (Pierce, 1971: 114), the following passage from *Henry V* is one of the very few exceptions where Fortuna functions comedically, featuring the famous four-nation stereotypes supplying comic relief in *Henry V*, resonating with the above-mentioned classical iconography of the free-wheeling, "reeling" and "tott'ring" Fortune as opposed to the medieval model, where the goddess is enthroned above or sat perfectly stable by the wheel which she turns with her hand (rather than balancing blindfolded on the rolling sphere as she does here):

> PISTOL. Bardolph, a soldier, firm and sound of heart,
> And of buxom valour, hath, **by cruel fate,**
> **And giddy Fortune's furious fickle wheel,**
> **That goddess blind,**
> **That stands upon the rolling restless stone** –
> FLUELLEN. By your patience, ensign Pistol. Fortune is painted blind, with a muffler afore her eyes, to signify to you that Fortune is blind; and she is painted also with a wheel, to signify to you, which is the moral of it, that she is turning, and inconstant, and mutability; and variation; and **her foot, look you, is fixed upon a spherical stone, which rolls, and rolls**, and rolls. In good truth, the poet makes a most excellent description of it. Fortune is an excellent moral. (*Henry V*, 3.6.25-38; my emphasis)

While the outstanding comedic effect of the tiresome exchange between the relentlessly wordy Welsh parody that is Fluellen and the boastful English ensign Pistol, a descendant of the *miles gloriosus* of Roman comedy, is rather self-evident, our attention here is drawn to the striking familiarity with which the two simple soldiers discuss the iconography of Fortune on her "spherical stone, / which rolls, and rolls, and rolls". Poetic licence aside, this points to the contemporary ubiquity of Fortune-related imagery[7] – in the vastly popular books

of emblems, recognized as well as mocked here, in Fluellen's tedious retelling, for their often "naïve and far-fetched correspondences" (Hoyle, 1971: 526)[8] – but also in various pamphlets and other marginalia in steady circulation on the streets of early-modern England. Clearly, Shakespeare is playing with something that is familiar to the audience, groundlings included, not only aimed at entertaining the educated few in the upper tiers – after all, Henslowe's choice of name for his new playhouse set to rival the Globe is a case in point, attesting to the uncontested prevalence of Fortune and her symbolism at the time.

Continuing with, indeed developing the "excellent moral" of Fortune, our second passage exemplifies a slightly different case, where the chance and contingency that Fortune epitomizes serve as a structural model or a lesson for a unifying, transhistorical moral argument about politics and the fatefully recurring moment of crisis. Spanning across the second tetralogy, it is the narrative arc of Northumberland, the treacherous "ladder" facilitating Bolingbroke's illicit succession in *Richard II*, prophesied by the deposed Richard as the precedent for the future betrayal of Henry IV. This results in powerful dramatic (and historic) irony attesting to Fortune's "giddy" and "fickle" ways as well as to her moral "retributive potential" over time. Our quotation comes from *Henry IV, Part 2* – the dying king reflects on the Northumberland rebellion in conversation with Warwick; he stresses the baffling, arbitrary beginnings of fateful future events, thwarting the ambition and schemes of man. While the following segment recalls the famous lines from Seneca's *Agamemnon*: "As Fortune rotates the headlong fates of kings" (cited in Parkinson, 1946: 214), Shakespeare's Henriad is also performing universal mutability, one of the chief philosophical concerns of the Renaissance, in close emblematic relation to the medieval, providential, moral arch, privy to view in transhistorical perspective only – there is a sense that "[b]ehind her apparent whims, Fortune is part of [the] cosmic order", "tied to an inflexible causal chain", "appear[ing] fickle only in the limited human perception" (Goy-Blanquet, 2003: 148).

> KING HENRY IV. O God! **that one might read the book of**
> **fate,**
> **And see the revolution of the times**
> **(...)**
> **how chances mock,**
> **And changes fill the cup of alteration**
> **With divers liquors!**
> **(...)**

'Tis not ten years gone
Since Richard and Northumberland, great friends,
Did feast together, and in two years after
Were they at wars: it is but eight years since
This Percy was the man nearest my soul,
Who like a brother toil'd in my affairs
And laid his love and life under my foot
(...)
To WARWICK
Richard
(...)
Did speak these words, now proved a prophecy?
'Northumberland, thou ladder by the which
My cousin Bolingbroke ascends my throne;'
Though then, God knows, I had no such intent,
But that necessity so bow'd the state
That I and greatness were compell'd to kiss:
'The time shall come,' thus did he follow it,
'The time will come, that foul sin, gathering head,
Shall break into corruption:' so went on,
Foretelling this same time's condition
And the division of our amity.
WARWICK. There is a history in all men's lives,
Figuring the nature of the times deceased;
The which observed, **a man may prophesy,**
With a near aim, of the main chance of things
As yet not come to life, which in their seeds
And weak beginnings lie intreasured.
Such things become the hatch and brood of time
(*2 Henry IV*, 3.1.45-92; my emphasis)

While the king's interpretation is tied to the providential moral and the retributive potential of Fortune, Warwick's lines – "the main chance of things" "which in their seeds / And weak beginnings lie intreasured", eventually becoming "the hatch and brood of time" – combine the Ovidian rhetoric of universal mutability[9] with the distinctive diction of Lucretian atomism. While, as highlighted earlier, the unifying moral line of Providence still looms over Shakespeare's historical perspective in these plays, the gap between this

providential rigidity of history and the extreme cosmos of pure chance is bridged in this momentous caveat of Warwick's. Reading these lines with the Lucretian concept of *clinamen* in mind, the slightest "swerve" or "weak beginnings" and "seeds" have the potential to eventually enact "the main chance of things", thus becoming "the hatch and brood of time" itself.[10] As Stephen Greenblatt usefully summarizes the crucial impact of atomist philosophy on the early-modern mindset: "The swerve is the source of free will", "for if all motion were one long predetermined chain, there would be no possibility of freedom. Cause would follow cause from eternity, as the fates decreed. Instead, we wrest free will from the fates" (Greenblatt, 2011: 188-189).

The king's last words relating to the exchange signal towards a characteristically cold, pragmatic solution: "Are these things then necessities? / Then let us meet them like necessities. / And that same word even now cries out on us" (*2 Henry IV*, 3.1.93-95). This pragmaticism betrays a seminal shift in the worldview of the epoch, epitomised by the character and strategies of Henry IV –

the medieval outlook, steeped in the predetermined confines of Christian teleology represented by Richard II gives way to the new humanist perspective, where fates can be forged by the hands of able men. As Brendecke and Vogt propose in their introduction,

> with Fortuna's help, a new relationship of the individual to history can be marked out, thus enabling us to follow the two great epochal trends of the early modern period, namely the development of a new understanding of historical time (and open future) and the constitution of a self-consciously acting subject (*idem*, 2-3).

This new, "self-consciously acting subject", is at the centre of Machiavelli's vastly influential treatise on politics and power, *The Prince*, and is very much tied in with the agonistic aspects of civilisation and history-making. Chapter 25 is dedicated to the role of Fortuna in human affairs, offering various strategies of withstanding her whims or even subduing her to one's ambition. Although Machiavelli concedes that Fortune is like a "violent river" that "floods" and "destroys" everything in its path and everyone "flees" from it, he posits that she is "the arbiter of [only] half of our actions", leaving "the other half" "for us to govern" – crucially, Fortune only obliterates where man has neglected to exert his *virtù*, his daring enterprise and free will (Machiavelli, 1998: 98). Machiavelli's Fortune is conceptualised as something between an elemental fury and a malleable woman

who, in a traditionally patriarchal understanding, favours resolution, ambition and audacity, even aggressive boldness, rather than timidity and inaction. However, it does not pay off to rely on her entirely, as one tends to lose when she inevitably turns. And here we must return to Shakespeare's Henriad – and one of its reflective transhistorical arcs, namely the Northumberland rebellion. As Rackin expounds:

> The conservative critics of the mid-twentieth century saw the plays as essentially medieval, the expressions of conservative ideology, cautionary tales based upon a political theology that attributed all the sufferings of the Wars of the Roses to the deposition, two generations earlier, of the divinely anointed Richard II. The newer generation, in our time as in the sixteenth century, prefers the Machiavellian version of historical causation, explaining history in terms of force, fortune, and practical politics. (Rackin, 1990: 43)

The Machiavellian relationship to Fortune is neatly epitomised by Northumberland's son and heir, Sir Henry Percy, aptly nicknamed Hotspur – in Shakespeare's rendition cast as a younger man than history would have had it, ever endeavouring to ride even the unfortunate spur of the moment to his utmost advantage. Shakespeare's Hotspur is playing at high stakes – recalling Machiavelli's treatment of the principle of *occasio*, he is playing a highly competitive game of chance, grabbing the propitious moment at full force. Crucially for Hotspur, described at the beginning of *Henry IV, Part 1* as "sweet Fortune's minion and her pride" (*1 Henry IV*, I.1.83), the prince who is in tune with the times will prevail, while the prince whose actions are out of joint with the times will fail. Hotspur needs must fail, according to Machiavelli's explication, because he relies wholly on Fortune, and, crucially, because he is also *out of joint* with the times (Machiavelli, 1998: 100). In a wider historical context pertaining to Shakespeare's portrayal of these epoch-breaking events, with "the ascension of Henry IV, medieval England recedes into the past. Medievalism, in fact, becomes anachronistic. Hotspur, who attempts to live by the code of feudal chivalry, seems misplaced in the world of Henry IV" (Rackin, 1990: 136). The following exchange illustrates the acute rhetorical as well as dramatic build-up, with specific seminal lines highlighted in bold:

HOTSPUR. **Sick now! droop now! this sickness doth infect**

The very life-blood of our enterprise;

(...)

Yet doth he give us bold advertisement,

That with our small conjunction we should on,

To see how fortune is disposed to us;

(...)

EARL OF WORCESTER. Your father's sickness is a maim to us.

HOTSPUR. A perilous gash, a very limb lopp'd off:

And yet, in faith, it is not; his present want

Seems more than we shall find it: **were it good**

To set the exact wealth of all our states

All at one cast? to set so rich a main

On the nice hazard of one doubtful hour?

It were not good; for therein should we read

The very bottom and the soul of hope,

The very list, the very utmost bound

Of all our fortunes.

(...)

EARL OF WORCESTER. But yet I would your father had

been here.

(...)

think how such an apprehension

May turn the tide of fearful faction

And breed a kind of question in our cause;

(...)

HOTSPUR. You strain too far.

I rather of his absence make this use:

It lends a lustre and more great opinion,

A larger dare to our great enterprise,

Than if the earl were here; for men must think,

If we without his help can make a head

To push against a kingdom, with his help

We shall **o'erturn it topsy-turvy down.**

(*1 Henry IV*, 4.1.29-85; my emphasis)

This speech resonates with Hotspur's deliberate, passionate raising of the stakes – by goading the hazard, Hotspur posits a moment of heightened possibility and sheer opportunity, "a larger dare" at "a rustling time". This daring attempt to combine *virtù* and *occasio* thrives on the inherent instability of structures and systems, proposing to use contingency as an advantage in political and military strategy. While Shakespeare (and history) does not ultimately favour Hotspur's persistently agonistic strategy, combined with riding the random tide of events, as we have seen in our reading of Machiavelli's exposition on Fortune, Hotspur's case nonetheless marks another vital point in the transgressive development of early-modern conceptualisation of history and history-making – for where a "providential view of history constructs an unbroken chain of historical causation", "a Machiavellian view interrupts that chain, constructing each age as unique, the product of Fortuna, or accident, and individual will" (Rackin, 1990: 54).

Here, then, we are on the cusp of a world increasingly governed by untrammelled contingency and conflict alone – simultaneously looking back to classical models but also fast-forwarding in time, past the empirical paths of established humanism and the emerging Enlightenment, and into the uncertain, anarchic modernity of non-chartable history. If, as Peter Vogt unfolds, the seventeenth century developed theories of probability, modern, empirical ways of accounting for contingency and chance, rendering Fortuna a sign of obsolete pre-modern mentality (Vogt, 2016: 148), Shakespeare's particular use of Fortune in the second tetralogy performs the shift from the medieval model of history ruled exclusively by Providence to the early-modern mindset's restoration of the classical emblematic Fortuna balancing blind on her rolling sphere. Shakespeare's Fortuna looks back to the Antiquity, bringing back to some degree a pagan sense of the cosmos ruled by indiscriminate chance as well as inscrutable, retributive Fates, but also adumbrating various inklings of something more unsettling and irregular, a world of the "singular randomness of events":

> [t]he forces operating in history are not controlled by destiny or regulative mechanisms but respond to haphazard conflicts. They do not manifest the successive forms of a primordial intention and their attraction is not that of a conclusion, for they always appear through the singular randomness of events. (…) the world of effective history knows only one kingdom, without providence or final cause, where there is only the 'iron hand of necessity shaking the dice-box of chance.' (Foucault, 1977: 154-5, citing Nietzsche's aphorism 130 from *Daybreak*)

Fortune's changing attributes and related symbolism across millennia also betray a certain irony – from the inscrutable, unstable Fortune of classical iconography to the medieval wheel handled by a stationary Fortuna in the service of divine Providence and its dependable morality, the symbolism turns back, in Renaissance emblems, to the reeling Fortuna on the rolling stone, marking the revival of Greek and Roman philosophy and iconography. This is followed, in turn, by empirical disbelief and the consequent abolishing of Fortuna as obsolete in the light of modern models of accounting for chance, such as theories of probability, and a seemingly final eclipse of Fortune in the onslaught of Enlightenment thought. Eventually, however, we come to the crisis of the Enlightenment project and its empirical line of enquiry, leading to the re-incorporation of the inevitability of chance as an inherent universal factor shaping human history, exemplified in Nietzsche and subsequent modern philosophy, and further still to our current understanding of the cosmos, in which traditional causality is challenged by the infinitesimally complex quantum interactions. However, the crowning historical irony epitomised by Fortune is not in the fluctuating ethos of science here, but in the recent, prominent political recourse to populism, characterised by blatant mistrust in empirical proof *per se*, disavowing expert opinion, marking a divide between scientific progress and political strategy sharper than we have seen in the last few centuries. If key 20th-century's crises were propitiated by the power structures' avowal of malignant pseudo-scientific theories such as eugenics, it is fair to say that some of our contemporary problems stem from the power structures' disbelief in scientific prognoses (most prominently exemplified by the climate crisis).

Increasingly today, we see the flourishing of the post-secular, but also aberrations of political discourse such as the post-factual or post-truth, which present an unprecedented impasse to political rhetoric and logical argumentation. Recent years have seen the ascent (and thankfully, the due descent after one term in office) of a new figure of impending chaos, a powerful force of global agency whose absolute unpredictability and off-the-cuff approach to politics unleashes daily mayhem and disorder unto the world – the 45th President of the United States, Donald Trump. The media have not been blind to this apparent symbolism, and there are dozens upon dozens of satirical depictions of President Trump as the new apparent personification of Classical Fortune, thwarting the logical efforts of contemporary socio-political science and rational enquiry and introducing instead onto the established scene of top global politics a stubborn strategy of personalised mayhem hardly conceivable before, culminating in the infamous attack on the Capitol on 6 January 2021.

Just over a month after Trump's inauguration as 45th President of the United States, on 1 March 2017, the magazine *Fortune* featured a telling, Fortune-evoking cover, cut diagonally in half, speculating as to the economic "rise" or "fall" of the Trump administration. In just a few months spanning the election campaign and the settling into his presidency, the eminent political scene has been forced to become accustomed to and rather urgently think of new strategies to tackle the political-theory-defying phenomenon of "fake news", the disenfranchisement of established mainstream media and a general overhaul of traditional political rhetoric, blatantly disavowing of any kind of critical debate. It is hardly surprising, then, that President Trump's impending presidency had also been associated with the fateful symbolism of tarot cards – such as the cover of the 2016's issue of *The Economist*'s special prognostic annual, *The World in 2017*, featuring eight tarot cards (among them "The Wheel of Fortune", Angela Merkel, Marie Le Pen and Geert Wilders tied to it, combining the *regnabo – regno – regnavi – sum sine regno* model and the Catherine wheel), with the card titled "Judgment" depicting a Fortune-like Donald Trump wearing coronation regalia, sat balancing on a rolled-up American flag on top of planet Earth, while the 2016 Republican primaries were in turn often visually associated with another timeless emblem, that of the *navis stultorum* [the ship of fools].

As ever at a time of historical crisis, with empirical lines of enquiry failing, many frustrated critical responses had called on the Bard, consulting the political lessons of his plays in an attempt to come to grips with this untimely turn of events – perhaps most famously Stephen Greenblatt's *Tyrant: Shakespeare on Power*, which never explicitly names its immediate correlative, but asks unambiguously: "how is it possible for a whole country to fall into the hands of a tyrant?" (Greenblatt, 2018: 1). Troubled by Fortune's recently rejuvenated afterlife, we may recall Cleopatra's fateful words: "'Tis paltry to be Caesar. / Not being Fortune, he's but Fortune's knave, / A minister of her will" (*Antony and Cleopatra*, 5.2.2-4). The concept of Fortune has always been used to account for the cosmic inevitability of crisis, functioning within various teleological frameworks as a coping mechanism – its recent revival in political cartoons by the expert mainstream press is non-religious, of course, but attests to the frustration of critical enquiry which has resorted to this ancient emblematic iconography. In a world where politics is regularly played out on social media but also, in a more sinister fashion, increasingly governed by social media and its clandestine manipulative algorithms, we have learned, to paraphrase Pistol's line from *Henry V*, to "beware giddy Trump's furious fickle tweets".

Notes

1. All Shakespeare quotations are from Thompson *et. al.*, 2011. Act V seems to be most often attributed to Shakespeare, alongside Act I, while the rest traditionally falls to Fletcher. This line is spoken by the Second Knight in an exchange among three anonymous knights, just before Palamon learns of Arcite's untimely fall from horseback, signalling the momentous turn of Fortune where impending death takes the former victor, rendering his reward (Emilia) to Palamon.

2. See the early- and mid-16th-century engravings by Albrecht Dürer and Hans Sebald Beham, or books of emblems such as Alciato's vastly popular *Emblemata* (1531).

3. "In ancient art the wheel was an attribute of Isis, of Nemesis, and of Dike, as well as of Tyche and Fortuna" (Robinson, 1946: 212).

4. "Fortuna standing on a globe in precarious balance also appears in Plutarch's *De fortuna romanorum*" (*idem*, 186).

5. Concordance of Shakespeare's complete works, http://www.opensourceshakespeare.org/concordance/, accessed 12 April 2024.

6. "In *Antony and Cleopatra*, forms of the word *fortune* appear forty-one times, or almost twice as often as in other high-frequency plays like *Lear* or *Timon of Athens*" (Williamson, 1968: 423).

7. The poet complimented by Fluellen for his "most excellent description" is most probably Ovid: see the numerous examples of Fortune's emblematic fickleness in *Epistulae ex ponto*. In the Henriad, "pictorial and proverbial emblems are a pervasive, self-conscious and exuberant quality of the imagery of all four of the plays" (Hoyle, 1971: 512).

8. Claudia Corti, in her enlightening chapter on the emblematic aspects of Shakespeare, makes a direct correlation between Alciato's Fortuna and Hermes emblem ("*Ars naturam adiuvat*") and Fluellen's description: "The correspondence with one of the most famous among Andrea Alciato's emblems is exact" (Corti, 2017: 30). However, the correlation is only partial, as while Fluellen mixes in the traditional medieval attribute, the wheel, this is lacking in the cited 1621 pictorial variation of Alciato's emblem.

9. As Ovid puts it in his *Amores*, "*omnia vertuntur*" – everything changes (in the fortunes of man).

10. While examining Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura* and its impact on the development of the Renaissance outlook, Greenblatt explains that the Lucretian concept of the "swerve", called in the original "*declinatio*, *inclinatio*, or *clinamen* (...) is the most minimal of motions, *nec plus quam minimum* (2.224). But it is enough to set off a ceaseless chain of collisions" (Greenblatt, 2011: 188).

Works cited

Alciato, Andrea (1531), *Emblemata*, Augsburg, Heinrich Steyner.

— (1591), *Emblemata*, Leyden, Officina Plantiniana, digitised archive and variorum of Alciato's *Emblemata*, http://www.emblems.arts.gla.ac.uk/alciato/emblem.php?id=A91a098, accessed 12 April 2024.

Ayscough, Samuel (1827), *An Index to the Remarkable Passages and Words Made Use of by Shakspeare* [sic]*, Calculated to Point Out the Different Meanings to which the Words are Applied*, London, Thomas Tegg, *et al*.

Brendecke, Arndt / Vogt, Peter (2016), "The End of Fortuna and the Rise of Modernity", in Arndt Brendecke and Peter Vogt (ed.), *The End of Fortuna and the Rise of Modernity: Contingency and Certainty in Early Modern History*, Oldenbourg, De Gruyter, pp. 1-14.

Cohen, Simona (2014), *Transformations of Time and Temporality in Medieval and Renaissance Art*, Leiden and Boston, Brill.

Corti, Claudia (2017), "Shakespeare the emblematist", in Michele Marrapodi (ed.), *Shakespeare and the Visual Arts: The Italian Influence*, London and New York, Routledge, pp. 29-42.

Chapman, Richard (1950), "The Wheel of Fortune in Shakespeare's Historical Plays", *The Review of English Studies*, vol. 1, nr. 1 (January), pp. 1-7.

Foucault, Michel (1977), "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History", in D. F. Bouchard (ed.) *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, Ithaka, NY, Cornell UP, pp. 139-165.

Goy-Blanquet, Dominique (2003), *Shakespeare's Early History Plays: From Chronicle to Stage*, Oxford, Oxford UP.

Greenblatt, Stephen (2011), *The Swerve: How the Renaissance Began*, London, Vintage.

— (2018), *Tyrant: Shakespeare on Power*, London, The Bodley Head.

Hoyle, James (1971), "Some Emblems in Shakespeare's Henry IV Plays", *ELH*, vol. 38, nr. 4 (December), pp. 512-527.

Machiavelli, Niccolò (1998), *The Prince*, ed. and trans. Peter Bondanella / Mark Musa, Oxford, Oxford UP.

Maiano, Daniele (2018), *Fortuna: Deity and Concept in Archaic and Republican Italy*, Oxford, Oxford UP.

Marrapodi, Michele (2017), "Introduction: *Timon of Athens*: The Theatre of the Visual", in Michele Marrapodi (ed.), *Shakespeare and the Visual Arts: The Italian Influence*, London and New York, Routledge, pp. 1-26.

Pierce, Robert B. (1971), *Shakespeare's History Plays: The Family and the State*, Columbus, OH, Ohio State UP.

Rackin, Phyllis (1990), *Stages of History: Shakespeare's English Chronicles*, Ithaka, NY, Cornell UP.

Robinson, David M. (1946), "The Wheel of Fortune", *Classical Philology*, vol. 41, nr. 4 (October), pp. 207-216.

Thompson, Ann / David Scott Kastan / Richard Proudfoot (ed.) (2011), *Arden Shakespeare Complete Works*, London, Bloomsbury.

Vogt, Peter (2016), "Introduction: The Death of Fortuna and Two Versions of Modernity", in Arndt Brendecke / Peter Vogt (ed.), *The End of Fortuna and the Rise of Modernity: Contingency and Certainty in Early Modern History*, Oldenbourg, De Gruyter, pp. 125-150.

Wells, Stanley / Gary Taylor / John Jowett / William Montgomery (ed.) (2005), *The Oxford Shakespeare: The Complete Works*, Oxford, Oxford UP.

Williamson, Marylin L. (1968), "Fortune in 'Antony and Cleopatra'", *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, vol. 67, nr. 3 (July), pp. 423-429.

Witmore, Michael (2001), "Accidents and an Aristotelian Tradition", *Culture of Accidents: Unexpected Knowledges in Early Modern England*, Stanford, Stanford UP.

2.2. The Thane and the Scullery Maid: Making Shakespeare Address the Populist Crisis

Paul Franssen
Universiteit Utrecht

ABSTRACT

Shakespeare's works are nowadays occasionally used to counter populism. This is fraught with problems, however: not only did he write for an age in which the common people were often looked down on, but also in the present his works are often perceived as being highbrow, so that they are unlikely to appeal to the very groups that are most influenced by populist rhetoric. Nevertheless, Shakespeare's works do offer some of the raw material and ideas about human nature that can be used and reinterpreted for our age to analyse the causes of populism. This will often be in relatively free adaptations of Shakespeare's texts, and the target audience may well be those highbrow audiences that may need to reflect on the root causes of populism in their own political and social choices. The argument is illustrated with a wide range of recent Shakespeare stage adaptations from various countries.

Arguably, most of the crises that have beset Europe over the last few years have had one common denominator: the disgruntlement of large sections of the population under the banner of nationalist populism. On the face of it, finding a Shakespearean angle to this problem should not be too difficult. In the Jack Cade rebellion in *2 Henry* VI, as well as the often quoted supposedly Shakespearean additions to the *Book of Sir Thomas More*, we find obvious analogues to modern popular discontent that may be, and in fact have been, used to address modern-day problems; and in the Roman plays, such as *Julius Caesar* and *Coriolanus*, we also find representations of groups of common citizens that, under the influence

173

of a gifted but unprincipled rhetorician, or because of the arrogance of a patrician opponent, turn into the stereotypical "many-headed multitude" (*Cor*, 2.3.16-17).[1] Yet, in so far as such analogies focus on the stupidity of the masses, then and now, they are problematic, if only because Shakespeare wrote during and for an age in which modern concepts like democracy and egalitarianism would have been anathema. Simply reproducing seventeenth-century class prejudice, however much Shakespeare may qualify it, would hardly be a productive way of making the early-modern age illuminate our current crisis.[2]

One way of avoiding this problem is through turning to those of Shakespeare's plays that do not foreground the fickleness of the masses, but focus on individuals, as seen in their various dimensions, not as flat characters or classist stereotypes. Besides, Shakespeare often comes to us in adaptations – one might say, the moment Shakespeare's works are transferred from the page to the stage, we inevitably shape them in accordance with our own values and preconceptions. Accordingly, I will examine a spin-off of a Shakespeare play, and attempt to show how it is relevant to today's populist crisis, without losing touch with ideas inhering in Shakespeare's text. I will also broaden my argument to show how many other contemporary Shakespeare productions, irrespective of the degree of textual rewriting that they involve, take the populist crisis as their chief point of departure. Finally, I will investigate, not just how Shakespeare is, or may be made, relevant to current problems, but also whether, and if so, how, he may be deployed in helping to solve them. I will take most of my examples from my own country, the Netherlands, but also include examples of Shakespeare appropriations in the Anglophone world and in France.

1.

When I was casting about for a topic to illuminate the connection between Shakespeare and crisis, an image appeared before my mind's eye, of a young woman with reddish curls, dressed in a white farthingale, who enthusiastically welcomed us, the audience, to a performance of her tragi-comic one-woman show, *Lady M*, in the Hague, on 26 November 2016.[3] The actress, Annemarie de Bruijn, introduced herself as the original of that Gentlewoman to Lady Macbeth who makes a brief appearance in Shakespeare's play (5.1), together with a doctor, to witness and discuss her lady's illness, her sleepwalking and obsessive handwashing. She is pleased and grateful that such a large audience

has turned up to listen to her side of the story—which, or so she claims, would have merited far more than that brief appearance as a "bit part" in a single scene of Shakespeare's play (Koerselman, 2016: 21). Her story is that of a rise in fortunes, from a humble scullery maid who has to put out the dustbin, to Lady Macbeth's Lady in Waiting. At the outset, she hero-worships her mistress, her lord, and particularly the king, and takes great pride in making the latter's bed as meticulously as possible. Then her great chance in life comes when she inadvertently witnesses the murder of Duncan while hiding underneath his bed. She is discovered there by Lady Macbeth, who buys her silence by offering to promote her to her Lady in Waiting. Over her simple white garment, the former scullery maid now wears a rich red bodice, as a token of her social rise but also of her sharing in the guilt of the Macbeths; and like her betters, she pays for her elevation by not being able to sleep anymore. Again, like her betters, she is caught up in the maelstrom of events that follow – which she all narrates and mimes in a lively manner. The collapse of Macbeth's kingdom causes friction between herself and her mistress. When she blames Lady Macbeth for bringing about this state of affairs, the lady replies: "you only live by the grace of me", and threatens her with a knife (Koerselman, 2016: 57). This is the moment when the Gentlewoman changes history, or so she claims, by grabbing the knife and frenziedly killing her mistress: "will you please remember that I committed her suicide", is her final request to the audience (*idem*, 59).

The general idea behind *Lady M* may seem familiar. Rewriting Shakespeare's tragedies from the perspective of minor characters, particularly of a lower class, has been with us at least since Tom Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* (1966). It has recently been expanded to other authors and genres, such as Jane Austen, whose *Pride and Prejudice* has been turned upside down by viewing it from the servants' perspective in Jo Baker's novel *Longbourn*. Yet, there also seems to be a further dimension to this particular play, *Lady M*: whereas the focus on the bystanders of a Shakespeare play or Austen novel usually serves to show that ordinary people also matter, and deserve to be taken seriously, here it is the scullery maid herself that demands to be acknowledged, first by her mistress, and later, most of all, by Shakespeare; and she does so in a disturbingly rancorous tone. In that respect, she is somewhat reminiscent of the Shakespeare-inspired monologues by Tim Crouch, which also "speak for the under-represented – the minor character, the young person, the audience", by giving the floor to these, often disgruntled, minor characters themselves (Crouch, 2011). Most worryingly, the scullery maid in *Lady M* feels entitled to the world's attention because she has committed a murder. The reason why she kills Lady Macbeth is that the latter

is obsessed with her own feelings of guilt, while ignoring those of her Lady in Waiting. The latter responds bitterly: "Well, what a coincidence! The reason I can't sleep anymore, my Lady, is because your conscience is too heavily laden" (Koerselman, 2016: 56). As for Shakespeare, she protests that he has relegated her to a single scene, has given her even less coverage than the drunken porter, and most of all obscured her moment of historical significance, by merely stating that Lady M, "as 'tis thought, by self and violent hands took off her life" (*idem*, 21). "[A]s if I never happened", the Gentlewoman protests: "not interesting enough to be blamed for this, Shakespeare must have thought" (*idem*, 58-59). She ends the play by a loud exclamation: "FUCK SHAKESPEARE!" (*idem*, 59). Feeling neglected and undervalued, this former member of the repressed underclass, once she has come into a little significance, turns into a complete monster, who will assert her importance, if necessary even by priding herself on having committed a murder, her sole claim to fame. "Tonight, I exist, thanks to you", she tells her audience (*idem*, 21).

The revenge of the repressed, one might say. As such, this play can also be interpreted as a response to one of the major causes of the current crisis in Europe: the rise of populism, interpreted as the reaction of simple people, who perhaps have a legitimate grievance against those that have long exploited them, yet react by extreme measures once they sense that they have the power to do so. Shakespeare is the vehicle for a rumination on this phenomenon. The fact that *Lady M* originally dates from 2006, though it was revised since, does not invalidate that reading as anachronistic: as far as the Netherlands are concerned, the first phase of the populist revolution came to a head with the steady rise in the election polls of maverick politician Pim Fortuyn, followed by his assassination in 2002. Geert Wilders trod in his footsteps with his extreme right-wing Freedom Party as of 2004. Both relied on their appeal to large groups of voters who felt left out of the economic boom of the preceding years, and threatened by immigration and globalisation, which were also increasingly associated with the concept of Europe; and in their frustration and rancour, these voters turned to extremist politicians who promised redress, even if the measures they proposed looked unworkable. The 2016 election victory of Donald Trump, helped by those whom Hillary Clinton had rather ungenerously called "deplorables", can be seen as another instance of this impulse.

2.

The main issue at hand, however, is whether it is really Shakespeare that has put this political development on the agenda. Is this play an instance of facing the crisis with the help of Shakespeare's play? Or is this merely an appropriation of Shakespeare for ends of which he was blissfully unaware? One might argue that the latter is obviously the case. After all, the Gentlewoman's rancour expresses itself also in a rejection of Shakespeare ("fuck Shakespeare!") for having neglected her role in history – as indeed, one must agree that Shakespeare's tragedies and histories, for all their occasional sympathy for the plight of commoners, do concentrate on the suffering of princes and noblemen. Besides, this play is a totally new creation, and not really Shakespeare's work at all.

To begin with the latter point, one might object that this sort of appropriation also happens in productions that are more closely based on Shakespeare's own texts. In fact, many recent productions of Shakespeare's plays comment on aspects of the populist crisis, with various degrees of directness. For example, the 2014 staging of *Julius Caesar* by the Dutch company Het Zuidelijk Toneel framed the Roman tragedy about the rise and assassination of a populist leader as an analogue to the rise and death of Pim Fortuyn – for instance through the choice of a bald-headed actor for Caesar, and by casting a young man as Calpurnia, Caesar's wife: Fortuyn was bald and openly gay. Similarly, in the USA, there was the controversial 2017 Public Theater production of *Julius Caesar* in New York's Central Park, with the eponymous hero bearing a clear resemblance to Donald Trump. These, too, were appropriations of Shakespeare that confronted populism, but used his own text throughout. In a 2018 Dutch production of *Othello* directed by Daria Bukvić, largely but not entirely following Shakespeare's text, Iago was made to speak Pim Fortuyn's slogan "At your service". Though the entire production was in Dutch, these words were in English, so that they echoed the English line with which Fortuyn used to whip up support for his party; ironically so, since his own command of English was notoriously weak, and the groups in society where he found most support were those that felt left behind by the globalisation that used English as its preferred vehicle. In Bukvić's conception, Iago was a narcissistic personality from the lower ranks, intelligent, yet feeling— not entirely without justification—that those belonging to the higher orders, like Cassio and Desdemona, patronised and despised him. This motivated his racism, his misogyny, and his hatred of those of superior rank, like Cassio, whom he also victimised. So one might go on. In 2016, there were two British productions of

King Lear with its original text largely intact: Deborah Warner's Old Vic production, starring Glenda Jackson as Lear, as well as Tom Morris's staging at the Bristol Old Vic, featuring Timothy West. Both of these productions were widely interpreted by reviewers as comments on the root causes and dangers of Brexit. In 2018, the centrifugal dangers of populism throughout the EU in general, as exemplified by Brexit, were even more clearly the subject of a joint Belgian-Dutch production of *Lear* by Het Zuidelijk Toneel and Het Paleis, directed by Simon de Vos, this time on the basis of a thoroughly rewritten and modernised text. These examples suggest that, for contemporary theatre makers who wish to address the rise of populism and its attendant problems, such as racism and isolationism, one important vehicle to do so is through appropriating Shakespeare's tragedies. In such productions the original text may either be left largely intact or be totally rewritten, in accordance with national traditions: whereas Anglophone countries tend to respect Shakespeare's words, Flemish and Dutch productions feel free to mine the plays for what Brecht called their "Materialwert", their value as material that may be taken apart and reassembled to make meaning (Guntner, 2008). Either way, Shakespeare can be and has been fielded against the rise of populism.

That still leaves us with the issue of the relation between modern uses of Shakespeare and the meaning supposedly inherent in his works. The more thoroughly Shakespeare's text is rewritten to bring out the parallels between it and our modern predicament, the more urgent the question becomes: is this still Shakespeare's supposedly authoritative voice that speaks against populism? Or is it the modern author who is hijacking Shakespeare, ventriloquising to make the bard say whatever the modern age, or at least, sections of the modern audience, desire to hear him say? In this respect, *Lady M* is a rather extreme example in that it deviates so far from Shakespeare's original text, yet I would argue that it also follows Shakespeare's lead in some essentials. The one-woman show translates the story of Macbeth to a lower social level that modern audiences can "relate to". The character of the Gentlewoman may be largely an addition to the play, yet her development from a modest, long-suffering drudge into an upwardly mobile yet vengeful and violent person is similar, even analogous, to Macbeth's development. Originally content to do Duncan's dirty work, Macbeth is praised by everyone for his nobility and valour. Having defeated the enemies of the realm, he is offered a reward for his efforts: he will take the place of the Thane of Cawdor, one of the traitors he has defeated. Yet, rather than satisfying him, this promotion whets his ambition for more. As David Norbrook has argued, Macbeth may even have some legitimate expectations of being offered more: the succession to the throne. As a number of modern critics have pointed out, there is some evidence

178

that in Macbeth's lifetime Scotland was an elective monarchy, and that this was also known to some of Shakespeare's contemporaries. The very fact that Duncan names Malcolm as his successor means that this was not a foregone conclusion, so Macbeth may have a legitimate reason to feel aggrieved at being bypassed in favour of the king's son (Norbrook 1987: 94). William C. Carroll agrees that in the alternative version of the story by the Scottish historian George Buchanan, Macbeth is "more clearly wronged" than in Shakespeare's tragedy (Carroll, 2004: 71). Similar arguments have been put forward by Albert Rolls (2002), Alvin Kernan (1995: 78-79), and Alan Sinfield (1992: 102). Macbeth may have good cause to feel neglected, then, but nevertheless his response, murdering Duncan, is a bloody and far from honourable deed. Ironically, had Macbeth not done that, he would not have ended up as Shakespeare's protagonist.

Summarised like this, we can see that there are parallels between Shakespeare's hero and the Gentlewoman. Both are originally modest, hard-working servants, whose labour is not always rewarded fairly. Then both are promoted, but this only whets their appetite for more. Both then react violently when frustrated; and because of their violent crime, each is immortalised as the protagonist of a play – though the scullery maid still complains that it is not Shakespeare who turned her into a protagonist. In this view, the main difference between Macbeth and the scullery maid is class: her career is a demotic version of Macbeth's aristocratic rebellion. This is underlined when the scullery maid describes and mimes how she is doing all kinds of dirty household work, such as collecting the eggs in the chicken coop and putting out a dirty and heavy dustbin while a rat runs down her back, while at the same time Macbeth and Banquo are carving up the king's enemies on the battlefield (Koerselman, 2016: 23-26). Clearly, the scullery maid's work is presented as a mock-heroic version of what Macbeth does; yet, as is often the case in a mock-heroic, the comparison calls attention not just to the incommensurability of warfare and domestic labour, but also to the underlying similarities, despite the class difference.

Obviously, this analysis also leaves aspects of Shakespeare's play out of account: the metaphysical prompting of the witches, and Lady Macbeth's appeal to her husband's manhood, for which there are no equivalents in the scullery maid's story; or the fact that Macbeth kills his first victim, Duncan, for the sake of calculated ambition rather than out of spontaneous rancour, as seems to be the case with the scullery maid-turned-gentlewoman; or that he subsequently turns into a serial killer. In other words, *Lady M* presents us with one possible view of Macbeth out of a large range of possibilities; just like the Julius Caesar resembling Pim Fortuyn or Donald Trump is just one possible Julius Caesar. Such

179

adaptations and appropriations flatten the original, make a choice out of several possible readings, to make their Shakespeare speak to issues alive in the present. "Shakespeare doesn't mean: *we* mean *by* Shakespeare", as Terence Hawkes would have it (Hawkes, 1992: 3); yet we can do so only because Shakespeare's text lends itself to so many different readings as it is so rich.

What does this mean, then, for our question: does Shakespeare help us face the current crisis in Europe? I think the answer to that must be: Not automatically; not in himself; but he can be used to shed light on such issues, because of the great variety of human motivation that is present in his work. The roots of populism can be extracted from his plays if we look for them diligently enough. It must be a process of cooperation, in which we bring our questions, perhaps even our own embryonic answers, to his texts; and in which he can then (often) yield the raw material on the basis of which we can formulate and shape our answers more precisely.

In their foreword to the published text of *Lady M* and other "Monologues not by Shakespeare", as the volume is called, the authors themselves are unsure to what extent they are using Shakespeare's material, and to what extent they are reading their own concerns into his works. In one passage they say: "The continued dreaming and thinking about the characters created by Shakespeare, however small, repeatedly offers a new view of the, as yet, untold world that he managed to hint at with the smallest turn of phrase" (de Bruijn / de Bruijn, 2016: 7); in another, they say: "We proudly present to you the results of our research into what can be read between the lines, or into what Shakespeare, possibly out of pure foolhardiness, never wished to reveal" (*idem*, 2016: 9). Is it discovering what Shakespeare had to say about issues like populism, even in the smallest hints? Or is it reading such modern issues into his work? As I have suggested, it may be a little of both. Shakespeare is a point of reference for us to start discussing European crises; yet we also need to read into his lines—or investigate how others, such as theatre makers, have done so for us.

3.

In that sense, of helping to diagnose the problem, Shakespeare is useful; but there are also limits to his usefulness. It is questionable whether *Lady M*, or any of the other productions mentioned here, will stop the rise of populism. This is not a matter of the impotence of art generally, of Auden's conviction that

"poetry makes nothing happen" (Auden, 1976: 197), but of the elitist image of the theatre in particular, in our modern age. Particularly a production of or related to a Shakespeare play is likely to appeal more to a class of spectators who have a considerable degree of education, who will not immediately see their own plight reflected in that of the chambermaid, and who are unlikely to support populist parties to begin with. Certainly, in a Dutch setting, a theatre production is more likely to preach to the converted than to reach any new audiences.

Obviously, one must make allowances for cultural differences between countries. If in the Netherlands, Shakespeare is the epitome of high culture, and as such mistrusted or seen as incomprehensible by large sections of the population, this is not necessarily the case elsewhere. In France, initiatives like the Printemps des Collégiens project have reached out to a wide variety of schoolchildren, inviting them to stage abbreviated Shakespeare plays, selected by the pupils themselves. The schools cooperating on this project came from very diverse neighbourhoods and ranged from a bilingual school catering to the globalised elite to institutions of secondary education with a largely immigrant population. Yet the latter, too, were successful in staging a Shakespeare play like *Measure for Measure*, whose chaste Isabella, the pupils explained, appealed to their own values (March: 2023). Even in the Netherlands, the 2018 free adaptation of *King Lear* thematising Brexit and the spectre of European disintegration was designed as a production partly aimed at schoolchildren of age 16 and over. In the United States, Shakespeare productions have been staged successfully in prison settings, for and sometimes by the prisoners: there the high status of Shakespeare's drama was not regarded as a problem but as an asset, because it gave the inmates who had mastered, say, *Hamlet*, a chance "to reclaim their social status" by giving them "access (...) to the ownership of some cultural capital" (Herold, 2016: 1201, 1203).

Useful as such Shakespeare-based productions for (and by) special audiences may be, they will only ever reach relatively small sections of the population: those for whom they are seen as educational or therapeutic. Plays like *Lady M*, though relatively accessible because of its tragi-comic elements, and most of the other examples of Shakespeare against populism that I have mentioned, have as their primary function to help us understand the problem of the gap that has opened up within societies, which can be and has been exploited by populist politicians. However, it is this very gap, which also separates those who will and those who will not voluntarily go to a theatre, that disqualifies Shakespeare from bridging that gap. For ways to make the broader population reflect on the premises of populist politics, perhaps different media might be more successful: one thinks of television

soap operas or thrillers that, though not necessarily based on Shakespeare's work, share with his plays the ability to look at matters from several perspectives, including those of refugees, racial and religious minorities, women, LGBT, and so on. Possibly also pop songs with protest lyrics might catch on.

There is one more important point to be made here: the gap that has opened up in society is not necessarily due to those of lower education alone. As Andrew Murphy has argued, the fact that Shakespeare is now widely regarded as high-brow and incomprehensible, which was not yet the case in the nineteenth century, is partly due to the snobbism of Modernist critics. These promulgated the myth of Shakespeare as a difficult writer by the abstruse language of their analyses, thus turning a right understanding of his works, according to their criteria, into an admission test for the cultured elite (Murphy, 2008: 184). For that reason alone, those well-educated citizens who have passed that test, who love to go to the theatre and see a Shakespeare play or spin-off there, might also consider looking in the mirror that a production like *Lady M* offers to them: though they may not see their own image reflected in the scullery maid turned Lady in Waiting, they may discern a resemblance between themselves and her manipulative and exploitative betters, the Macbeths. Solutions to populism may lie not just in preaching to those who fall to its lure, but also in listening to their genuine grievances and taking those seriously.

Admittedly, this takes us far from the text of *Lady M*, and even further from Shakespeare's own texts, except possibly the additions to *Sir Thomas More*; yet, the scullery maid's angry reaction to being neglected might give rise to uncomfortable questions about the grievances of her modern-day equivalents, such as: who has benefitted from globalisation and the free labour market, and who has paid the price for it? Were the voices of all groups heard equally when decisions were made, over the past half century or so, about attracting foreign labour, about housing guest workers and refugees, and about schemes to integrate them in society? Without subscribing to the so-called solutions offered by populism, such considerations may form the basis of a renewed understanding between various groups in society.

Notes

1. See Wiegandt, 2016: 71 and passim. Cf. Rumour's reference to "the blunt monster with uncounted heads, / The still-discordant wav'ring multitude", *2 Henry 4* induction, 18-19. All Shakespeare quotations are from Thompson *et al.*, 2011.

2. That Shakespeare was far from elitist has been argued by Patterson, 1989.

3. See Koerselman, 2016 for the full English text.

Works cited

Auden, W.H. (1976), "In Memory of W.B. Yeats", in Edward Mendelson (ed.), *W.H. Auden: Collected Poems*, London, Faber and Faber, pp. 197-198.

Baker, Jo (2013), *Longbourn: The Servants' Story*, New York, Vintage Books.

Carroll, William C. (2004), "'Two Truths Are Told': Afterlives and Histories of Macbeths", *Shakespeare Survey*, vol. 57, pp. 68-80.

Crouch, Tim (2012), *I, Shakespeare*, London, Oberon Books [2011].

De Bruijn, Sarah / Annemarie de Bruijn (2016), "Foreword", Het Vijfde Bedrijf, *Monologues not by Shakespeare*, trans. Marlous Lang-Peterse, Amsterdam, International Theatre and Film Books, pp. 7-9.

Guntner, Lawrence (2008), "Rewriting Shakespeare: Bertolt Brecht, Heiner Müller, and the Politics of Performance", in Dirk Delabastita / Jozef de Vos / and Paul Franssen (ed.), *Shakespeare and European Politics*, Newark, University of Delaware Press, pp. 179-195.

Hawkes, Terence (1992), *Meaning by Shakespeare*, London, Routledge.

Herold, Niels (2016), "Shakespeare Behind Bars", in Bruce R. Smith (ed.), *The Cambridge Guide to the Worlds of Shakespeare*, Cambridge, Cambridge UP, vol. 2, pp. 1200-1207.

Kernan, Alvin (1995), *Shakespeare, the King's Playwright: Theatre in the Stuart Court 1603-1613,* New Haven and London, Yale UP.

Koerselman, Annechien / Annemarie de Bruijn / David Geysen / Radna Diels (2016), *Lady M*, Het Vijfde Bedrijf, *Monologues not by Shakespeare*, trans. Marlous Lang-Peterse, Amsterdam, International Theatre and Film Books, pp. 19-59.

March, Florence (2023), "Shakespeare and Citizenship in France", in Claire Hansen / Jacqueline Manuel / Liam Semler (ed.), *Reimagining Shakespeare Education: Teaching and Learning through Collaboration*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, pp. 41-53.

Murphy, Andrew (2008), *Shakespeare for the People: Working Class Readers, 1800-1900,* Cambridge, Cambridge UP.

Norbrook, David (1987), "*Macbeth* and the Politics of Historiography", in Kevin M. Sharpe and Steven N. Zwicker (eds.), *Politics of Discourse: The Literature and History of Seventeenth-Century England*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, U of California P, pp. 78-116.

Patterson, Annabel M. (1989), *Shakespeare and the Popular Voice*, Cambridge MA., Blackwell.

Rolls, Albert (2002), "*Macbeth* and the Uncertainties of the Succession Law", *The Shakespeare Newsletter*, vol. 52, Summer issue, pp. 43-44, 48.

Sinfield, Alan (1992), *Faultlines: Cultural Materialism and the Politics of Dissident Reading,* Oxford, Clarendon.

Stoppard, Tom (1967), *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, London, Faber and Faber.

Thompson, Ann / David Scott Kastan / Richard Proudfoot (ed.) (2011), *Arden Shakespeare Complete Works*, London, Bloomsbury.

Wiegandt, Kai (2016), *Crowd and Rumour in Shakespeare*, Abingdon, Routledge [2012].

2.3. From a Corrupt Eden to Bio-power: War and Nature in the Henriad

Martin Procházka

Univerzita Karlova / Prague

ABSTRACT

In the Henriad, nature and war coexist. In *Richard II*, nature is identified with the authority of the symbolic "other body" of the king, as well as with the ideal state of existence, which is forever lost. In opposition to nature, war is the "infection" in the collective body of the nation, caused by the corruption of the king and his advisors. In the introductory monologue of the monarch in *1 Henry IV* the link between nature and war becomes imminent and threatening. The emergence of Falstaff in this catastrophic situation does not merely represent the debasement of the unity of the humans with nature symbolised by the "grotesque body", the main agency of the "carnivalesque". Falstaff also represents the alienation of common humanity from the unity of nature when he denies its authority. Falstaff's influence on Prince Hal, particularly the debasement of the grotesque body of the people and its recuperative function in the carnival, engenders Hal's pragmatic approach to politics. When Hal is enthroned and leads the nation into an aggressive war, his actions acquire the features of modern political technologies leading finally to genocide. When Henry V talks in disguise with common soldiers, he no longer makes a distinction between royal and divine authority. Taking war as a just punishment for potential or undetected crimes of his subjects, he subscribes to the modern ways of policing the population, or in Foucault's terms, managing it as the "bio-power".

In the Henriad, nature and war coexist, and their closeness implies deep changes of their conventional understanding. Representations of nature in Shakespeare's mature works differ from those in the works of his predecessors and contemporaries. A crucial distinction is the absence of a Neoplatonic

perspective, which informs the works of Edmund Spenser (Waller, 1994: 76-77) and considerably influences those of other early modern poets, such as Michael Drayton (Ewell, 1983: 515-525), Sir Philip Sidney (Sinfield, 1980: 29) or Ben Jonson (Sanders, 2010: 33-34; 324-325).

Just one example out of many: in the fragmentary seventh book of Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, nature is the origin and principle of the cosmic order (called "*Natures Sergeant*" 7.7.4)[1] and the source of its laws. Although it is almost identified with God ("God of Nature" 7.6.35) and His omnipotence ("all, both heauenly Powers, & earthly wights, / Before great Natures presence should appeare" 7.6.36; "Nature *soone / her righteous Doome arades* 7.7.0), her identity is based on paradoxes ("Great *Nature*, euer young yet full of eld,/ Still moouing, yet vnmoued from her sted; / Vnseene of any, yet of all beheld 7.7.13) and her personification transcends the differences of gender and sex ("Yet certes by her face and physnomy, / Whether she man or woman inly were, / That could not any creature well descry" 7.7.5). As a result, sovereign Nature can graciously tolerate "Mutability", but only as a power helping individual beings on their way to heavenly perfection. Anticipating Hegel's theodicy, Book VII of *The Faerie Queene* represents change in nature as a mere temporary alienation from primeval perfection which must be later overcome by the return of individual beings to their eternal, unchangeable identities ("They are not changed from their first estate; / But by their change their being doe dilate: / And turning to themselues at length againe, / (...) / (...) they raigne ouer change, and doe their states maintaine" 7.7.58).

In contrast to this discourse relating nature permanently to its divine origin, the representation of nature in the Henriad is subject to "the revolution of the times", in the course of which "chance's mocks / And changes fill the cup of alteration / With divers liquors" (*2 Henry IV*, 3.1, 45, 51-2).[2] Anticipating theories of chaos, this representation emphasizes fortuitous temporality pervading nature seen as a universal process, which, envisaged in human dimensions, acquires a deterministic character. Warwick's "history in all men's lives" can be grasped as a cumulative representation of the past, a set of diverse temporal processes and events ("Figuring the natures of the times deceas'd;"), whose respectful understanding ("The which observed") can reveal future potentialities of historical development based on general probability – "the main chance of things / As yet not come to life, who in their seeds / And weak beginnings lie intreasured" (*2 Henry IV*, 3.1.75-80).[3] Even though the passage may draw on Renaissance typology, where the past events prefigure the future ones, it completely abstracts from the metaphysical framework of this typology, the Divine Providence. The book which King Henry longs to read is neither the Scripture, nor even the Book of Nature, but "the book of fate" (3.1.44).

The probabilistic as well as determinist framework of universal "history" in *2 Henry IV* informs the representations of nature in the whole Henriad. These are characterized by the growth of their pragmatic character: the shift from Nature as an ideal, which is the source of perfection as well as the objective of all existence, to nature as a power which has to be controlled and exploited for political and military purposes.

In *Richard II* nature is identified with the symbolic authority and "the body politic"[4] of the monarch ("This royal throne of kings, this scepter'd isle", *Richard II*, 2.1.40), yet this "body politic" is no longer "a theological idea" (Kantorowicz, 1957: 8ff). It is a presented as a fiction to be unravelled in the course of the play. As Victoria Kahn points out: "Kantorowicz appears more interested in the way Shakespeare imaginatively anticipated the unraveling of the fiction of the king's two bodies" especially in the moment when "the fiction of the oneness of the [fictive] body breaks apart" (Kahn, 2009: 86; Kantorovicz, 1957: 31).[5] The "duplications" characteristic of the "two bodies of the king" also influence the verbal aspects of the representation of nature: "This fortress built *by nature for itself*" (2.1.43; emphasis added) and its cognates: "This *royal* throne of *kings* (...) / (...) / This *other* Eden" (2.1.40, 42; emphasis added). In this way, seemingly equivalent or "adequate"[6] notions are played "off against each other", confused or balanced again (Kantorowicz, 1957: 25-26). As a result, Platonic and Aristotelian principles of mimesis are unsettled and "the idea of a legislator" shifts "from the imitator of nature to the creator of laws ex nihilo" (Kahn, 2009: 87). The last changes mentioned had in most cases led to the glorification of poets and affirmation of the independence of their creation, often called "second nature".[7]

These features, however, do not characterize the representations of nature in *Richard II*. Here, nature as the corrupt "Eden" (2.1.42; "now bound with shame" 3.1.63) and the representation of the gradual loss of Richard's royal power ("the blushing discontented sun" shaded by "the envious clouds" 3.1.62, 64) is replaced by the allegory of a "garden (...) full of weeds" (3.4.44-45), which can no longer represent good government as a model[8] ("Showing as in a model our firm estate", 3.4.42).

Although John of Gaunt still believes that nature's "fortress" can protect "against infection and the hand of war" (2.1.43, 44), war evidently prevails, being identified with a disease, an "infection" (2.1.44) wasting the body politic, caused by the corruption of the king and his advisors. In this way, nature can no longer serve as a bond between the "two bodies of the king". And since the "body politic" of the king can no longer be represented as the actual location of power, political theology itself has to be transformed by means of fiction, whose "usefulness" consists precisely in dislocating power "from one particular place and one particular body" (Kahn, 2009: 95).

Anticipated by Kantorowicz, this solution is discussed at some length by Claude Lefort, who suggests that "democracy" is the only form of government representing power as "an *empty place*" and thus maintaining "a gap between the symbolic and the real", in order to show

> that power belongs to no one; that those who exercise power do not possess it; that they do not, indeed, embody it; that the exercise of power requires a periodic and repeated contest; that the authority of those vested with power is created and re-created as a result of the manifestation of the will of the people (Lefort, 1988: 225).

Lefort has also shown that this condition is not new but rather results from a process common to all changes of the representations of political and social power, namely the transfer "from one register to another (...) intended to ensure the preservation of a *form* which has since been abolished" (*idem*, 255). This, among others, implies two rather fatal flaws of democracy: First, the reactivation of the religious fiction, whose "efficacy is no longer symbolic but imaginary, (...) at the weak points of the social" (*ibidem*), where it can generate violent symbolic practices, such as those typical of nationalism or racism. Secondly, this internal instability of democracy appears to be, in Lefort's words, "the unavoidable – and no doubt ontological – difficulty democracy has in reading its own story" (*ibidem*) leading to the fundamental weakness of its political ideologies, where the notions like "n/Nature", or "the people" lose their meaning and performative power. It can almost be said that the ominous aspect of Lefort's approach consists in his effort to re-establish the "Theologico-Political" as an underlying pattern of all forms of government. In this way, the essential vulnerability of democracy and the imminence of civil war may almost appear as a 'natural' feature of somehow absurdly repeating history, where "falseness" and corruption grow to demand a radical response,[9] "the inward [i.e., civil] wars" (*2 Henry IV*, 3.1.102), as King Henry fears.

In the introductory monologue of the king in *1 Henry IV* the link between nature and war becomes imminent and threatening. "The other Eden" invoked by John of Gaunt (*Richard II*, 2.1.42) is not only corrupted, but also destroyed. Personified by a disfigured female body or face, where the mouth is as a mere opening gorged with blood[10] ("No more the thirsty entrance of this soil / Shall daub her lips with her own children's blood" *1 Henry IV*, 1.1.5-6), the land is drained ("channelled", 1.1.7) and mutilated by "trenching war" (1.1.7).[11] The polarization of the body

politic reaches down to the level of strife between individuals ("Those opposèd eyes", 1.1.9). As a consequence, the body politic is no longer that of the king but of the nation, and its near destruction is associated with a cosmic disaster ("like the meteors of a troubled heaven /All of one nature, one substance bred / Did lately meet in the intestine shock", 1.1.10-12). The last line of the passage represents the violence of civil wars by means of the image of a fierce hand-to-hand combat ("furious close of civil butchery", 1.10.13). The metaphor of war as "infection" in *Richard II* (2.1.44) is intensified in *1 Henry IV*: the birth of one of the rebel leaders and the representative of the exotic, 'barbaric' and demonized culture, the Welsh king Owain Glyndŵr, is described as a violent outbreak ("eruption") of disease ("Diseasèd nature oftentimes breaks forth / In strange eruptions" 3.1.25-26). Despite all effort to rectify the stereotyping of Wales and the Welsh in 3.1, the threat of acculturation (Howard, 1997: 1149), is looming large over the civil war in *1 Henry IV* and intensifies its catastrophic representations.

The imagery of war as a disease inaugurates also the scenes of the battle of Shrewsbury ("The day looks pale / At his distemp'rature.", 5.1.2-3). Metaphors of the disturbance of cosmic order are repeated in the exchange of the King and Prince Harry with the Earl of Worcester, one of the leaders of the rebels. The metaphorical image of the Earl represents him (and – synecdochically – the whole rebellion) as a star, which was moving "in [an] obedient orb" and giving "a fair and natural light" but has turned into "an exhaled meteor, / A prodigy of fear, and a portent / Of broachèd mischief to the unborn times" (5.1.16-21). This parallel between the disintegration of the body politic and the disruption of the macrocosmic order is extended beyond the limits of the present and near future. War represented as a cosmic disorder becomes a powerful omen of evil haunting "the unborn times".

The representation of war is further monumentalized in Hotspur's speech to his allies which uses the words "instruments", "embrace" and "courtesy" as syllepses, meaning both "musical instruments" and "weapons"; "friendly hug" and "grip in a close man-to-man fight"; "graciousness" and "chivalrous combat"; and ascribes them a cosmic ("heaven to earth") dimension: "Sound all the lofty instruments of war, / And by that music let us all embrace, / For, heaven to earth, some of us never shall / A second time do such a courtesy" (5.2.97-100). In this way, war becomes an ironical and perverted version of a cosmic dance, which at the beginning of *2 Henry IV* changes into a *danse macabre* in Northumberland's eschatological tirade:

Let heaven kiss earth! Now let not nature's hand
Keep the wild flood confined! Let order die!
And let this world no longer be a stage
To feed contention in a ling'ring act;
But let one spirit of the first-born Cain
Reign in all bosoms, that each heart being set
On bloody courses, the rude scene may end,
And darkness be the burier of the dead!
(*2 Henry IV*, 1.1.153-60)

This over-inflated image of civil war as the self-destruction of nature, order, representation ("And let this world no longer be a stage") and the body politic can be read as a coda of a specific history of representing based on the disintegration of the King's body politic and its transformation into the collective body of the nation. As Jean Howard has shown, further development of this representation will require "a complex illusion of temporal simultaneity" (*idem*, 1149). This is also in keeping with Benedict Anderson's definition of nation as an "imagined community" (1991: 6).[12]

The emergence of Falstaff in this catastrophic situation does not merely represent the debasement of the unity of the humans with nature symbolised by the "grotesque body", the main agency of the "carnivalesque" which, according to Bakhtin, "is not separated from the rest of the world", and in which "the cosmic, social and bodily elements are given (...) as an indivisible whole" (Bakhtin, 1984: 19).[13] Beyond this symbolic function, Falstaff represents the alienation of common humanity from the unity of nature, when he denies its authority, seeing "no reason in the law of nature" (*2 Henry IV*, 3.2.297) and valuing nature (and "time") only as random processes and opportunities for aggressive or calculating behaviour.[14]

At the end of the second part of *Henry IV*, nature is identified with death. When the king dies, "He's walked the way of nature" opposed to "our purposes" ("and to our purposes he lives no more"), as Warwick dryly states (5.2.4). In other words, the body politic is no longer represented by the body of the king, but defined by the "purposes" of the powerful, or rather, the strategic nature of power. A similar feature characterizes Falstaff's influence on Prince Hal. Falstaff's passionate entreaty, which identifies his obese body with the collective "grotesque body" of the carnival, "Banish plump Jack and banish all the world" (*2 Henry IV*, 2.5.439), is treated by Hal with ironic humour ("I do, I will", 2.5.439), which undermines the carnivalesque subversion of the preceding parodic game.

It can be said that the influence of Falstaff and his companions engenders Hal's pragmatic, strategic approach to politics: "Redeeming time, when men think least I will" (*1 Henry IV*, 1.2.195). Hal comes to understand fairly soon that an efficient political action cannot be based on political theology but draws from an unscrupulous, even criminal, use of "political technology" (Foucault, 1982: 780). He can "offend to make offence a skill" (1.2.194).

When Hal is enthroned and leads the nation into an aggressive war, his actions acquire the features of modern political technologies leading to genocide in later centuries (Foucault, 1978: 137).[15] When he talks in disguise to his soldiers, Williams and Bates, about justice and war, he denies his responsibility for the deaths of soldiers in his military campaign, comparing his subjects to potential criminals:

> Besides, there is no king, be his cause never so spotless, if it comes to the arbitrament of swords, can try it out, with all unspotted soldiers. Some, peradventure, have on them the guilt of premeditated and contrived murder; some of beguiling virgins with the broken seals of perjury; some making wars their bulwark, that have before gorged the gentle bosom of peace with pillage and robbery. Now, if these men have defeated the law and outrun native punishment, though they can outstrip men, they have no wings to fly from God. War is his beadle. War is his vengeance. So that here men are punished for *before-breach of King's laws*, in now the King's quarrel. (*Henry V*, 4.1.149-60, emphasis added)

Taking war as a just, though extra-legal, punishment for the potential or undetected crimes committed by his subjects, King Harry subscribes to modern strategy, not yet of the circulation of power in the network and "network-centric warfare" (Reid, 2003: 7), but to the "strategical model" of power, which has supplanted "the model based on law" (Foucault, 1978: 102; Reid, 2003: 13), whose representation was also the body politic of the king. In modernity, wars are not waged for the preservation of the king, but, as Foucault points out, "on behalf of the existence of everyone; entire populations are mobilized for the purpose of wholesale slaughter in the name of life necessity" (Foucault, 1978: 137): in the latter plays of the Henriad this takes the form of overcoming the threat of civil war. War also becomes an efficient means of policing the population, or in Foucault's terms, managing the "bio-power" (*idem*: 140ff). Seen in this context,

King Harry's strategies anticipate the ominous dictum of Carl von Clausewitz: "War is the continuation of *Politik* by other means", where the German word "*Politik*" means both "politics" and "policy", the latter meaning government control of the population (Foucault, 1988: 158-159).[16] As a result, the existence, which is at stake in modern wars, "is no longer the juridical existence of sovereignty" but "the biological existence of a population" (Foucault, 1978: 137).

It is important not to confuse this condition with that of the totalitarian state. As King Harry says, "Every subject's duty is the King's, but every subject's soul is his own" (*Henry V*, 4.1.164-165), articulating the position of the individual in a *liberal society* characterized by the responsibility towards the law combined with the freedom of choice. While the first one becomes increasingly problematic (as in Kafka's parable "Before the Law"), the second one is all the more restricted by the allegedly free market.

Notes

1. All quotations are from Spenser, 1995, with emphases added.

2. All quotations are from Greenblatt, 1997.

3. King Henry's and Warwick's speeches may be said to anticipate the main aspects of recent definitions of chaos: "sensitive dependence on initial conditions" ("the main chance of things / As yet not come to life, who in their seeds / And weak beginnings lie intreasured"), "topological mixing" ("Make (...) the continent, / Weary of solid firmness, melt itself / Into the sea" 3.1.46-48) and a number of "dense periodic orbits" ("Figuring the natures of the times deceased"). For mathematical definitions of these aspects see Hasselblatt and Katok (2003: 209-210).

4. Ernst H. Kantorowicz has identified the source of this representation in Edmund Plowden's transformation of the abstract legal concept of Sir John Fortescue. According to Plowden, "the Body politic includes the [king's] Body natural (...) [and] these two bodies are incorporated in one person" (Kantorowicz, 1957: 9).

5. Kahn has also demonstrated Kantorowicz's interest in the "duplications" revealed in the central scenes of *Richard II*: "The duplications [are] (...) all one and all simultaneously active in Richard: 'Thus play I in one person, many people' (5.5.31) (...). Moreover, in each one of those three scenes we encounter the same cascading: from divine kingship to kingship's 'Name' and from the name to the naked misery of man" (Kantorowicz, 1957: 27).

6. On mimesis as "*adequatio*" ("the measured quality of proportion to a model" – Hobson, 2001: 138), see Derrida, 1981: 219.

7. "It is therefore of Poets thus to be conceiued, that if they be able to deuise and make all these things of them selues, without any subiect of veritie, that they be (by manner of speech) as creating gods" (Puttenham, 1904: 2). "[T]he artist is a God-like creator of a second nature" (Abrams, 1971: 274).

8. "The common-sense relationship between a model and its copy, which is one of cause and priority, is disturbed". This "mime" (Derrida uses Mallarmé's "Mimique") "delivers activity which is reduplication without origin" (Hobson, 2001: 136). In this way, "law and form" are no longer "in a due proportion" (*Richard II*, 3.4.42). However, as Derrida shows in *The Truth in Painting*, the word "model" can also function as a "fetish", that is, as a replacement for something banned or taboo (*idem*: 141). In *Richard II*, the "unweeded garden", whose "herbs", are "swarming with

caterpillars" cannot present the unity of the "two bodies of the king" and the representation of truth as *adequatio* becomes impossible.

9. See Warwick's speech in *2 Henry IV*, 3.1.81-87: "Such things become the hatch and brood of time; / And by the necessary form of this / King Richard might create a perfect guess / That great Northumberland, then false to him, / Would of that seed grow to a greater falseness, / Which should not find a ground to root upon, / Unless on you". In terms of political theology, the fortuitous, chaotic process of history, "the hatch and brood of time" (see above) is represented not only as "necessities" (3.1.87), but also as ongoing corruption ("grow to greater falseness", 3.1.85) which must be stopped by force.

10. The ambiguity of the personification derives from the violence of disfiguration which obscures the difference between the face and other body parts.

11. The word "trench" has been used in its modern military meaning since 1500 and appears frequently in Shakespeare. The original etymology of the verb "to trench" is to maim, mutilate, cut off ("trench", *Online Etymology Dictionary* (2001-2024), https://www.etymonline.com/search?q=trench, accessed 15 March 2024).

12. Instead of imagining the community in a temporal simultaneity ("along time" as Benedict Anderson has it), which includes both the mythical time and the cycles of growth and cultivation (the gardening and planting metaphors as a model for good government in *Richard II*, 3.4.), the country is seen in a "transverse, cross-time" simultaneity, "marked not by prefiguring and fulfilment, but by temporal coincidence" (*idem*, 24-25). Anderson has pointed out that religious communities, including monarchies based on the authority of sacred kingship, are not imagined at certain historical moments but always with respect to the whole course (and end) of time represented in their sacred texts. Every historical moment is simultaneously a moment in the totality of mythical time, which accounts for the spiritual authority of individuals (priests, kings). The links between individual moments are meaningful only because of this mythical time, providential or sacred history.

13. "The material bodily principle in grotesque realism is offered in its all popular and festive aspect. The cosmic, social and bodily elements are given here as an indivisible whole. And this whole is gay and gracious (...) contrary to modern canons, the grotesque body is not separated from the rest of the world" (Bakhtin, 1984: 26).

14. "Let time shape, and there an end" (*2 Henry IV*, 3.2.298).

15. "If genocide is indeed the dream of modern power, this is not because of the recent return to the ancient right to kill; it is because power is situated and exercised at the level of life, the species, the race, and the large-scale phenomena of the population" (*ibidem*).

16. Foucault draws on the work of Johann Heinrich Gottlob von Justi (1717-71), *Grundsätze der Polizeywissenschaft* (*Elements of Police*, 1756), which distinguishes *Politik*, dealing with the internal and external enemies of the state, and *Polizei* as the employment of measures improving the quality of citizen's life. Clausewitz does not make this distinction, using the term *Staatspolitik* which incorporates both meanings (Clausewitz, 1832-34: xi).

Works cited

Abrams, Meyer Howard (1971), *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition*, New York, Oxford UP.

Anderson, Benedict (1991), *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, second edition, London, Verso [1983].

Clausewitz, Carl Philip Gottlieb von (1832-1834), *Vom Kriege*, first edition, https://static.clausewitz-gesellschaft.de/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/VomKriege-a4.pdf, accessed 19 March 2024.

Derrida, Jacques (1981), *Dissemination*, trans. Barbara Johnson, Chicago, The U of Chicago P.

Ewell, Barbara (1983), "From Idea to Act: The New Aesthetics of Drayton's *Englands Heroicall Epistles*", *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, vol. 82, nr. 4, pp. 515-525.

Foucault, Michel (1978), *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1, trans. Robert Hurley, New York, Random House.

— (1982), "The Subject and Power", *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 8, nr. 4, pp. 777-795.

— (1988), "The Political Technology of Individuals", in Luther H. Martin / Huck Gutman / Patrick H. Hutton (ed.), *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault*, London, Tavistock, pp. 145-162.

Greenblatt, Stephen (ed.) (1997), *The Norton Shakespeare*, New York, Norton.

Hasselblatt, Boris and Anatole Katok (2003), *A First Course in Dynamics with a Panorama of Recent Developments*, Cambridge, Cambridge UP.

Hobson, Marian (2001), "Derrida and Representation: Mimesis, Presentation and Representation", in *Jacques Derrida and the Humanities: A Critical Reader*, ed. Tom Cohen, Cambridge, Cambridge UP, pp. 131-149.

Howard, Jean E. (1997), "Introduction" to *1 Henry IV*, in *The Norton Shakespeare*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt, New York, Norton, pp. 1147-1155.

Kahn, Victoria (2009), "Political Theology and Fiction in *The King's Two Bodies*", *Representations*, vol. 106, nr. 1, pp. 80-97.

Kantorowicz, Ernst H. (1957), *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology*, Princeton, Princeton UP.

Lefort, Claude (1988), *Democracy and Political Theory*, trans. David Macey, Cambridge, Cambridge UP.

Online Etymology Dictionary (2001-2024), https://www.etymonline.com/, accessed 19 March 2024.

Puttenham, George (1904), *The Arte of English Poesie*, Book 1, ed. G. Gregory Smith, Oxford, Clarendon Press [1589].

Reid, Julian (2003), "Foucault on Clausewitz: Conceptualizing the Relationship between War and Power", *Alternatives*, nr. 28, pp. 1-14.

Sanders, Julie (ed.) (2010), *Ben Jonson in Context,* Cambridge, Cambridge UP.

Sinfield, Alan (1980), "Sidney and Astrophil", *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, vol. 20, pp. 27-37.

Spenser, Edmund (1995), *The Faerie Queene*, Renascence Editions, ed. Risa Stephanie Bear, U of Oregon P, https://scholarsbank.uoregon.edu/xmlui/bitstream/handle/1794/784/faeriequeene.pdf, accessed 19 March 2024. (Based on *The Complete Works in Verse and Prose of Edmund Spenser*, ed. Alexander Balloch Grosart, London and Aylesbury, Hazell, Watson and Viney, 1882) [1590, 1596].

Waller, Gary (1994), *Edmund Spenser: A Literary Life*, Basingstoke, Macmillan.

2.4. "There Is No Alternative": *Timon of Athens* and Contemporary Economic Crises

Imogen Goodman
Freie Universität Berlin

ABSTRACT

In *Timon of Athens*, Shakespeare presents a view of nascent capitalism that exposes the inequities and contradictions of economies based largely on debt. The Ancient Athens presented in the play strongly echoes the world in which Shakespeare lived: an early modern England in the grip of new economic structures where money was increasingly distanced from its Marxian "use value" in favour of "exchange value", and where unscrupulous lenders could enrich themselves through an ever more complex chain of debts.

Drawing on the work of David Graeber and Mark Blythe, the chapter reveals how the critique of these systems offered in the play also conveys a clear-sighted view of the problems that led to the 2008 financial crash: the personification of the "market" as a living and emoting thing; the increasing gap between a bank's assets and its leverage, and a dearth of regulatory oversight. In its ambivalent and irresolute ending, too, we can also understand the mechanisms by which a crisis can fail to effect meaningful change. Instead, in our contemporary society, the debts of the private sector have been passed onto society at large through more than a decade of austerity, and structural inequalities have become further entrenched.

In 2009, in the immediate aftermath of the global financial crash, Queen Elizabeth asked a group of analysts assembled at the London School of Economics why they, like everybody else, had failed to see it coming. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, global banks had been engaged in ever more precarious feats of financial juggling designed to maximise their revenues, yet even as late as 2006 and 2007, it seemed the dream of infinite abundance could never come to an end.

According to the views of many working in the finance sector, nobody could have predicted the crash because there was a less than one-in-a-million chance of it happening in the first place: it was, according to David Viniar, the chief financial officer at Goldman Sachs, "comparable to winning the lottery 21 or 22 times in a row" (Dowd *et al.*, 2008: 78). How, they asked, do you go about modelling the potential for several extreme unlikelihoods all occurring at the same time? In reality, however, it was not the unlikeliness of the sequence of events, but the models used for calculating the probability of these events that were to blame for the short-sightedness of the experts. At the time, assessments of probability were based almost exclusively on the patterns of the past, leading to a vast underestimation of the likelihood of a systemic collapse (Blyth, 2013: 33-34).

At the start of William Shakespeare and Thomas Middleton's *Timon of Athens*, we are introduced to a protagonist with a wilful inability to foresee his imminent ruin. In the words of one commentator on the Greek debt crisis, Timon is living "in a universe of benign neglect", blissfully ignorant of his own insolvent state and the kind of economy he and his "friends" are operating in.[1] Much like the financial analysts of the pre-crash economy, he engages in a stark mis-assessment of risk, choosing to base his perception of the future on his present and past experience – a model that the more cynical Athenians, with their belief in the cyclical machinations of Fortuna, know to be flawed.

Discussing the reason for the financial sector's widespread insensitivity to the oncoming crisis, political economist Mark Blyth explains:

> [T]o be truly blindsided by a crisis of this magnitude you need to have a theory of risk that denies that catastrophic events can happen in the first place, and then leave it entirely to the self-interested private sector to manage that risk. Unfortunately, almost the entire global financial system worked with just such a theory of risk management. (Blyth, 2013: 32)

In a world in which probability is calculated entirely on previously known quantities, it takes a crisis on a whole new scale to correct society's assessment of what can be possible. When Timon's own "financial crisis" occurs, he is forced into a radical revaluation of the world and his own place within it. At the centre of the play, following on from the collapse of a fragile debt-based economy, Timon experiences a moment of recognition with the potential to lead to decisive action: he must choose a path, and formulate a response to the new economic conditions he finds himself in.

In her discussion of utopia in contemporary post-crisis Greek literature, Maria Boletsi draws on the work of Reinhart Koselleck in framing crisis as a type of crossroad at which binary choices are faced. Quoting Koselleck, she points out that, for the ancient Greeks, the term *crisis* "demanded 'choices between stark alternatives – right or wrong, salvation or damnation, life or death'":

> Following Reinhart Koselleck's history of the concept, in the classical Greek context, crisis signified both an "objective crisis" (a decisive point "that would tip the scales", particularly in politics) and "subjective critique" (a judgement or verdict, in the sense of "criticism", but also in the juridical sense of "trial" or "legal decision"). (Boletsi, 2017: 260)

According to Giorgio Agamben, however, instead of signifying decisive resolve, "the present understanding of crisis refers to an enduring state [that is] extended into the future, indefinitely". During this type of crisis, "judgement is divorced from the idea of resolution and repeatedly postponed", which "serves to legitimize political and economic decisions that in fact dispossess citizens and deprive them of any possibility of decision" (Schümer, 2013).

If *Timon of Athens* is widely considered one of Shakespeare's most claggy and ambivalent works, it is perhaps because of its inability to establish a new paradigm, a decidedly new state, which, like the destruction of old dynasties and the crowning of new kings at the end of *Macbeth* and *Hamlet*, heralds the dawn of a new epoch. Timon's dramatic emotional pivot throughout the play tracks the traumatic shift from trust in immutable patriarchal bonds and fair dealing to a sense that society's institutions hold no chance of redress, justice, or reform. It is a disillusionment that sees corruption as the necessary outcome of all contact with the city or *polis*, and all of mankind's civil institutions. As he prepares to leave the city, he concludes that:

> All's obliquy.
> There's nothing level in our cursed natures
> But direct villainy. Therefore be abhorred
> All feasts, societies and throngs of men!
> His semblable, yea himself, Timon disdains.
> Destruction fang mankind! (4.3.18-23)[2]

For Timon, all men are equal, but only in "villainy". This passage echoes the passage in the feast scene, in which he declares to his guests, "your diet shall be in all places alike", adding: "Make not a city feast of it to let the meat cool ere we can agree upon the first place" (3.7.65-67). In Timon's satirical construction – mimicking ritualistic social norms through which men scramble over status symbols – he flips the gesture of mock politeness on its head: there is no longer any need to pit anyone above one another, not because men are equally valuable, but because they are equally corrupt.

Following the global banking crisis and its exposure of society's inequalities, compounded by the sleight of hand that saw the losses of private-sector entities put a permanent drag on the balance sheets of nation-states, we are facing a similar crisis of trust in our contemporary society: for many, this manifests itself in a rampant distrust of the political class, and for some it has prompted a search for ways to escape the "bonds" that tie us within what is now widely perceived as a broken system. Timon's sentiments echo a common refrain from disillusioned voters in this post-crisis state: the sentiment that "they" – the political class – are "all the same".

In order to understand the catalyst for this dramatic shift, it is worth looking more deeply at the kinds of economic and social critiques dramatized in the play. In this, I hope to also shed some light on why early modern commentators can offer us an unusually clear-sighted approach to late modern predicaments, and how the changes affecting England in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries contain the seeds of much of our thinking about the economic world we now live in.

I.

With its dual authorship and irresolute structure, *Timon of Athens* often has a mixed reception from critics, who struggle to place it comfortably within a single genre, either as a tragedy or a city satire. In contrast to the tragedies that produce their affective power in part through their depiction of strong familial, hereditary or romantic ties, the primary effect of *Timon* has been described as one of "insistent alienation":

> Timon denies us the connection we expected with its hero
> and his world – partly because of the total lack of family
> relationships, or indeed close relationships of any kind. (...)

> What characterises Timon's last moments is contempt, an
> almost absolute distancing from, and negation of, others.
> (Dawson / Minton, 2017: 30)

Marx's concept of alienation is central to an understanding of the play's economic and social environment, in which gold operates as the "confounding and compounding of all natural and human qualities" (Marx, 1988: 140). In the Athens that Timon inhabits (with its persistent echoes of early modern England), Shakespeare and Middleton depict a world in which people are increasingly divorced from themselves and their innate human needs and qualities; in which perceptions of value are precarious and endlessly mutable; and where material truth has been replaced by abstractions, while signs and symbols are imbued with a magical subjective power and agency.

From the start of the play, it is apparent that art and nature have become inexorably muddled. On the verge of purchasing a work of art from the Painter, Timon states:

> The painting is almost the natural man,
> For since dishonour traffics with man's nature,
> He is but outside; these pencilled figures are
> These pencilled figures are
> Even such as they give out. (1.1.161-165)

The symbolic representation of the thing has, for Timon, become more real than the thing itself: in real life, dishonour "traffics with men's nature" and causes them to put on social airs but the painted "figures" are just what they appear to be.

Here, signs have been divorced from their proper, referential function: rather than providing a "necessary, practical system of mediation between the subjective mind and its objective environment", they are now "mistaken for the reality that they represent" (Hawkes, 2010: 14). According to David Hawkes, such a mistake would have had an uncomfortable resonance for early modern audiences due to its link with the world of magic. In contrast to predominant teachings of the Aristotelian and Platonic philosophy and the Judeo-Christian-Islamic religious tradition, magic suggests "there is nothing real that exists beyond representation, that there is no referent beyond the sign" (*ibidem*).

The act of usury – lending at interest – enables money bypass its supposed referent (commodities) and become an autonomous actor with the ability to breed more of itself. As a result, Aristotle viewed the practice of obtaining wealth through usury as "the most contrary to nature" (Aristotle, 1998: 51). Although money, as a sign that achieves its meaning in the human mind, is able to reproduce endlessly, it is not morally desirable for it to do so, since it is "logically and ethically barren in essence, even though it is not necessarily so in practice" (*idem*, 49).

In *Timon*, an important shift has taken place in the criteria for assessing the worth of a commodity, promoting what is "barren" to an increasingly elevated social position. Instead of "use-value" – the innate qualities of an object and the uses to which it can be put – Timon starts the play entirely focused on "exchange value", a much more volatile and subjective method of calculation. He, like much of Athenian society, has become blind to all "natural and human qualities", and obsessed instead with socially constructed exchange value. This is an irony that comes to the fore when Timon finds gold out in the woods while digging for food, and Apemantus tells him, "Here is no use for gold" (4.3.289). As well as there being no way to use it to purchase anything, Timon picks up on the implication that, removed from its social context, it can be no longer "used" for usury and extortion, making its use in the forest "the best and truest, / For here it sleeps and does no hired harm" (4.3.289-290).

That exchange value is the primary form that value takes in Shakespeare and Middleton's Athens is clear from the short discussion between Timon and the Jeweller over the price of a jewel in the first scene of the play. The jewel, Timon implies, has become more expensive through a "satiety of commendations". If he were to "pay (…) for't as 'tis extolled", he tells the Jeweller, "It would unclew me quite" (1.1.170-172).

Social discourse – and in this case, praise and admiration – have mysteriously reformed the physical properties of the jewel in question. When Timon makes the oxymoronic assertion that the jewel "hath suffered under praise" (1.1.169), the word "suffered" suggests its etymological sense of bearing a weight or being weighed down. In driving up the price of the jewel, praise has almost literally added weight to it. Nevertheless, the value of the jewel does not remain static; rather, it rapidly becomes the object of financial speculation, with the Jeweller indicating that its price would rise even further after purchase. Once again, public opinion has the ability to transform the physical world around it: Timon, he argues, would "mend the jewel by wearing it" (1.1.176).

In his discussion of the cultural signification of the "market" in modern discourse, Campbell Jones writes that, as a result of numerous political, cultural and economic developments,

> [a] set of abstractions have risen to centre stage in economic, political and cultural life and among these one abstraction in particular, the abstraction that is 'the market'. The market has become a reality unto itself, at the same time that human bodies and the very existence of the material world have become increasingly incidental when faced with the market. (Jones, 2013: 5)

The precariousness of such an abstracted system is evidenced on a daily basis in the rapid creation and destruction of value on the stock exchange. Quantitative estimations of the value of a company rise and fall, based on qualitative estimations of the business, as well as analysts' attempts to read the "mood" of the market.

In its representations of alienation, *Timon* offers a vision of nascent capitalism that reflects both the rapid economic developments occurring in early modern England and some of the most troubling aspects of the late-capitalist, finance-driven economy of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. In both cases, money is no longer a referential sign, but rather an autonomous, reproducing actor floating in a volatile world of shifting signifiers, offering the potential for almost infinitely large gains – and infinitely large losses.

2.

In the years preceding the financial crash, writes David Graeber, "everyone had been hearing of a whole host of new, ultra-sophisticated financial innovations: credit and commodity derivatives, collateralised mortgage obligation derivatives, hybrid securities, debt swaps, and so on". At the time, these were presented as mechanisms so complicated that "financiers couldn't even begin to understand them" – a message designed to encourage the rest of the world to "leave it to the professionals" and discourage states from even attempting regulatory oversight. After the crash, however, "it turned out that many if not most of them had been nothing more than very elaborate scams" (Graeber, 2011: 15).

In fact, in order to maximise profits, financiers had been engaging in the practice of leveraging and accruing debts on an unbelievably large scale, ensuring that the amount of borrowed capital and running investments on balance sheets dwarfed the value of banks' financial reserves entirely. As Blyth explains,

> Leverage, the ratio of assets (loans and investments out in the world) relative to equity (reserve capital – the cushion you draw upon when things go wrong) rose precipitously throughout the 1980s and 1990s. If a major bank is running thirty times leverage, which was not uncommon in the run-up to the crisis, all it takes is a very small change in its asset values against its equity cushion to make it illiquid, if not close to insolvent. (Blyth, 2013: 28)

In *Timon*, the scale of the economic disaster that befalls Timon is largely a result of his being leveraged up far beyond his actual means. The monetary sum he owes to his concatenation of lenders bears no relation to his current assets or historic wealth: a situation pithily summarised by Flavius when he states, "The greatest of your having lacks a half / To pay your present debts" (2.2.144-145). Here, debt functions through language, and specifically the speech act of "promising", enabling financial obligations to reproduce endlessly. As Flavius asserts, Timon's "promises fly so beyond his state / That what he speaks is all in debt – he owes / For every word" (1.2.200-202).

The picture is one of radical instability, where men are constantly pummelled by the "quick blows of Fortune's" (1.1.93), whose "shift and change of mood" (1.1.86) can cause wealth and status to collapse in an instant. Indeed, "mood" plays a particularly important role in the debt economy of *Timon*, where "confidence" (3.4.31) and social "credit" are the prerequisites for remaining solvent in a complicated network of lending and obligation.

At the outset of what quickly develops into a catastrophic run on credit, the Senator declares that he must call in his debts from Timon because

> My uses cry to me, I must serve my turn
> Out of mine own, his days and times are past,
> And my reliances on his fracted dates
> Have smit my credit. (2.1.20-23)

In Athens' elaborate financial system, much like early modern England, money lenders exist in an elaborate credit chain, often involving borrowing money from other parties in order to lend money out at higher rates of interest to someone else. The senator's "uses" could refer both to the money he has borrowed and the money he has lent – they are closely connected, because a default or deferred payment from Timon has a domino effect that can harm both his social and financial credit.

In his glossing of this scene, Vivian Thomas observes that it is highly likely that the Senator "fears his precarious situation will be perceived, thereby undermining his own creditworthiness" (Thomas, 2015: 93). In fact, it is Timon's creditworthiness that is damaged: as word spreads of his financial straits, he continues to be rejected (more and more forcefully) by potential creditors, as others rush to cash in their debts without success. "Liquidity", as Blyth reminds us, "does not simply evaporate like the morning dew. It burns up in a 'fire sale' as a process known as 'contagion' takes place" (Blyth, 2013: 26). As Lucius assesses, "Timon is shrunk indeed, / And he that's once denied will hardly speed" (3.2.62-63).

With the expansion of usury, complementary "professions" such as scriveners and brokers sprung up on the streets of early modern England, developing new ways of generating money that were increasingly convoluted and abstract. Marvelling over the complexity of these emerging practices in a tract which was translated into English in 1607, French printer and scholar Henri Estienne declared: "[T]here are such villainous vsuries practised at this day, with such strange courses and proceedings, as (doubtlesse) the aforesaid Preachers neuer heard of: and it is not vnlike but that they haue bin deuised of late" (qtd. in Hawkes, 2010: 31).

As a result of increasingly complicated financial networks – not unlike the mind-achingly complicated derivatives markets of the early 2000s – the reality of an entity's financial health becomes more and more difficult to determine. However, once the smokescreen of credit is taken away or "[w]hen every feather sticks in his own wing", some are "left a naked gull" that previously appeared in the guise of "a phoenix" (2.1.30-32).

3.

In his polemical text on the contemporary debt crisis, *The Making of the Indebted Man,* Maurizio Lazzarato summarises one of the central and most unjust paradoxes at the heart of the financial crash. "We should note", he writes, "that in crises the recovery of damages due to money as capital ('virtual' money, since

it remains to be fully actualised) depends on revenue money (wages and public spending, actual money)" (Lazzarato, 2012: 86).

While, as Jones asserts, what lies behind what we term "the market" may be "abstraction upon abstraction" (Jones, 2013: 4), the effects of its mood swings – like the changeable whims of Fortuna – are all too real. Since 2008, what started out as a liquidity problem for a set of private financial entities has transformed into a sovereign debt crisis that has directly impacted the lives and prospects of hundreds of millions of citizens, their rights and their futures.

By forcing citizens – through austerity – to pay a debt that, like Timon's, is more than what they owe, debt has revealed itself to be a force that "rearticulates chains of capital valorisation and accumulation, reconfigures the composition of the labour force and the population, and establishes new forms of subjection" (Lazzarato, 2012: 86). Radical cuts to public spending and rising taxes on the unemployed and lower-income workers have meant that the most vulnerable in society have overwhelmingly paid for gross miscalculations on the part of the private financial sector, with no perceivable end in sight.[3]

As Deleuze and Guattari suggest,

> [t]he infinite creditor and infinite credit have replaced the blocks of mobile and finite debts. (…) [D]ebt becomes a debt of existence, a debt of the existence of the subject themselves. A time will come when the creditor has not yet lent while the debtor never quits repaying, for repaying is a duty but lending is an option (…). (Guattari / Deleuze, 1983: 197-198)

For Timon, the first explicit moment of confrontation occurs in 3.7, when the "covered dishes" that his guests suppose contain "[r]oyal fare" are uncovered to expose bowls of steaming water (3.7.47–8). This "[s]moke and lukewarm water" (3.7.88), revealed to both the onstage audience and real audience in a dramatic dénouement, is potentially epiphanic. Set up like the performance of a magic trick, it is a turning point at which Timon attempts, for the first time, to expose the "smoke and mirrors" of the credit economy.

The transformative potential of the moment is quickly abandoned, however, and the guests rapidly retreat, gathering up their scattered belongings and remarking, "Lord Timon's mad" (3.7.114). Rather than perceive commodity and debt culture as a form of madness – a "confounding and confusing of all natural and human qualities" – the Athenian elite choose to believe their detractor is "but a mad lord, and naught but humours sways him" (3.7.109-110).

In the wake of the 2008 financial crisis, writes Graeber,

> there was not only public rage and bewilderment, but
> the beginning of an actual public conversation about the
> nature of debt, of money, of the financial institutions that
> have come to hold the fate of nations in their grip. But
> that was just a moment. The conversation never ended up
> taking place. (Graeber, 2015: 15)

If, as Jill Philips Ingram suggests, "providence" in early modern diction had come to mean "an especially pragmatic kind of prudence", Timon's decision to leave the city could be interpreted as a "negative example of such providence, its positive counterpart evident in the actions of another character who responds quite differently to 'annoyance', Alcibiades" (Phillips Ingram, 2006: 61-62).

A kind of anti-Coriolanus, Alcibiades is ultimately happy to adapt his notions of honour to cohere with Athens' "public laws" and the pragmatic structure of civil society (5.5.62). Convinced by the senators' arguments that "[a]ll have not offended" (5.5.35) and their pleas for him to, like a shepherd, "[a]pproach the fold and cull th'infected forth, / But kill not all together" (5.5.44-45), he agrees to "Use the olive with my sword / Make war breed peace, make peace stint war, make each / Prescribe to other, as each other's leech" (5.5.80-82). The outcome of Alcibiades' attack on Athens – the tokenistic punishment of a small, select group of wrongdoers – seems unlikely to bring about any form of radical change in Athenian society. While he promises to help enforce "the stream / Of regular justice in [the] city's bounds" (5.5.60-61), there is a strong fissure between ethical and legal practice. It is perfectly legal to practice usury – indeed, the senators themselves seem to be some of the most prolific usurers who have "told their money and let / Their coin upon large interest" (3.6.106-107) – but this does not change its ethical ramifications or social implications. Essentially, Alcibiades is agreeing to place human laws above the more profound, enduring ethical laws that should govern human behaviour.

Furthermore, in an act that would no doubt be welcomed by all proponents of capitalist self-regulation, Alcibiades delegates the task of picking out this select group of bad eggs to the senators themselves: "Those enemies of Timon's and mine own / *Whom you yourselves shall set out for reproof* / Fall, and no more" (5.5.56-58, my italics). Immediately after this exchange, a soldier enters to deliver news of Timon's death. Recounting the words on his gravestone, we are reminded of the fact that "those enemies of Timon's" were not merely a small group of offenders, but rather "all living men" (5.5.70).

In Alcibiades's closing lines, the use of the word "breed" to link the abstract concepts of "war" and "peace" forges a discomforting connection with the most prominent type of breeding in *Timon*: the unnatural "breeding" of money through usury. The vision of a society in which everyone acts as "each other's leech" is similarly ambivalent, suggesting both a medicinal cure and the bloodthirsty financial cannibalism depicted throughout the play. In other words, while Alcibiades and Timon form a dramatically significant pairing in the play, it is not, as Jill Phillips Ingram suggests, "through the respective success and failure" of the former compared to the latter (Phillips Ingram, 2006: 64). Rather, Timon's misanthropy – his critique of society as a whole – acts as an ideological counterweight to the uneasy conclusion of the play, which sees a potential challenger to the status quo reincorporated into a *polis* that is still plagued by the problems it manifested at the start. As Lazzarato reminds us: "The financial catastrophe is far from over (…). [T]he oligarchies, plutocracies, and 'aristocracies' in power have no alternative political program" (Lazzarato, 2012: 165).

Discussing the riots and the anarchist Occupy movement that sprung up in the wake of the financial crisis, Blyth writes:

> Its motivations were diffuse, but one stood out: concern over the income and wealth inequalities generated over the past twenty years that access to easy credit had masked. Winter, and police actions, emptied the Occupy encampments. But the problems that spawned those camps remain with us. (Blyth, 2013: 1-2)

If "crisis" once signified both an objective and subjective event – in its medical sense, both the condition and its diagnosis – in recent years there seems to have been a concerted attempt to rob it of its second, subjective meaning. As austerity came to represent the hegemonic response to the debt crisis in Europe and the United States, Margaret Thatcher's so-called "TINA" doctrine was adopted once more in an attempt to convince citizens that "There Is No Alternative". In these circumstances, crisis becomes, not a crossroads, but a "perennial state of exception that (…) renders critical thinking and acting redundant, irrational, and ultimately unpatriotic" (Athanasiou / Butler, 2013: 149).

Along with the flashes of clarity that can come to us in such moments of collapse – exposing, in the case of 2008, the almost-fatal flaws in the financial system – it seems more necessary than ever to reimbue the term with its former sense of agency, and take the opportunity to ask, as David Graeber suggests,

"who really owes what to whom" (Graeber, 2005: 8). By incorporating an element of human analysis, choice and agency alongside the manifestation of a political or social crisis, such junctures can therefore become a "turning point, not of trauma, but of new possibilities" (Stauning Willer, 2017: 235).

Notes

1. These are the words of Jean Claude Trichet, president of the European Central Bank between 2003 and 2011, who levelled this criticism of financial mismanagement against the Papandreou-led Greek government in an interview for the 2015 documentary film *Agora: From Democracy to the Marketplace*. The narrative of lavish over-spending by a well-meaning but financially illiterate centre-left ruling party is one that has been developed in the years following the financial crisis to imply that the real problem facing debt-stricken nations is a bloated welfare state. As Mark Blyth (2013) has convincingly shown, however, the financial crash had far more complex causes – none of which were related to public spending. In fact, the "universe of benign neglect" could more accurately refer to states' attitudes towards the financial sector, manifesting itself in an unwillingness to regulate the financial instruments that originally led to the economic crisis.

2. All references to *Timon of Athens* are from Shakespeare, 2017. Act, scene, and line numbers are parenthetically indicated in the text.

3. The brief interlude of 4.2, in which Timon's poverty-stricken servants meet for one last time before vanishing in a 'sea of air', offers a powerful depiction of the way in which such credit crises overwhelmingly impact the poorest in society. The unfathomably large debts that Timon owes were accrued via verbal contracts among the upper classes and translated into gifts that are devoid of use-value and offer no tangible benefits either to Timon or his entourage. When these debts are called in, however, they suddenly materialise in real terms, leading to a sell-off of Timon's estate and erasing the servants' homes, incomes, and security.

Works cited

Avgeropoulos, Yorgos (dir.) (2015), *AGORA: From Democracy to the Market*, Small Planet [Amazon Instant Video], https://www.amazon.com/AGOR%C3%81-Democracy-Market-Yorgos-Avgeropoulos/dp/B01M63FYGG, accessed 19 March 2024.

Aristotle ([1959] 1998), *Politics*, trans. H. Rackham, Cambridge, Harvard UP.

Athanasiou, Athina / Judith Butler (2013), *Dispossession: The Political in the Performative*, Cambridge, Polity.

Boletsi, Maria (2017), "The Unbearable Lightness of Crisis", in Dimitri Tziovas (ed.), *Greece in Crisis: The Cultural Politics of Austerity*, London, Bloomsbury Publishing, pp. 256-281.

Blyth, Mark (2013), *Austerity: The History of a Dangerous Idea*, Oxford, Oxford UP.

Deleuze, Gilles / Félix Guattari (1983), *Anti-Oedipus*, trans. Robert Hurley, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press.

Dowd, Kevin / John Cotter / Christopher Humphrey / Margaret Woods (2008), "How Unlucky is 25-Sigma?", *Journal of Portfolio Management*, vol. 34, nr. 4, pp. 76-80, accessed 19 March 2024.

Graeber, David (2005), *Debt: The First 5000 Years*, New York, Melville House.

Hawkes, David (2010), *The Culture of Usury in Renaissance England*, London, Palgrave Macmillan.

Jones, Campbell (2013), *Can the Market Speak?*, Alresford, Zero Books.

Lazzarato, Maurizio (2012), *The Making of the Indebted Man*, trans. Joshua David Jordan, Los Angeles, Semiotext(e).

Marx, Karl (1844 / 1988). *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, trans. Mark Milligan, Amherst, Prometheus Books.

Phillips Ingram, Jill (2006), *Idioms of Self-Interest: Credit, Identity, and Property in English Renaissance Literature*, London, Routledge.

Schümer, Dirk (2013), "Giorgio Agamben im Gespräch: Die endlose Krise ist ein Machtinstrument", *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 24 May, https://www.faz.net/aktuell/feuilleton/bilder-und-zeiten/giorgio-agamben-im-gespraech-die-endlose-krise-ist-ein-machtinstrument-12193816.html, accessed 19 March 2024.

Shakespeare, William (2017), *Timon of Athens*, ed. Anthony B. Dawson / Gretchen E. Minton, Arden Shakespeare Third Series, London, Bloomsbury Publishing.

Stauning Willert, Trine (2017), "Nostalgic Visions of the Greek Countryside: National Idyll, Personal Fulfilment or Rescuing the Ecosystem", in Dimitris Tziovas (ed.), *Greece in Crisis. The Cultural Politics of Austerity*, London, Bloomsbury Publishing, pp. 220-238.

Thomas, Vivian (2015), *Shakespeare's Political and Economic Language: A Dictionary*, Arden Shakespeare. London, Bloomsbury Publishing.

2.5. "Dive, thoughts, down to my soul": The Politico-Aesthetic Function of Vice and Machiavel in *Richard III* and *House of Cards*

Eline Reinhoud

Universiteit Utrecht [1]

ABSTRACT

In the "age of post-truth", where emotions often outweigh objective facts in shaping political discourse, the lines between aesthetics and politics blur, giving rise to unique challenges and opportunities. The politico-aesthetic functions of Vice and Machiavel in William Shakespeare's *Richard III* and the television series *House of Cards* will be examined to show how the spectators' capacity for discernment is reinvigorated and the challenges posed by the crisis of post-truth can be mitigated. As post-truth phenomena challenge traditional distinctions between truth and falsehood, this study employs Jacques Rancière's concepts of politics and aesthetics as agents of change, focusing on their ability to disrupt the distribution of the sensible.

Examining how characters like Richard III and Frank Underwood combine traits from Vice and Machiavel archetypes, the author highlights their manipulation of audiences through metadramatic techniques. These characters signify both political representation and artistic performance, inviting the audience into their plots while obscuring the true depth of their intentions. Ultimately, the Vice-Machiavel figures serve as potent tools for breaking post-truth apathy by encouraging the spectators to engage critically, reassess their own agency, and challenge the manipulation they witness both in art and politics.

While a comparison between politicians and actors usually leads to cynical jokes more than anything ("one acts for money, and the other one is the actor"), today's popular television series about politics actively play with it, and in some cases even erase the difference altogether. The most astonishing recent example is perhaps the case of Volodymyr Zelensky, who played the role of the Ukrainian president, first on screen in Слуга народу (*Servant of the People*) and since the 2019 Ukrainian elections also in real life, despite having practically no political experience (Fox, 2019). Such transgressions of the difference between aesthetics and politics are characteristic of the so-called "age of post-truth", in which facts are rapidly losing value and emotions reign supreme.

This post-truth phenomenon has of late sparked a lively debate concerning its possible causes, but a solution remains out of reach, partly because the definition of the idea itself is still under discussion (Reinhoud, 2019: 3-44). Post-truth is popularly understood as "[r]elating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping political debate or public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief" ("Post-Truth, Adj."), but this is a limited understanding. For example, one could argue that the 'post' of post-truth is misleading, because emotions have *always* been more influential than facts in politics, as demonstrated for example by Lauren Berlant in her theorisation of public intimacy. She signalled the immense influence of emotion and affect in shaping the American public debate already in 1997: "[T]he political and the personal [have been collapsed] into a world of public intimacy" which concerns itself with such private issues as "pornography, abortion, sexuality, and reproduction; marriage, personal morality, and family values" (Berlant, 1997: 1). Additionally, one might argue for the importance, effectiveness, and historicity of lying in politics, especially in comparison to the notion of 'objective facts', as for example Martin Jay does in *The Virtues of Mendacity: On Lying in Politics*, when he refers to Michel de Montaigne's defence of "*mensonges officieux* (altruistic lies that are for someone else's benefit[)]" (Jay, 2010: 50), which is in turn based on Plato's similar justification of "'noble lies' (...) when politics is involved" (*ibidem*). Briefly put, I understand post-truth as a specific, but not altogether new attitude and rhetoric that has gained unprecedented currency today,[2] largely due to information overflow and pollution on and of contemporary news, online, and social media. It consists of two major components, namely a selective use of information and an apathetic disregard for the distinction between truth and lies. In other words, we have arrived at a dangerous but immensely interesting crossing of emotion and apathy: a certain segment of our society (think anti-vaxxers, climate change deniers, flat-earthers, conspiracy theorists, et cetera) acts on what *feels* true, and does not care whether it *is* true.

This crisis of truth, where facts easily become lost in a wilderness of fake news, cannot be solved by referring to more truths and facts, primarily because it is exactly this wilderness, this overflow, that exacerbates, or even constitutes, the problem. Therefore, in this essay I will take a different approach. Rather than adding more facts to the already existing, but largely ignored pile, I will try to turn post-truth on itself, by approaching the post-truth audience using something they like, something that makes them feel good: theatre, or rather television series. Drawing on Jacques Rancière's theory of politics and aesthetics as forms of dissensus, or agents of change, I will (re)conceptualise the politico-aesthetic function of Early Modern and postmodern descendants of the medieval Vice character and the Early Modern Machiavel,[3] in order to explore how such characters encourage what Rancière calls the emancipation of the spectator. I will look particularly at how these functions are performed by Shakespeare's Richard III (1590s) and *House of Cards*' Frank Underwood (2013-2018): how they involve the audience in their plots, the dynamic this creates, and the degrees of spectator complicity they evoke. While it would be overly ambitious to propose any solutions to the crisis of post-truth in this paper, I will nonetheless be taking some first steps, by exploring how the apathy and general disengagement of a post-truth audience may be punctured by a(n) (re-)emancipation of the subject as brought about by descendants of Vice and Machiavel in modern television.

As I have already mentioned, the relation between aesthetics and politics is particularly strained in this time of post-truth, but it is also where we may begin looking for solutions. Over the past few decades, Rancière has famously brought aesthetics and politics together in his notion of the distribution, or partition, of the sensible. Briefly put, this is "the system of divisions and boundaries that define, among other things, what is visible and audible within a particular aesthetico-political regime" (Rancière, 2004: 1). A notion that helps unpack this idea is Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's distinction between different kinds of representation, via the German *Vertretung* and *Darstellung*, which she respectively understands as "representation as 'speaking for,' as in politics, and representation as 're-presentation,' as in art or philosophy" (1988: 275; see also Van der Ham, 2014). That which is represented, either politically, aesthetically, or both, becomes visible, audible, sensible. That which is not, remains invisible, inaudible, insensible. The act of representation or lack thereof determines what can and cannot be discussed, and therefore changed. In other words, art, politics, and the combination and mutuality thereof – after all, "politics has its aesthetics, and aesthetics has its politics" (Rancière, 2004: 62) – function as agents of change, as "forms of *dissensus* [that may] effect a redistribution of the sensible" (Rancière, 2010: 1; emphasis in the original).

This redistribution of the sensible may be brought about in various ways within the realms of aesthetics and politics. In theatre, it occurs in the interaction between the actors and the audience, rather than by the actors alone (Rancière, 2007: 277-278). As he explains, he rejects the common assumption that the audience is either passive or active, let alone an entity separate from the actors. While playwrights like Bertold Brecht and Antonin Artaud sought through various means to activate what they perceived as a passive audience, Rancière argues that this rests on a false dichotomy. Rather, "it is precisely the attempt at suppressing the distance [between actor and spectator] that constitutes the distance itself" (*idem*: 277). Such binaries and their accompanying assumptions (e.g. spectatorship is bad because it is passive, and acting is good because it is active) constitute a partition of the sensible, because the value judgement inherent in these binaries creates a power dimension, an inequality, that is not necessarily there, but nonetheless influences the representation of either side of that binary. In line with the *theatrum mundi* metaphor, Rancière argues that individual spectators are also actors in their own way; they "see, feel, and understand something to the extent that they make their poems as the poet has done; as the actors, dancers, or performers have done" (*ibidem*). Through the understanding that audience and actors alike are active, emancipated, and intelligent – in other words, equal –, the false dichotomy and distribution of the sensible can be overthrown. It might be questioned, however, whether Rancière's argument still applies today. A post-truth audience, struck by inertia and apathy, is in many ways opposed to Rancière's emancipated spectator. Even if a dialogue is established, it is much easier to shout 'fake news!' – which has of late become more a tool to discredit and dismiss information that does not suit one's (political) agenda than an actual statement regarding the information's factuality – than to engage critically with either aesthetics or politics.

However, Rancière's concepts can nonetheless illustrate how a(n) (re-)emancipation of the audience, or the subject more generally, may theoretically be achieved. By actively playing with and explicitly reflecting on the partition of the sensible, the Early Modern and postmodern descendants of Vice and Machiavel may remedy this post-truth apathy. Before looking specifically at this shared function, it is necessary to outline the differences between these characters. Admittedly, this is a difficult task, as on the Early Modern stage the more psychologically complex villains would usually display traits of both characters and as such cannot be categorised as either one or the other. The characters are similar in many ways: while they come from different backgrounds and date from different time periods – the former from the medieval morality

plays, the latter from Niccolò Machiavelli's notorious sociopolitical treatise, *The Prince* – both characters are traditionally known for their slippery appeal and skilful manipulation of other characters and audiences alike. They tend to be ambiguous, both regarding their moral status and their part within the play, and more generally in the scholarly understandings of the character. This ambiguity makes the combination of Vice and Machiavel in a single character such as Richard III or Frank Underwood particularly agile and difficult to pin down, and as such sufficiently fascinating to rigorously redistribute the sensible.

In the case of Machiavel, there appears to be no consensus on the features of the archetype beyond the *OED*'s definition,[4] which simply refers to the term's roots in Machiavelli's treatise and its derogatory connotations. This definition makes no distinction between the theatrical type and offstage persons, and as such applies as much to the character as to any real-life Machiavels, making it rather unhelpful in an attempt to understand the theatrical type specifically. Beyond the *OED*, understandings of the type go in completely opposite directions. The *McGraw-Hill Encyclopedia of World Drama*, for example, understands Machiavel as a character that is "[devoted] to evil for its own sake, with no other motivation required" (Hochman, 1984: 241), while Michael Donkor, writing for the British Library, states that "there is a clear purpose and design to [the archetypal Machiavel's] savagery", and that this savagery "is to be carefully and sparingly deployed" (Donkor, n.d.).[5] This lack of consensus can be traced back to the Elizabethan period, when Machiavelli's work was primarily known in England through imperfect translations and distorting secondary material, which led to numerous misinterpretations, misunderstandings, and exaggerations (Bawcutt, 1971: 208; Scott, 1984: 147);[6] this is also why, in the late nineteenth century, Edward Meyer argued "for the severance of Machiavel from Machiavelli" (Scott, 1984: 148).[7] Fear may also have played a part – after all, this was a time of brutal religious persecution and general upheaval. The distinguishing trait of Machiavel, however, may be found in the character's roots in sociopolitical discourse rather than the theatre: whereas Vice functions primarily as a dramatic, extradiegetic force (see also next paragraph), Machiavel ultimately reflects human qualities, and is driven by human motivations, however deplorable. The most common motivation is a selfish desire for personal advancement, wherein the end justifies the means – as for example in the cases of Richard III and Frank Underwood, who both have ultimate power as their goal, either as king or as president.[8] Having accomplished that goal, the plot and the characters' development tend to stagnate and end in death: a re-election is simply not as glamorous as an election, just as defending a crown pales in comparison to obtaining one.[9]

Machiavel's difference from Vice, however, is one of degree rather than kind: both characters have extradiegetic functions, drive the narrative, and the motivations for their actions may be dramatic as well as emotional. This becomes especially clear in their joint descendants: both Iago and Richard, for example, can be said to act out of jealousy and ambition, but are also "the driving force behind the game" (Matuska, 2011: 99). As such, any distinction between Machiavel and Vice, especially between their descendants, is always artificial to some degree.

The scholarly understanding of Vice is equally conflicted, but one prevalent difference between the characters is that unlike Machiavel, Vice does not need a clearly defined goal or motivation. The character of Falstaff is an excellent case in point: he is happy to simply cause chaos for the sake of it, not caring particularly whether his actions result in anything either good or bad.[10] As Peter Happé explains, the traditional Vices were "not characters so much as embodiments of dramatic forces" (*apud* Matuska, 2011: 45), and Ágnes Matuska adds to this that they were "not really part of the play's events" (*idem*: 46), but can be seen rather as abstract, allegorical dramatic functions.[11] This outsider status allows the character to provide critical commentary at a slight remove from the action and to function as a mediator between the audience and the play. Due to the character's generally quite appealing nature, and despite his ambiguous moral status, Vice establishes a degree of trust and complicity with the audience. Through a clever use of humour and dramatic irony, for example in soliloquies and asides directed at the audience, in which Vice explicitly reflects on his own actions and schemes, Vice guides the audience through the action. As Matuska explains, later Vices take this capacity for metadrama and liminality further, by explicitly drawing attention to the theatricality of the theatre, destabilising meaning, and even corrupting the boundaries between reality and fiction (2011: 104-105, 112-113). Of particular interest for the purposes of this essay are Vice's meta- and melodramatic qualities, Machiavel's ruthless socio-political cunning, and the politico-aesthetic devices they use to influence the audience.

As I have already mentioned in a previous paragraph, both Richard and Underwood can be read as Machiavels. Richard even explicitly identifies himself as such in *3 Henry VI*, or rather more: he claims he could "set the murderous Machiavel to school" (3.2.193).[12] Both Richard and Underwood have been characterised as Machiavels (Scott, 1984: 152; Heilman, 1964: 59; Fallis, 2016), but they have also been read as a critique on Machiavelli's treatise. L. Joseph Hebert, for example, argues that the shortcomings in Machiavelli's argument are also the cause of Richard's final downfall, and his argument is equally applicable to Underwood. As neither Richard nor Machiavelli (nor Underwood) recognises

any objective good apart from fulfilling their own desires, these desires become arbitrary, unfulfilling, unmoored, and meaningless:

> [Richard's] conscience—far from being a manifestation of cowardice—is in fact the voice of practical reason within him, revealing that he has done no good to himself by committing villainous deeds for the sake of a crown that in itself is neither objectively good nor subjectively satisfying. (Hebert, 2017)

Robert Heilman, too, reads Richard as a Machiavel, although he finds "[h]is 'I am determined to prove a villain' and 'I am subtle, false, and treacherous' (…) too explicit, and we scent the thinned-out, allegorical air of the morality play" (Heilman, 1964: 59). This combination of allegory and conscience, of ultimate power and inevitable downfall, is what made Richard, and now Underwood, such an appealing villain. Both are ruthless, cunning, and successful, with a vindictive lust for power, but are also witty, appealing, and metadramatic; in other words, makers and masters of play. Like their archetypal ancestors, they exude what Matuska calls a "genuine allure" (Matuska, 2011: 69). The audience is drawn to them against their better judgement, for their wit, their skilful directing of the play, and their acknowledgement and even flattery of the audience when they share their plans and motivations. As Stephen Greenblatt points out, the loathsome Richard "has seduced more than four centuries of audiences" (Greenblatt, 2016b: 555), and the similarly deplorable Underwood was lauded for his "smiling and eager villainy" and his "twisted version of integrity" (Crouch, 2013).[13] While they are the villains of their stories, they are the heroes of their stages. In both Underwood's and Richard's case, the character is best read as a combination of Vice and Machiavel, resulting in a particularly powerful player, able to redistribute the sensible by simultaneously showing and hiding their true nature: abstract evil, human evil, or perhaps a bit of both. Machiavel alone cannot do justice to the characters' antics or their success, but when Machiavel's drive is combined with Vice's metadramatic awareness, the players become playmakers. This power, especially when it begins to crumble near the end of their respective narratives, is what makes Vice-Machiavel a potential remedy for a stultified audience: in the act of showing the puppet master's strings, these strings become sensible in Rancière's sense to both Early Modern and post-truth audiences.

I have mentioned in passing some of the metadramatic techniques deployed by Richard and Underwood: witty asides, dramatic irony, and addressing the

audience directly. The television series and screen adaptations of *Richard III* also break the fourth wall by having the actor make eye contact with the camera. These are all typical Vice techniques, but they serve a Machiavellian purpose, and have long been associated with the role of Richard III.[14] Similar to present-day populist politicians, they present themselves as honest and authentic – a key term in the 2016 election –, or at least direct to their audiences, in order to flatter them with their confidences and corrupt them by drawing them into their plots, both in the sense of narrative and conspiracy. They invite the audience to watch the plot unfold from a metalevel that they exclusively share with them, or at least give that impression. Depending on the performance, such flattery can make the villain appear most charming; in Richard's words, "I can smile and murder whiles I smile" (*3 Henry VI*, 3.2.182); a statement that easily and chillingly transgresses from the realm of aesthetics to that of politics in President Trump's assertion that he could "stand in the middle of 5th Avenue and shoot somebody and [not] lose voters" (Diamond, 2016).[15] This puts the audience in a difficult position: on the one hand, they know that they are dealing with a villain, aware as they are of his true intentions and cruelty, but on the other hand, the villain's guile and centrality – being the only one to acknowledge the audience – makes the audience eager to root for him.

The fact that both Richard and Underwood are crafty statesmen within their relative plots is noteworthy here: in a sense, they (aesthetically) represent (political) representation itself, bringing the aesthetic, abstract, Vice-dominated realm together with the socio-political realm of Machiavel, traditionally overlapping but separate spheres. By representing representation and focusing the audience's attention on the politico-aesthetic tools deployed by the Vice-Machiavel to actively influence this representation, the play and the series dramatize the partition of the sensible: they show, aesthetically, the brutality of how representation works, politically. One important difference between Richard and Underwood illuminates this further. While Richard is generally honest to his audience, Underwood rarely gives full disclosure and lies to his audience even at the metalevel, brazenly admitting this afterwards and laughing at the audience for believing him.[16] Although this only temporarily damages the audience's willingness to be Underwood's co-conspirator, such moments, in combination with various metadramatic techniques, puncture the illusion of the play and the metalevel alike. It shows the audience that there is more to the story than the controlling Vice-Machiavel is letting on; an even more exclusive, more private metalevel. *Richard III* contains a similar puncturing moment, albeit inverted: rather than showing the superior meta-metalevel controlled by Vice, as in the case of Underwood, Richard's Vice-ness temporarily

216

leaves him on the eve of the Battle of Bosworth, when his confidence is shaken by the revenging ghosts. It is one of the few scenes where Richard is alone on the stage without addressing the audience; instead, he talks to himself; "that is I and I" (5.3.181). This is the only moment when Richard's control of the metalevel crumbles, and he withdraws into a more private level of play that he shares neither with the characters nor with the audience. While they do so through different techniques – one by reasserting his control, the other by losing it – both scenes serve to shake the audience's trust in the Vice-Machiavel character; Underwood by reasserting his Vice-ness, Richard by losing it. By grabbing the audience's attention on the first metalevel and showering them with attention, and then excluding them from a more private level, these Vice-Machiavels play with the audience's emotions and show them the puppet strings that allow them to control both the characters and the audience – in the case of Underwood, by showing that the strings are attached to yet more strings, or, as in the case of Richard, by temporarily dropping them. Their unusually direct relationship with the audience – making the audience complicit, part of the plot, before shutting it out again – can serve as a device to force the audience to reconsider their position vis à vis the performance: to become aware of the strings, and to decide whether they accept them and the partition of the sensible proposed by Vice-Machiavel, or whether they will discard the strings and (re)claim their agency within the play; perhaps even making them, as Rancière says of the emancipated spectator, "see, feel, and understand something to the extent that they make their poems as the poet has done; as the actors, dancers, or performers have done" (Rancière, 2007: 277).

The combination of traits derived from Vice and Machiavel are what gives Richard and Underwood their particular crooked allure. It allows them to capture audiences and to play with their emotions, and in staging the partition of the sensible, the audience is encouraged to (re-)emancipate – to put themselves on equal footing with these sly rogues, to claim their own agency in the play of aesthetics and politics alike, to see them for what they are, and to decide how they want the story to continue: whether they reject the villain or continue to allow his puppeteering. As such, Vice-Machiavel's politico-aesthetic function is to provide a way for a stultified audience to become an 'emancipated spectator' in Rancière's sense, and so encourages the audience to pierce through the fictions spun before their eyes. Having become aware of the many metalevels involved in aesthetics, audiences could – theoretically – apply this awareness in other areas of life as well, motivating them to shake off their apathy and break the vicious cycle that the current crisis of post-truth is threatening to become.

Notes

1. I am particularly indebted to Ágnes Matuska for her encouragement and help.

2. These post-truth attitude and rhetoric are not necessarily split between audience and disseminator, one having a particular attitude and the other using a particular rhetoric. Rather, these elements are both present on either side; as such, post-truth is not so much a question of intent as of general stultification, to the extent that people may not even be aware of being either audience to or disseminator of it. Then again, there are also plenty of individuals who have noticed this stultification and have become adept at feigning it for political purposes.

3. For the connections between the early modern and the postmodern period, for example in relation to epistemological crisis, see Kiss, 2010, and Matuska, 2011. See Matuska especially for an in-depth examination of Vice and his descendants.

4. The *OED* defines Machiavel as follows: "A person who acts on principles recommended, or supposed to have been recommended, by Machiavelli in his treatise on statecraft; an intriguer or schemer. In early use also appositively. Usually derogatory" ("Machiavel, N.", n.d.).

5. The dissensus between the *Encyclopedia* and Donkor is a typical example of how slippery Vice and Machiavel are. In my opinion, the former's definition is better suited to Vice, insofar as the distinction can be made.

6. Contemporary critics such as Martin Jay have provided more favourable readings of Machiavelli's treatise, claiming that *The Prince* rather shows an acute (albeit blunt) awareness of the realities of statesmanship, which requires flexibility and decisiveness. As Jay argues, Machiavelli's preference for the cunning of the fox may rest not on a delight in deceit but on a distaste for the violence of the lion; his stress on keeping up the appearance of morality indirectly acknowledges the importance of that same morality; his rejection of abstract values may derive from the understanding that these are of little use in the concrete, often ambiguous reality of politics; by grounding statesmanship in illusion and appearance, he acknowledges the untenability of natural or divine order, or even absolute truth; and finally, he appears to be highly aware of how ethical intentions may nonetheless result in counter-ethical outcomes (Jay, 2010: 5-6). In this light, Machiavelli's sometimes brutal advice can be read as containing a certain realism, not sadism.

7. Elizabeth Scott casts doubt on this understanding of Machiavelli's work in Early Modern England, arguing that "a dramatist like Kyd or Marlowe would have had little difficulty in securing reasonably accurate and readable versions of Machiavelli's original works" and that "Machiavelli was widely read, much debated, and quoted at length in literary circles and at universities" (Scott, 1984: 151). While this argument may be valid for the playwrights and literati of the time, it does not mean that they did not play with these stereotypes, or that the general audience did not rely on them.

8. Underwood resembles various other Shakespearean characters as well, including Iago from *Othello* and Henry Bolingbroke from *Richard II*. Another popular example of Vice-Machiavel in contemporary television would be Petyr Baelish, or Littlefinger, from *Game of Thrones*.

9. In Underwood's case, his death was rather due to the accusations of sexual assault against actor Kevin Spacey, which resulted in his character being written out of the series. Incidentally, Spacey had played the character of Richard III (dir. Sam Mendes, 2011-2012) just prior to playing Underwood on *House of Cards* (see Crouch, 2013). Soon after Underwood becomes president at the end of the second season, though, the series' tension slackens and the plot becomes repetitive, because the ultimate goal has already been accomplished.

10. Matuska specifically classifies Falstaff as a descendant of the Vice-Fool and explores the different kinds of Vice descendants in greater detail. As she rightly points out, however, Vice and Fool "are not clearly distinguishable" (Matuska, 2011: 72), and this appears to be the case with most later Vice characters: they often borrow and blend characteristics from other archetypes in addition to those of Vice.

11. There is an interesting link to be made here to the field of perpetrator studies, where the trope of the monstrous villain is understood as a device to create a safe distance between the 'good' audience and the 'evil' villain. Such portrayals prevent audiences from confronting and understanding how horrible things can and do happen in reality. In the case of theatre, subtle performative choices may influence the villain's place on the scale ranging from abstract evil, such as portrayed more commonly by Vice and his descendants, to the more human and tangible (though no less cruel) kind of Machiavel.

12. All references are from Greenblatt et al., 2016.

13. This adoration became problematic after Spacey was accused of sexual harassment. His frankly bizarre "Let Me Be Frank" video statement, where he indirectly addresses his personal situation as Underwood, did not help matters: when Spacey started to sound like Underwood in reality, the infatuation quickly ended.

14. See Freedman for an analysis of the use of direct address in performances of *Richard III*; ranging from Frederick Warde's 'sideshow' commentary on his silent film, reciting passages and explaining the situations like a doubly extradiegetic Vice character (48), to Laurence Olivier's "flirting with the camera": "(...) audiences were shocked and delighted by Olivier's use of a direct address (...); it continues to rivet audience attention today" (Freedman, 2007: 59).

15. The question whether Trump might be a Vice-Machiavel in disguise – seeing his background in television and his foray into politics – is an interesting one that would deserve more thought; in my opinion, he possesses some characteristics of both types (the drive to power, the melodrama verging on caricature), but lacks the nuance demanded by either, let alone the combination. This might explain the split reaction to Trump, with some seeing through his puppeteering (a fatal flaw in a Machiavel), while others believe he holds no strings at all (an utterly failed Vice).

16. For example, in "Chapter 64": "(...) I'm guilty as hell, but then so are all of you. Yes, the system is corrupt, but you wanted a guardian at the gate like me. And why? Because you know I will do whatever it takes. And you have all enjoyed it, been party to it and benefited by it. [Aside:] Oh, don't deny it. You've loved it. You don't actually need me to stand for anything. You just need me to stand (...)" (2017: 48:45-50.30).

Works cited

Bawcutt, N.W. (1971), "'Policy,' Machiavellianism, and the Earlier Tudor Drama", *English Literary Renaissance*, vol. 1, nr. 3, pp. 195-209.

Berlant, Lauren (1997), *The Queen of America Goes to Washington City: Essays on Sex and Citizenship*, Durham, NC, Duke UP.

"Chapter 64" (2017), *House of Cards*, dir. Robin Wright, season 5, episode 12, Netflix.

Crouch, Ian (2013), "Richard III's House of Cards", *The New Yorker*, 4 February, www.newyorker.com/culture/culture-desk/richard-iiis-house-of-cards, accessed 19 March 2024.

Diamond, Jeremy (2016), "Donald Trump Could 'Shoot Somebody and Not Lose Voters'", *CNN*, 24 January, www.cnn.com/2016/01/23/politics/donald-trump-shoot-somebody-support/index.html, accessed 19 March 2024.

Donkor, Michael (n.d.), "Richard III and Machiavelli", *The British Library*, www.bl.uk/shakespeare/articles/richard-iii-and-machiavelli, accessed 19 March 2024.

Fallis, Don (2016), "Machiavelli Would Not Be Impressed", in J. Edward Hackett (ed.), *House of Cards and Philosophy: Underwood's Republic*, Hoboken, NJ, John Wiley & Sons, pp. 92-101.

Fox, Kara (2019), "Volodymyr Zelensky Played Ukraine's President on TV. Now It's a Reality", *CNN*, 21 April, www.cnn.com/2019/04/21/europe/volodymyr-zelensky-ukraine-president-profile-intl/index.html, accessed 19 March 2024.

Freedman, Barbara (2007), "Critical Junctures in Shakespeare Screen History: The Case of *Richard III*", in Russell Jackson (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare on Film*, Cambridge, Cambridge UP, pp. 47-71.

Greenblatt, Stephen et al. (ed.) (2016), *The Norton Shakespeare*, New York, Norton.

— (2016a), "The Third Part of Henry the Sixth", in Stephen Greenblatt et al. (ed.), *The Norton Shakespeare*, New York, Norton, pp. 276-342.

— (2016b), "Richard the Third", Introduction to the play, in Stephen Greenblatt (ed.), *The Norton Shakespeare*, New York, Norton, pp. 555-562.

— (2016c), "Richard the Third", in Stephen Greenblatt (ed.), *The Norton Shakespeare*, New York, Norton, pp. 566-648.

Ham, Boris van der (2014), *De koning kun je niet spelen. Toneelwetten voor kiezers en politici*, Amsterdam, Uitgeverij Prometheus.

Hebert, L. Joseph (2017), "*Richard III* and the Machiavellian Madness of Postmodernity", *Public Discourse*, 15 September, www.thepublicdiscourse.com/2017/09/20004/, accessed 19 March 2024.

Heilman, Robert B. (1964), "Satiety and Conscience: Aspects *of Richard III*", *The Antioch Review*, vol. 24, nr. 1, pp. 57-73.

Hochman, Stanley (ed.) (1984), *McGraw-Hill Encyclopaedia of World Drama: An International Reference Work in 5 Volumes*, New York, McGraw-Hill.

Jay, Martin (2010), *The Virtues of Mendacity: On Lying in Politics*, Charlottesville, U of Virginia P.

Kiss, Attila (2010), *Double Anatomy in Early Modern and Postmodern Drama*, Szeged, JATEPress.

"Let Me Be Frank" (2018), *YouTube*, 24 December, uploaded by Kevin Spacey, www.youtube.com/watch?v=JZveA-NAIDI, accessed 19 March 2024.

"Machiavel, N." (n.d.), *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, Oxford, Oxford UP, www.oed.com/view/Entry/111831, accessed 19 March 2024.

Matuska, Ágnes (2011), *The Vice-Device: Iago and Lear's Fool as Agents of Representational Crisis*, Szeged, JATEPress.

"Post-Truth, Adj." (n.d.), *OED Oxford English Dictionary Online*, Oxford, Oxford UP, www.oed.com/view/Entry/58609044, accessed 19 March 2024.

Rancière, Jacques (2004), *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible*, trans. Gabriel Rockhill, New York, NY, Continuum.

— (2007), "The Emancipated Spectator", Opening of the 5th international summer academy in Frankfurt on August 20, 2004, published in a slightly revised form in *Artforum* (March 2007), pp. 270-281.

— (2010), *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics*, ed. and trans. by Steve Corcoran, New York, NY, Continuum.

Reinhoud, Eline (2019), *The Post-Truth Era: Crises of Truth in (Post-)Postmodern Literature*, RMA Thesis, Utrecht University, studenttheses.uu.nl/bitstream/handle/20.500.12932/34010/ReinhoudEline_5497590_RMAThesis_Final.pdf?sequence=1, accessed 19 March 2024.

Scott, Margaret (1984), "Machiavelli and the Machiavel", *Renaissance Drama*, vol. 15, Modes, Motifs and Genres, pp. 147-74.

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty (1988), "Can the Subaltern Speak?", in Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (ed.), *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, IL, U of Illinois P, pp. 271-313.

2.6. Our Inability to Imagine a Utopian Alternative

Hannah Goldstein

Freie Universität Berlin

ABSTRACT

Since its conception utopia has been bound to dystopia. The former presents a perfect world to act as foil, reflecting a real society's flaws. The latter takes our current world and watches as it atrophies in the future. Both serve to criticize the present. Contemporaneously, the idea of a utopian other is difficult to collectively imagine. Utopia as a genre has been overpowered by its successor. Similarly, capitalism as an ideology has subsumed the planet. Capitalist realism, as defined by Mark Fisher, is marked by our collective inability to imagine a reality removed from the construct of capitalism. Our failure to imagine a utopian alternative is therefore linked. We cannot imagine any other outside of global capitalism to learn from, and therefore we cannot imagine a utopia.

This is complicated in our fiction by the imagining of apocalypse. Though in our current globalized world the influence of capitalism suffocates, in fiction we can conceptualize a restart. Only then is a new sort of utopia glimpsed. As exemplified by Margaret Atwood's *MaddAddam Trilogy* and *Utopia* (2013), this utopia is not to be found in a foreign land, nor an advanced future time, but rather in apocalyptic reset.

Introduction

The early modern genre of utopian fiction raises some scepticism in the contemporary world. Defined by a journey to some faraway land, the global overreach of capitalism makes such untouched societies difficult to imagine. We prefer to entertain ourselves with (post)apocalyptic narratives, suggesting that the only fathomable hope for a new social order is in the total demolition of democratic capitalism, and through such an escape from capitalist realism, followed by a period of rebuilding.

Perhaps this contemporary discomfort with the antiquated genre has to do with its structuring, the narrator being foreign and excluded from utopian life, and, as such, less trustworthy to a contemporary audience familiar with the unreliability of the exported, propaganda-based "reality" of totalitarian societies. The stranger must be kept at arm's length for the genre to be successful, his function being observational, rather than proactive. This is perhaps exemplified best in *New Atlantis* by Francis Bacon, in which the stranger is kept in a literal Strangers' House, with limits constraining his capacity to explore the utopian society of Bensalem, so that he is only able to experience it through dialogue with representatives of the utopia. A contemporary reader need only compare this to the eerie footage of visits to North Korea, available through *Vice News,* to be sceptical of the legitimacy of unsubstantiated claims of a perfect social order. What would happen if the stranger were invited in? The rise of the dystopian genre implies that the answer to this question is, "nothing good", and points towards the unsustainability of the utopian genre from a closer vantage point.

In this paper, contemporary discomforts with early modern utopia will be interrogated to understand why within our globalized world it becomes nearly impossible to imagine a never-before-seen alternative world order. There is ample evidence that one should fear an upheaval of modern democratic capitalism, be it fictionalized, or else rooted in reality, for example when considering the utterly isolated and regimented life in North Korea. As the world becomes more homogenous beneath the umbrella of capitalism, with those opting out seemingly prone to adopt a totalitarian alternative, it is no wonder that the only imaginable escape from our current capitalist system and into utopia seems to be through the apocalypse and subsequent rebuilding.

Defining Utopia

The concept of utopia, since its early coinage by Thomas More in his genre-actualizing text *Utopia*, has forever been defined by its inability to be pinned down. The word itself is explained as "two Greek words – *ouk* (that means not and was reduced to *u*) and *topos* (place), to which he added the suffix *ia*, indicating a place. Etymologically, utopia is thus a place which is a non-place, simultaneously constituted by a movement of affirmation and denial" (Vieira, 2010: 4). This no-place place benefitted from being birthed during a time of colonial exploration, and in its early-modern form typically included,

the journey (by sea, land or air) of a man or woman to an unknown place (an island, a country or a continent); once there, the utopian Traveller is usually offered a guided tour of the society, and given an explanation of its social, political, economic and religious organization; this journey typically implies the return of the utopian Traveller to his or her own country, in order to be able to take back the message that there are alternative and better ways of organizing society. (Vieira, 2010: 7)

The utopia is constructed through conversation between a Traveller (also known as the stranger) and a representative of the utopian society. Recorded in a travel log, the observations made while visiting the utopian place are relayed to the Traveller's homeland. The utopian society, in being useful only in its comparative relationship to the Traveller's own society, is thusly presented as being at the end of all human societal evolution, having reached a perfect state of universal equilibrium. Such is the importance of the name, the "no-place" never meant to be a place the Traveller can truly occupy (Vieira, 2010: 9).

As the genre matured through the centuries, these early requirements became more difficult to satisfy. Rather than being a fantastical space on the edge of our known world, the utopia morphed into something to be found in the future. This shift – from movement of locale to movement in temporality – implied that there was some path that contemporary society *could* take to arrive at the dreamt-of utopia. Rather than having the utopia as an unreal, unchanging mirror for the society to learn from, in situating the utopia in our own land (only further along in its progression), the utopian space became something to aspire to. This new utopia was coined, "euchronia", or "the good place in the future" and it correlated with the optimism of the European Enlightenment (Vieira, 2010: 9). This largely had to do with the idea that the Enlightenment began the path to "human perfection". Whereas previously, and in the Renaissance, discoveries of other societies were made, observed, and learned from, suddenly in the Enlightenment period progress could be achieved within one's own society, while staying home. When the newly discovered theory of evolution began to suggest that life is honed into an eventual perfect or near-perfect form, time became the only thing standing in the way between our own selves and perfection.

In the twentieth century, confronted by the world wars, the ecological fallout from industrialization and the discovery of nuclear weaponry, the assumption of the unerring goodness of progress had to be questioned. Thus, dystopian

literature, and above all the apocalyptic novel, grew in popularity. The apocalyptic novel, in imagining the very end of human societal development altogether, airs out the very real fears of a society that has born witness to the atrocities, both wartime and otherwise, of unfettered progress for progress's sake.

Before exploring what, exactly, led to the downfall of the genre, it is worth interrogating the structure of early modern utopia, as it is the foundation that later genres had to build upon or react to. The cliches of the genre will be outlined by looking at the example text of *New Atlantis* by Francis Bacon.

New Atlantis and the Stock Character of the Stranger

The stock character of the stranger can be observed in classical utopian texts such as Thomas More's *Utopia,* Tommaso Campanella's *La Citta del Sole* and, perhaps most starkly and importantly for this essay, Francis Bacon's *New Atlantis.* The stranger is not meant to be strange to the early modern reader, but rather to the utopian society itself. An explorer, he encounters the utopia, but is never truly invited in, as there is always some sort of limitations imposed upon his presence. Take, for example, the stranger in *New Atlantis* whose experience of Bensalem is firstly mediated by a representative, in this instance the governor of the Strangers' House. Although the stranger is able to move around the utopian space, this movement is limited, and not reported upon in the narrative. Rather, the conversation between the stranger and the governor is what the text concerns itself with.

The conversation that makes up the bulk of the text reveals the limitations of the stranger's stay. Along with his team of sailors, he must stay in The Strangers' House, a space serving this very function. Furthermore, the stranger cannot stay indefinitely. He is told by the governor that, "The state hath given you license to stay on land for the space of six weeks" (Bacon, 1999: 157) and although there is mention that the stranger could likely stay longer, this sets the expectation that the visitors are being tolerated as outsiders, rather than welcomed into the society as potential future citizens. During their stay, they are told that, "none of you must go above a karan (that is with them a mile and a half) from the walls of the city, without especial leave" (*idem*, 157-158). These restrictions serve the utopian genre, with the utopia meant to function not as a place but rather as a foil for the stranger's local community to juxtapose their own societal shortcomings against.

This juxtaposition is most evident in the ways in which the utopia is described. It is often not described in isolation, but in relation to what the stranger already knows. Upon his arrival, the stranger observes that, "The Strangers' House is a

fair and spacious house, built of brick, of somewhat a bluer colour than our brick" (*idem*, 159) and then later, after having tasted the food, that it was, "better than any collegiate diet that I have known in Europe" (*idem*: 156). The use of comparative adjectives, such as "bluer" and "better" instead of "blue" or "good" gives a hierarchy to the different forms of governance, with the utopia unarguably in the more powerful place in this comparison. As such, these descriptors serve a dual purpose, both commenting on the exemplary nature of the utopian space, and also conversely giving attention to the inadequacy of the stranger's (familiar) world.

When considering that the early modern utopia served the purpose of commenting reflexively upon the implied reader's society, it is made clear that this distancing tactic of experiencing the text through dialogue rather than narrative prose is meant to make it easier for this comparison to occur. Rather than concern himself with the quality of life of the utopian citizen, the stranger only wants to report back to his own society, in order to draw attention to those aspects of it which he views as problematic. Although the goal of the stranger is to explore, the exploration is constrained the moment the stranger enters the utopian space. Even the notion that the stranger is kept in a special guesthouse reveals the totality of the control the utopia must impose upon its own narrative.

However, to the contemporary reader, the utopia implies, rather than perfection, some sort of a propaganda state. What forms of government benefit from strict propaganda in our contemporary world? Not capitalism, which, though flawed, allows at least for self-criticism through art and entertainment. Instead, totalitarianism comes to mind, casting a backwards facing shadow upon the naive trust of the stranger in utopian narratives.

Totalitarianism: North Korea, Isolation and Propaganda

Early modern utopia is a literary form that no longer exists in our contemporary society. It has been replaced, firstly by the euchronia. Then, by the late nineteenth century, the genre had transformed again, but into something much less optimistic. So why the drastic and pessimistic turn towards the dystopian? Claeys explains,

> In many accounts we emerge from the hopeful, dream-like state of Victorian optimism through what H. G. Wells called the age of confusion into a nightmarish twentieth century, soon powerfully symbolized by the grotesque slaughter of the First World War. (Claeys, 2010: 107)

225

The hope for a utopia, then, was thwarted by its own positing as something in the future. Rather than being distinct from the societies it commented upon in the early modern period, its situating as something related to contemporary society that may be reached if we are patient was undermined by the grim reality experienced by those who lived through World War I. What's more, as will be exemplified in this chapter, this scepticisms towards progress casts a retroactive shadow over the early modern utopian texts that had already been written, so that, "the desire to create a much improved society in which human behaviours was dramatically superior to the norm implies an intrinsic drift towards punitive methods of controlling behaviour which inexorably results in some form of police state" (Claeys, 2010: 108). Though the utopia is structurally "perfect", it fails to cater to the individuality of its own people. An attempt to analyse utopian narratives such as *New Atlantis* from a contemporary vantage point is to see parallels between the utopian city portrayed in the text and present-day totalitarian political systems, especially given the necessity of the total isolation of the utopia from global political structures. To illustrate this point, parallels will be drawn between the fictional Bensalem and real-world Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

In *New Atlantis* Bensalem is able to improve itself by simultaneously looking externally at the world and keeping its own social structures hidden, revealed only in mediated and small doses to their occasional visitors. The governor explains, "that by the means of our solitary solution, and of the laws of secrecy which we have for our travellers, and our rare admission of strangers, we know well most part of the habitable world, and are ourselves unknown" (Bacon, 1999: 159). Again, it is worth bearing in mind that this is a representative of the state that is relaying this information. It is easy to imagine that this knowledge of the external world may not permeate all of the social stratospheres of Bensalem, all the more so if Bensalem is compared to the propaganda state of North Korea. Dukalskis and Hooker note, when considering North Korea, that "without access to the country and its people, achieving analytical subtlety is extremely difficult" (Dukalskis and Hooker, 2011: 53). Or that, because any access the rest of the world has to North Korea is in many ways mediated by the state itself, it is difficult to develop a complex understanding of the structures within.

In utopian fiction, this simplified understanding of the politics of the utopia allows for an idealization of the unknown state to occur. However, here we see a perversion of the same interaction. As western media consumers, we can only access two extremes, one being the idealized North Korea portrayed in the propaganda we can access through watching state-produced media, the other

being the first-person testimonies of North Korean refugees. As a consequence, we must grow suspicious of any representation of an idealized utopian existence being constructed for us. Moreover, a totalitarian regime, being "concerned with political participation and allegiance to its all-encompassing ideology, will tolerate very little activity that is contrary to its worldview" (Dukalskis and Hooker, 2011: 55). Or, merely stating that a political structure is perfect is no longer enough to prove perfection to the modern reader, as such statements of grandeur are in actuality one indicator of a state that controls the movements, behaviours, and ideas of its populace.

When watching the *Vice News* documentary series on North Korea, one may notice that there is much distinction made between what is being curated for the visitor's experience, and what is believed to actually be the quality of life based on a western understanding of the regime. Like in *New Atlantis*, the visitors are kept in special quarters, their movements are monitored and controlled, and their access is limited. Even gaining initial access proves difficult, with Shane Smith of *Vice News* reflecting that, "We tried to get in for a year and a half, but couldn't because North Korea does not let anyone in. They do not want anyone to corrupt their one-hundred-percent homogenous society" (Smith, 2011). Here, again, the similarity to Bensalem is evident in the self-isolating tactics of the walled-off society. When access is finally granted, it is evident that Smith is not having an authentic, unmediated experience.

The parallels between North Korea and Bensalem are perhaps most starkly exemplified by Smith's trip to The People's Library of North Korea. There, he visits the philosopher hotline, where philosophical Marxist dialectic problems can be asked to a professor who will then, "give them the correct answers immediately", according to Smith's North Korean tour guide (Smith, 2011). The idea of the immediacy and totality of knowledge resembles in some ways *New Atlantis*' Salomon's House, which is described as, "the noblest foundation (as we think) that ever was upon the earth; and the lanthorn of this kingdom" (Bacon, 1999: 167) where all knowledge is being collected with some semblance of finality. Taking notice of the switch from comparative adjectives to a superlative usage of "all", there is an implication that the knowledge gathered is finite and perfectly complete. Amongst the many things the father of Salomon's House tells the stranger about, he boasts, "We have also precious stones of all kinds, many of them of great beauty, and to you unknown" (*idem*, 182), "We have also sound-houses, where we practise and demonstrate all sounds, and their generation" (*ibidem*), "We have also a mathematical-house, where are represented all instruments, as well of geometry as astronomy, exquisitely made" (*idem*, 183)

and so on and so forth. The use of "all" in these sentences represents a totality of knowledge that is unrealistic. Much as the professor in The People's Library of North Korea can be viewed as suspect because the claim is made that he can give all correct answers immediately, and with no caveat, the concept of a utopian state must be questioned if it presents itself as having access to all knowledge. Without unmediated access to the lived experience of the citizens in any utopian state, it is easy for a modern interpretation of classical utopian texts such as *New Atlantis* to be one of scepticism.

Capitalist Realism and Our Inability to Imagine a Utopian Alternative

Gone is the notion that one might be able to sail a ship to a faraway land and come into contact with a more advanced unknown. With the only large-scale real-world political alternatives seemingly more dystopian than utopian, it becomes difficult to imagine anything that could function smoothly while also existing outside the globalized social order of democratic capitalism. One may ask why capitalism is incompatible with utopianism, to which the simple answer is that, due to capitalism being based on concepts of expansion, it is inherently unsustainable. Beckert explains,

> Capitalist economics are in constant pursuit of expansion. Whatever level of consumption has been reached, whatever technological progress has been achieved, whatever profit has been made, all of these are no more than snapshots to be superseded by more consumption, better technologies, and higher profits. (Beckert, 2020: 69)

Here is the crux of the issue. Expansion for expansion's sake must inevitably lead to a lack of resources. Moreover, profit for profit's sake begets exploitation of workers to maximize profit. In this sense, capitalism remains at odds with the pinnacles of utopian society, being equal access to education in some, equal distribution of resources in most, and social cooperation in all.

Why, then, is capitalism held as the only viable global political option? This is no accident. As Curtis explains,

> When diversity and plurality were seen as democratic ideals to be promoted, and social and cultural theory was dominated by the discourses of hybridity and flow, it became increasingly apparent that powerful Western nations such as the USA and the UK, together with transnational capitalist institutions such as the WTO, the World Bank, and the IMF were becoming increasingly less tolerant of any form of social life that resisted the dogma of the global free market. Despite the ascendancy of multiculturalism free market capitalism increasingly became the only model for social organisation. In effect you can have free market capitalism with any kind of topping, but the stipulation is that you must have free market capitalism. (Curtis, 2013: 3)

Or, the tying together of democracy with capitalism implies a reliance of one on the other, so that to take a step away from capitalism is to be accused of being anti-democratic.

These sentiments lend themselves to capitalist realism, defined by Mark Fisher as, "the widespread sense that not only is capitalism the only viable political and economic system, but also that it is now impossible to even *imagine* a coherent alternative to it" (Fisher, 2009: 8). The deriding of democratic socialism in the US is one example of this phenomenon, the idea of universal healthcare, for example, considered "unrealistic" if applied to the USA. As the world becomes more interconnected, the reality of the crusading nature of neo-liberalism becomes undeniable. This is because, "the opening up taking place under globalization is really the enclosing of the world within the dominant neo-liberal model" (Curtis, 2013: 4) and this is what capitalist realism is, the overarching ubiquity of neo-liberal capitalism and its self-defence mechanism of defining all that is other as radical, as anti-democratic, and as "bad". The death of the popularity of utopian fiction exemplifies one of the ways in which an outside is becoming unimaginable. Reliant on the stranger, it is no wonder that, in a globalised world, it is difficult to imagine how such a narrative could possibly manifest. *Who* could possibly exist outside of this system, to be encountered and subsequently learned from?

Paradoxically, capitalist realism gains its power through its ability to conquer, implying that there was once some other, but it has since been subsumed. The different system must always be found and then dominated, made to bend itself to the capitalist world order or else risk global exclusion.

Perhaps early days of capitalism were defined by a similar mode of exploration as is envisioned in the utopian genre. However, in our contemporary world, the symbolic "stranger" must never have recognized the potential utopia as such, but rather concluded time and time again that the only way for global progression was through subsuming the other until it could fit into the pre-established world order. As capitalism makes itself more ubiquitous, the question becomes, "having all too-successfully incorporated externality, how can [capitalism] function without an outside it can colonize and appropriate?" (Fisher, 2009: 12). As evidence of capitalism's global domination: only some thirty years after the Berlin Wall fell, symbolising the fall of the Soviet Union, Moscow itself is saturated with craft beer bars and a McDonald's is situated 1.5 kilometres from Red Square. This total encapsulation helps to explain why it is so difficult to imagine something external from what is already known and established.

Even internal modes of resistance do not seem capable of withstanding the larger social order. For example, the notion of "punk" became a commodity almost as soon as it was a form of resistance, most famously with Malcom McLaren's cultivation and marketing of the image of the Sex Pistols. The punk music of the mid-to-late-1970s concerned itself with being a removal from the capitalist infrastructure that enabled most music production. Rather than affiliate itself with big and expensive labels, the movement found other cheaper and independent avenues to gain exposure. Instead of signing on with one of the Big Six record labels, "punks reverted to 'front-room studios' and recorded their music relatively cheaply, using four-track tape recorders" (Thompson, 2001: 51). This was in line with the punk ideology, which fancied itself to be more interested in DIY, both in style and in music production, than commercial and fiscal success. However, by eventually signing with larger labels, early punk bands such as the Sex Pistols and The Clash gave away much of their agency, seemingly the price to pay for inclusion in the capitalist market that the movement had initially eschewed.

In this way the concept of rebelling against the system was sold almost as quickly as it was established. In contemporary representations of UK culture, rather than the notion of "punk" being a radical reaction against commercialisation, it has been almost entirely subsumed by the commodifying machine of capitalist realism. At the opening ceremony of the 2012 London Olympic Games, alongside Daniel Craig's James Bond delivering the Queen to the arena, Arctic Monkeys' rendition of "Come Together" by The Beatles, and Mr Bean playing the keyboard, "Pretty Vacant" by the Sex Pistols can be heard. Video footage of the lead singer Johnny Rotten leers behind masked dancers with cartoonish Mohawks atop their artificial bobble-heads (Boyle, 2012). At the time of the performance, the

Queen was in the audience watching. This is a far removal from the reaction in 1977, when the Sex Pistols track "God Save the Queen" was banned from play on the BBC. If the opening ceremony can be considered as representative of the idealised cultural heritage that the UK, and namely England, wants exported globally, then the Sex Pistols' inclusion in the opening ceremony reveals the totality of the declawing and commodification of the original punk sentiment of anarchy and upheaval. By 2012, the Sex Pistols were palatable enough to be tastefully performed in front of royalty, and accepted as something aesthetic, rather than anarchic.

In regard to the Sex Pistols Ruth Adams notes that "Arguably the band themselves have been complicit in the 'Pistols Heritage Industry,' staging their own 'Silver Jubilee' celebrations in the form of a(nother) reunion concert in 2002 and licensing numerous souvenir commodities from pencil cases to fridge magnets" (Adams, 2018: 473) but one need not wait until the early 2000s to see this rapid commodification. Nearly as soon as the punk movement was started, it was perverted, as the sudden global awareness of the movement sapped all authenticity from the image of the rebellious outsider it had previously strived for. By 1979, "Punk was history, finished; the full story could now be told" (Adams, 2018: 473), as evidenced by the biographies already published by that date, including *Sex Pistols: The Inside Story* (1977) by Fred and Judy Vermorel and *The Boy Looked at Johnny* (1978) by Julie Burchill and Tony Parsons (Adams, 2018: 473). This "ending" of the movement, meaning its incorporation into the world of capitalist commodity exchange through "selling-out" as it has been criticized of doing, occurred a mere 5 years after what is understood to be its birth in New York City's CBGBs, circa 1974.

This quick turnaround experienced by the punk movement, from resistance against to product of a capitalist culture, can be illuminated by Fisher's concept of "precorperation". Fisher explains, "what we are dealing with now is not the incorporation of materials that previously seemed to possess subversive potentials, but instead, their *precorperation:* the pre-emotive formatting and shaping of desires, aspirations and hopes by capitalist culture" (Fisher, 2009: 12). Punk may have been the first instance of this phenomena, being subsumed by the consumeristic machine so that the concept of independence from said machine could be oxymoronically purchased and worn. In this way, the alternative became the mainstream, and the feelings of antipathy towards society became muted and controlled; the rebellion and dissent against commercial capitalism repackaged as something that would fit cleanly within the framework provided.

All of which leaves us with a dual problem. We cannot find the change externally, as any external system is demonized as either regressive or totalitarian, or else ultimately incorporated and forced to conform to the already established system, and yet we also do not seem to be able to enact change within, as any attempt to do so is swallowed up by the machine, repackaged, and then sold as acceptable, and ultimately aesthetic, dissent. The only option that presents itself is to burn the world down and begin again. There, the utopian state can be glimpsed, although it is ultimately post-apocalyptic.

"Interpassivity" in the Face of Global Disaster

The Enlightenment and the discovery of evolution encouraged early writers to anchor their utopias in the future. Contemporary authors seem to use their observations to paint a much bleaker picture of what is to come. These warnings occur in the form of dystopian literature, which is described as "didactic and moralistic: images of the future are put forward as real possibilities because the Utopist wants to frighten the reader and to make him realize that things may go either right or wrong, depending on the moral, social and civic responsibility of the citizens" (Vieira, 2010: 17). The utopian genre was bolstered up by our scientific progress, until at a certain point, and through the observation of what these new technologies could do, the idea of progress itself became tainted. It is no wonder that the optimism that helped sustain the nineteenth century euchronias buckled under the pressure of the twentieth century, which "was predominantly characterized by man's disappointment – and even incredulity – at the perception of his own nature, mostly when his terrifying deeds through the two World Wars were considered" (Vieira, 2010: 18).

The conflict of nations and tension between different world orders, namely capitalism and totalitarianism or fascism, have led to world wars and the development of nuclear weapons. Industrialization, though at first a utopian pursuit, has led to global warming. Each advancement has been proven to have an ugly underbelly, tinging the public belief in the unerring good of progress itself. As Vieira puts it, "the vision of a completely different future, based on the annihilation of the present, which had been put forward by the political utopias of the nineteenth century, was replaced by a focus on a slower but effective change of the present" (Vieira, 2010: 22). What does this imply about our ability

to imagine anything alternative to capitalism? As slow change replaces radical reimagining, a path to something more utopian becomes glacial, and based around the hope of improving society within the system now, rather than dreaming up anarchic upheaval. In the shift from vastly different to slower and more likely changes, the radical is subsumed by the achievable, which returns us to the problem of capitalist realism: If we cannot imagine anything else, how will anything ever truly change? However, when considering the rise of another genre, namely post-apocalyptic fiction, suddenly radical change is reintroduced to the creative consciousness. While it seems impossible to imagine a radical and simultaneously desirable alternative to capitalist realism in our world, there is one place where dreaming of the utopian other still occurs, and that is after the apocalypse literarily configured.

Fisher explains the cognitive challenges one must face in order to combat capitalist realism: "Over the past thirty years, capitalist realism has successfully installed a 'business ontology' in which it is simply obvious that everything in society, including healthcare and education, should be run as a business" (Fisher, 2009: 17). In this way, capitalist realism is defended from scrutiny, as it presents itself as some sort of common-sense step in societal evolution. The only way to fight against the ubiquity of capitalism is to destroy this illusion: "emancipatory policies must always destroy the appearance of a 'natural order', must reveal what is presented as necessary and inevitable to be a mere contingency, just as it must make what was previously deemed to be impossible seem attainable" (*ibidem*). Or, in order to unshackle ourselves from capitalist realism, we must first accept that all that is perceived as "real" in society is a construct, through which the real can sometimes be glimpsed in how it challenges our communal acceptance of unreal structures such as capitalism. Fisher expresses some hope that there is a real beneath this artificial "reality" presented to us by capitalism and goes on to explain that one such real that may be able to challenge capitalist realism is the environmental catastrophe. He explains how the fantasy of capitalist culture in regard to climate change is supported by "a presupposition that resources are infinite, that the earth itself is merely a husk which capital can at a certain point slough off like a used skin, and that any problem can be solved by the market" (*idem*, 18). This pits capitalism against sustainability, and therefore against environmentalism. In being the antithesis of the capitalist promise of infinite growth, environmental catastrophe cuts through the facade of capitalist culture.

For this reason, capitalism continually refuses to solve the problem of impending disaster. Capitalism, and not capitalists. As Fisher explains:

Instead of saying that *everyone* — i.e. every *one* — is responsible for climate change, we all have to do our bit, it would be better to say that no-one is, and that's the very problem. The cause of eco-catastrophe is an impersonal structure which, even though it is capable of producing all manner of effects, is precisely not a subject capable of exercising responsibility. (*idem*, 66)

Given that capitalism keeps itself powerful by instilling the belief that individual decisions drive good or bad outcomes, it is difficult to imagine a solution to large and difficult problems such as climate change arising from it. Because it fixates on the individual rather than the societal, much as most novels do, we see these individual narratives in our stories follow the same path that we ourselves feel pulling us, that of being subjected to the tides of history, rather than proactive in changing them.

Margaret Atwood's MaddAddam series exemplifies this inability within our global society to imagine a solution. In *The Year of the Flood*, we are introduced to the Gardeners, a radical environmental group that styles itself after the Garden of Eden. The Gardeners are part of a small utopian government within the dystopian landscape. The society lives in near-total isolation and does not let in just anyone. The individual has been subsumed by the collective, so that all women in leadership roles are named Eve, the men named Adam. This functions so that the members identify with the group, rather than with their own egos, mirroring the representations of early modern utopias, which are more concerned with the larger societal dynamics than individual agency.

The Gardeners' idealized ecological acts of resistance, such as living as "strict-vegetarians" and farming their own produce, are still not enough to stall the end of the world. Although the Gardeners are living an eco-friendly, utopian life, their bubble is too small to enact any real change. They venture out in order to hold protests, and are described by Toby thusly,

The leader had a beard and was wearing a caftan that looked as if it had been sewn by elves on hash. Behind him came an assortment of children—various heights, all colors, but all in dark clothing—holding their slates with slogans printed on them: *God's Gardeners for God's Garden! Don't Eat Death! Animals R Us!* (Atwood, 2009: 66)

234

The Gardeners are dismissed immediately by the surrounding public. Utopian idealism, it seems, when attempting wider-scale impact, is met by distrust and scepticism. How, with a contemporary understanding of the world, can *these* people be trusted? With the knowledge of how closed groups oftentimes are riddled with their own internal power dynamics, resulting in them being much less idealistic than they present themselves to be, the Gardeners are working for change at a deficit, being forced to prove themselves as truly utopian, rather than just aesthetically so. As such, the Gardeners' plead for change must be met by heckling, "'Shut the fuck up, ecofreak'" (Atwood, 2009: 67), a bystander chides.

Compare these efforts to the current UK-based movement Extinction Rebellion. Arising in the UK circa 2018, they have three key demands: Tell the truth, zero emissions by 2025, and the instillation of a Citizens' assembly to address the crisis. Although their efforts have made a global media ripple, the question remains: How effective can these protests be to enact change? Their successes have been mostly superficial, and based on rhetoric, rather than truly radical societal change. On May 1, 2019, members of the UK parliament declared a climate and environment emergency, followed by the convening of a citizen's assembly in June, with this later concession being only a partial victory, due to the fact that the recommendations deriving from the assembly will not be legally binding (Knight, 2019). Notably, the demand that has been most ignored by those in power, being zero emissions by 2025, also requires the most concrete and systematic governmental action. Their efforts bring to mind "interpassivity" or the performance of anti-capitalism which eventually functions as a cathartic act that ultimately allows the participants to remain within the capitalist system, all the while pacified by knowing in their hearts that they are not the problem (Fisher, 2009: 16). The fight is ongoing, however, since the demands are aimed rather broadly at one small aspect of capitalistic governing and the efforts of both the Gardeners and Extinction Rebellion exist within a system dominated by capitalist realism, it is suggested that these efforts, both fictional and non-fictional, will be ultimately aesthetic, rather than truly world changing. The activists themselves would seemingly also agree with this prognostic, "the actions of XR [extinction rebellion] have results in an increase in public attention towards the climate crisis and some responses from government, yet not responses that most XR activists deem as sufficient" (Stuart, 2020: 488). The hope for a world saved from the devastation of climate change is gone, and activists must reconfigure their goals, as "the ideal outcome that was once desired by most climate activists is no longer possible. In addition, many proposed solutions to our ecological crisis

are clearly insufficient" (Stuart, 2020: 489) and radical governmental support has been minimal at best.

At the climate march in Berlin, Germany on September 20, 2019, the images evoked were those of apocalypse. Placards were illustrated with images of the Earth burning. As has been seen in other major cities throughout Europe, a girl stood before Brandenburger Tor on a block of ice with a noose around her neck, waiting for the ice to melt away and hang her where she stood. As some theorists observe,

> Arguably, modern environmentalism has been infused with a strong current of apocalyptic sentiment from its very birth, being distinct from earlier forms of conservationist or preservationist activism – and from social movement activism in general – through its invocation of impending global doom as a tool to rouse action and mobilize support. (Cassegård and Thörn, 2018: 562)

The debate seems to be whether this forward-looking pessimism is rallying, or debilitating. Returning to the girl at the climate march who stood atop the block of ice with her hands positioned as if tied behind her back and a noose around her neck, the image becomes all the more poetic when considering the idea of someone having their hands tied. Having one's hands tied meaning having the will to do something, but not the power, due to some invisible force which stops the person from acting freely. There is the disaster happening right in front of us, but there is also this hands-tied feeling of "interpassivity". We recognise the problems but, beyond building awareness of the depth and breadth of them, feel an inability to enact real societal change, which is keeping us from the revolutionary upheaval that is likely required to actually save the planet, and ourselves.

VII. *Utopia* (2013) and Pandemic as Means to Save the World

It is easy to imagine ourselves as living within a slow-burning apocalypse. With little faith left that individuals within capitalism have the capacity to organise and stop such seismic events as climate change, artistic mediums such as novels and movies have embraced visual and literary representations of the impending

end. If one genre of fiction benefits from our inability to imagine ourselves out of the contemporary global world order of capitalism, it is post-apocalyptic fiction. Although exact and up-to-date figures are difficult to locate, a study on the apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic cannon conducted by Jerry Määttä suggests that "In future, a similar study would likely show a sharp rise in interesting apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic disaster stories form the years 2000-2015, following a decade of slightly less important work in the genre" (Määttä, 2015: 421). But this rise in popularity is problematic in that it supports Fisher's theory that we cannot imagine anything outside of our contemporary social order. Furthermore, if we cannot imagine a new global order as solution, how could we then implement it?

The 2013 British television show *Utopia* upon first glance seems at odds with its own title. The world it creates, one of vivid comic-book inspired violence, in which no one is "bad" or "good" and no one can be trusted, does not lend itself to ideas of utopia in the traditional sense. In *Utopia* (2013) the world resembles our own in several key ways. The viewer is made aware of the fact that the world is suffering from overpopulation, that the environment cannot bear us any longer, and that, if things are allowed to continue on as they are, there will be a total crumbling of the world's infrastructures. The problems of overpopulation and everything that entails (hunger, pollution, war) are global problems, faced by a global society, and as such the solution cannot be found by looking outwards, as there is no "outside" to learn from. In order to create some semblance of a "utopia" a drug must be introduced to the world that will sterilise 90-95% of the population, leading to a mass decrease in the number of humans on Earth, or such is the premise of the show.

In season 2, episode 4, this is perhaps laid out most explicitly by the character of Milner. Milner is the mastermind behind the plan to, as some of her followers put it, "save the world". This involves releasing a deadly strain of the Russian flu and encouraging the world population to take a vaccine to protect themselves against the pandemic. The flu and drug serve two functions, wiping out a chunk of the population, and subsequently sterilizing a large percentage of the survivors, helping to curb over-population and create a utopian world. In conversation with Wilson Wilson, one of her new recruits, Milner explains the urgency of the situation:

> 2050. That's when fish stocks run out. Do you fucking get
> that? 2080, end of gas. 2090, end of oil. Those figures don't
> come from Greenpeace or Friends of the fucking Earth.

> They come from BP. If demand for fertiliser increases at current rates phosphates end this century, and that means no food. If you really knew, you'd understand that we have no choice. You're just like Philip. You can't let go of morality. But what we must do puts us beyond morality. (*Utopia*, 2013)

Milner is testing Wilson's commitment to the cause, and further challenges him by introducing him to Paul. Paul explains how, when the time comes, he will, as he puts it, "walk out of [his] life". He will go to a car park in Denham, collect a canister of a deadly strain of the virus, and release it with a crop-duster over a 35 square mile area, then he will repeat the procedure at four other locations around the world. When asked if he is bothered by releasing a deadly virus, and if he is worried that he and many others will die before the vaccine is possibly able to work, he replies, "But I will have saved everyone", and "No, I'm not worried about dying at all. I'm going to save the world" (*Utopia*, 2013).

The reality of the strain to Earth's resources is undeniable, the thought that such a vast global problem can be solved by separate and distinct democratic capitalist governments is unlikely, especially when the fiscal incentive is not there. Much like the character of Wilson Wilson who in the first season is fighting against the extremity of Milner's actions, only to later switch sides when he realizes the apocalyptic reality of their situation, so too must the viewer consider who is actually the villain, and what is the utopia.

The world has faced a similar problem. The number of COVID-19 deaths reported to WHO (cumulative total) on Sunday the 10th of March 2024 amounts to 7,038,623 (World Health Organization COVID-19 dashboard). A more global health challenge has never been faced before. Western democracies have infringed upon the freedoms of their populaces with what some are calling "draconian" measures, and capitalist infrastructures have been hindered, and in some places halted, owing to the precautions put in place in order to curb the rates of infection. The implications of such a prolonged interruption to "business as usual" with seemingly no decisive end in sight forces a re-evaluation of what, since the 1990s, has been considered the reality in a capitalist world, "an ideology that ruthlessly and relentlessly privileges the private, rendering any reference to the public a heresy, and any use of the public a social evil" (Curtis, 2013: 7).

In *Pandemic! Covid-19 Shakes the World* (2020), Slavoj Žižek notes how Wuhan today may be a good representation of the futuristic dystopian city which could become the norm post COVID-19:

238

> Many dystopias already imagine a similar future: we stay at home, work on our computers, communicate through video conferences, exercise on a machine in the corner of our home office, occasionally masturbate in front of a screen displaying hardcore sex, and get food by delivery, never seeing other human beings in person. (Žižek, 2020: 56)

Most would largely agree with the diagnosis of this imagined future as dystopian, but Žižek goes on: "The abandoned streets in a megalopolis – the usual bustling urban centers looking like ghost towns, stores with open doors and no customers, just a lone walker or a single car here and there, provide a glimpse of what a non-consumerist world might look like" (Žižek, 2020: 56). Or a world that has successfully peaked behind the curtain of capitalist realism. In defense of this radical statement, Žižek explains: "My plea is just that even horrible events can have unpredictable positive consequences" (2020: 58). The unpredictable positive consequence being the stalling and potential escape from capitalism, a system that, in being based on expansion at any cost, is inherently unsustainable and incompatible with a planet with finite resources and an ever-increasing number of human inhabitants. In this sense, like in the TV show *Utopia* (2013), it is made clear that this alternative, though a continuation of the human race and thus utopian comparative to its apocalyptic alternative, is not an enjoyable option, but merely the lesser of two bad hypotheticals.

But what about the inherent selfishness of people within capitalist society? Surely, the demand made by the proletariat upon those benefiting the most from capitalism, a demand for the elite to lower their quality of life in order for a healthier global society, will fall upon deaf ears. To which, Žižek makes an interesting point, "I am not a utopian here, I don't appeal to an idealized solidarity between people — on the contrary, the present crisis demonstrates clearly how global solidarity and cooperation is in the interest of the survival of all and each of us, how it is the only rational egotist thing to do" (Žižek, 2020: 68). The beauty of the coronavirus is that it is able to infiltrate all socioeconomic levels of society. It is not a problem confined to the developing world, something that can be ignored or donated to sporadically from the safety of those (mostly white) countries that benefit the most from the global imbalance of the distribution of capital.

In this sense, the pandemic is different from the climate disaster. In countries already bearing the grunt of the climate disaster, a 2007 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change presented evidence that climate events are a real and severe existential threat for both mother and child. They gave some examples as

follows, "The frequency of extreme weather events, such as droughts and heavy precipitation, has increased over the past 3 decades. (...) It is evident that drought has resulted in massive livestock deaths, crop failure, and severe malnutrition" (Rylander et al., 2013: 3). They continue, "Safe drinking water is essential for good health, yet it is still unavailable to more than 1 billion people worldwide. Natural disasters or extreme events will reduce the access to safe drinking water and proper sanitation, thereby increasing the risk of malnutrition, diarrhoea, and cholera" (*idem*: 4). And the list goes on. However, these realities have not been enough to lull consumption in more privileged areas of the world. Although it may be easy for some in the West to ignore the hypothetical destruction of peoples in countries that are considered to be far away, in the experience of COVID-19, the hens came home to roost, so to say. American capitalism, arguably the most rampant form of capitalism, has been described as having a perception of, "the future as open, and at the same time uncertain in its concrete manifestations", which, "forms a crucial cultural trait of capitalist modernity" (Beckert, 2020: 70). Contrast this against the imaginings of the future dreamed up by climate activism, being an apocalyptic and inevitable ending in spite of, and even because of, capitalism. Even with the increased climate disasters, the reality of climate change is still too slow, too easy to ignore, to destroy the open and free perception pushed by capitalism. In combating COVID-19, the dreaming up of the future that capitalist expansion allows has been hindered by unknowability due to real, current, blanketing, and un-ignorable turmoil.

There is still a danger of the post-Covid societal change being largely individually focused, and as such unable to create real large-scale change. A sort of self-policing, in the style of being asked to eat vegan as a means to curb the rate of meat consumption and water wastage, rather than making the big systematic changes that are necessary to save humanity. With regards to how this mentality relates to COVID-19, Žižek explains:

> Media are full of stories about people who misbehaved and put themselves and others in danger, an infected man enters a store and coughs on everyone, that sort of thing. The problem with this is the same as the journalism dealing with the environmental crisis: the media over-emphasize our personal responsibility for the problem, demanding that we pay more attention to recycling and other behavioral issues. Such a focus on individual

> responsibility, necessary as it is to some degree, functions
> as ideology the moment it serves to obfuscate the bigger
> question of how to change our entire economic and social
> system. (Žižek, 2020: 88)

Once again, as with climate change, it must be accepted that no one person or group of people are responsible for COVID-19. Not the Chinese government, not Bill Gates, and not the man coughing in the grocery aisle. It is much harder to accept that these large-scale existential threats are merely symptoms of human life, especially within a system like capitalism which is based on expansion. As is described by Kate Jones, chair of ecology and biodiversity at UCL, transmission of disease from animals to humans is:

> a hidden cost of human economic development. There
> are just so many more of us, in every environment. We are
> going into largely undisturbed places and being exposed
> more and more. We are creating habitats where viruses
> are transmitted more easily, and then we are surprised
> that we have new ones. (Vidal, 2020)

In this sense, it is impossible to blame the individual, and the problem of increased risk of disease is strongly linked to economic development, something that cannot be combated by recycling more. Rather than blame one another, the thought that must be encouraged is a reconceptualization of human life as something that could be lived outside of the expansionist goals of capitalism. However, as long as the question becomes "what did my neighbour do that made me sick?", rather than "what did inequality on a societal and governmental level do that made me sick?", there can be no hope of entering into a world that is equitable. That equality must derive from a curbing of economic drive, as equity cannot be born naturally from capitalistic systems left to run amuck. COVID-19 is a disease that targets the group, uncaring about the subjectivity of the individual, and in doing so reminds the world of the unified realities of human life and human suffering. In fiction, as in life, the layer beneath the fallacy that is capitalist realism can only be glimpsed after catastrophe, as that seems to be the only way to shake the foundations of capitalist rule.

Conclusion

Long gone are the days when utopias could be used to instruct and warn the public. Where in the early modern period utopian texts might have been used as a foil to comment upon pre-existing social structures, in our contemporary world these same outdated texts instead seem to share traits with totalitarian regimes. Furthermore, the hope that one might stumble upon some other society that is both exemplary and removed from our own, as the stock character of the stranger does, seems to have disappeared as capitalism tightens its global chokehold. Though still dissatisfied with the current social order of democratic capitalism, trends in fiction seem to indicate that we are unable to imagine anything that could challenge the accepted world order. In the place of utopian dreams, we are left with grim narratives centralized around our impending societal collapse.

The only hope left is in the imagining of an apocalypse with the capacity to wipe out the capitalist beast, and so that is what our artists do. Like the canary in the coal mine, our authors and filmmakers, even our video game developers, present hypothetical dystopias with familiar flaws, the world raped by late-stage capitalism and harsh to the contemporaneous eye, perhaps in the hope that these stories will offend their audience enough to recoil from the capitalism that has led us to the precipice of our own potential extinction. Jimmy and Crake in *Oryx & Crake* watch inmates die on television, desensitised to the human suffering on display. They look on as trafficked children lick the cream off an adult man's body, and they participate in the final stages of mutual commodification, their attention and the filmed children simultaneously a product. We drive through a cruel city, modifying our internal organs in *Cyberpunk 2077* while pulling off heists, locked in our real-world living rooms while a pandemic is raging outside. We read articles that describe "20 ways the world could end" (Powell et. al, 2013) with bullet points such as: global epidemics, global warming, ecosystem collapse, nanotechnology disaster, environmental toxins, global war (…) and the list goes on. When these warnings are not heeded, and they often are not, there is the desire to wallow in despair.

In Stuart's interviews with Extinction Rebellion activists on the topic of both hope and despair, they accept their hope without optimism, accept the loss that has already begun and is "getting worse" (Stuart, 2020: 494). The death of human society has been constructed and reconstructed, however today's speculation feels different. The antinuclear activism of the '60s and '70s, which concerned itself with warnings against a sudden apocalypse, has been replaced by the

protest of today, described as, "Neither to be nourished by a strong sense of hope, nor of a future disaster, but a sense and an idea that the catastrophe is already ongoing" (Cassegård and Thörn, 2018: 562). There is an overarching feeling of being too late, without the capacity or the time to imagine an alternative global order. As such, the question becomes not how we could remove ourselves from this global rule and create some other society, but rather what we can do once capitalism has finally run its course. The apocalypse has already begun for those who are paying attention. With any luck it might spare a few and allow for utopian rebuilding in a post-capitalism world.

Works cited

Adams, Ruth (2018), "The Englishness of English Punk: Sex Pistols, Subcultures, and Nostalgia", *Popular Music and Society*, 20 June, pp. 469-488.

Atwood, Margaret (2003), *Oryx and Crake*, New York, Random House Inc.

— (2009), *The Year of the Flood*, Toronto, McClelland & Stewart.

Beckert, Jens (2020), "Capitalism: Anticipating the Future Present", in Jacques-Henri Coste / Vincent Dussol (ed.), *The Fictions of American Capitalism: Working Fictions and the Economic Novel*, Cham, Switzerland, Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 69-88.

Bacon, Francis (1999), *New Atlantis*, in Susan Bruce (ed.), *Three Early Modern Utopias: Utopia, New Atlantis, and The Isle of Pines*, Oxford, Oxford UP, pp. 149-186.

Boyle, Danny (2012), "The Complete London 2012 Opening Ceremony London 2012 Olympic Games", *Youtube*, 27 July, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4As0e4de-rI, accessed 22 March 2024.

Cassegård, Carl / Håkan Thörn (2018), "Toward a Postapocalyptic Environmentalism? Responses to Loss and Visions of the Future in Climate Activism", *Environment and Planning E: Nature and Space*, vol. 1, nr. 4, pp. 561-578.

Claeys, Gregory (2010), "The Origins of Dystopia: Wells, Huxley and Orwell", in Gregory Claeys (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Utopian Literature*, Cambridge, Cambridge UP, pp. 107-113.

Curtis, Neal (2013), *Idiotism: Capitalism and the Privatisation of Life*, London, Pluto Press.

Danilescu, Andrada (2018), "Beyond the Human: Transhumanist Negotiations and Posthuman Instantiations in Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* and David Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas*", *Caietele Echinox*, vol. 34, Posthuman Configurations, pp. 255-274.

Dukalskis, Alexander, / Zachary Hooker (2011), "Legitimating Totalitarianism: Melodrama and Mass Politics in North Korean Film", *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, vol. 44, pp. 53-62.

Fisher, Mark (2009), *Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?*, Winchester, Zero Books.

Knight, Sam (2019). "Does Extinction Rebellion Have the Solution to the Climate Crisis?", *The New Yorker*, 21 July 2019.

Määttä, Jerry (2015), "Keeping Count of the End of the World: A Statistical Analysis of the Historio-graphy, Canonisation, and Historical Fluctuations of Anglophone Apocalyptic and Post-Apocalyptic Disaster Narratives", *Culture Unbound*, vol. 7, pp. 411-432.

Powell, Corey S., and Diane Martindale (2023), "20 Ways the World Could End", *Discover*, April 18, https://www.discovermagazine.com/planet-earth/20-ways-the-world-could-end, accessed 19 March 2024.

Rylander, Charlotte, Jon Øyvind Odland and Torkjel Manning Sandanger (2013), "Climate Change and the Potential Effects on Maternal and Pregnancy Outcomes: An Assessment of the most Vulnerable – the mother, fetus, and newborn child", *Global Health Action*, 11 March, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/epdf/10.3402/gha.v6i0.19538?needAccess=true, accessed 28 March 2024.

Smith, Shane (2011), "We tried sneaking journalists into North Korea", *Vice* Channel, 16 April 2012, https://videodb.org/sneaking-into-north-korea/sfq2BYB8K54, accessed 27 March 2024).

Spinozzi, Paola (2013), "Utopia, *The City of the Sun* and *New Atlantis* as Manifestos of Utopian Ideals in the European Renaissance", in Rui Carvalho Homem, Martin Procházka and Paola Spinozzi (ed.), *Memory, Conflict and Commerce in Early Modern Europe*, Special Issue of *Litteraria Pragensia*, vol. 23, nr. 45, pp. 6-25.

Stableford, Brian (2010), "Ecology and Dystopia", in Gregory Claeys (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Utopian Literature*, Cambridge, Cambridge UP, pp. 259-281.

Stuart, Diana (2020), "Radical Hope: Truth, Virtue, and Hope for What is Left in Extinction Rebellion", *Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics*, November 2020, pp. 487-504.

Taylor, Matthew (2019), "The Extinction Rebellion Scorecard: What Did It Achieve?", *The Guardian*, 25 April, https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/apr/25/extinction-rebellion-assessing-the-impact, accessed 28 March 2024.

Thompson, Stacy (2001), "Market failure: Punk Economics, Early and Late", *College Literature*, Spring 2001, pp. 48-64.

Utopia (2013-2014), created by Dennis Kelly for Channel 4, directed by Marc Munden and Rebekah Wray-Rogers, written by Dennis Kelly and John Donelly. Season 1 and 2 aired from 15 January 2013 to 12 August 2014.

Vidal, John (2020), "'Tip of the Iceberg': Is Our Destruction of Nature Responsible for Covid-19?", *The Guardian*, 18 March, https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/mar/18/tip-of-the-iceberg-is-our-destruction-of-nature-responsible-for-covid-19-aoe, accessed 28 March 2024.

Vieira, Fátima (2010), "The Concept of Utopia", in Gregory Claeys (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Utopian Literature*, Cambridge, Cambridge UP, pp. 3-27.

WHO COVID-19 dashboard, "Number of COVID-19 deaths reported to WHO (cumulative total)", World Health Organization, https://data.who.int/dashboards/covid19/deaths?n=c, accessed 28 March 2024.

Žižek, Slavoj (2020), *Pandemic! Covid-19 Shakes the World*, New York, OR Books.

Intercultural Dialogues and Dialectics

3.1. Crossing the Mediterranean in Early Modern Drama

Sabine Schülting

Freie Universität Berlin

ABSTRACT

Plays as different as Christopher Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta* and William Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* or *Pericle*s do not merely map the Mediterranean; they also construct plots around maritime networks and the risks of seafaring. The Mediterranean Sea represented in these plays is characterized by its openness to encounter, trade, and communication on the one hand, and by insecurity and danger on the other. Exploring both the dramatic functions of the ocean and its cultural connotations, this chapter suggests that early modern English drama emerges from an increasingly expanding world in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in which the Mediterranean Sea played an important role. This historicist focus is closely connected to a presentist perspective on the Mediterranean Sea, which in recent years has become a lethal border zone separating Europe from Northern Africa and the Middle East.

In the first scene of Christopher Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta*, Barabas, the eponymous hero, enters the stage, counting his gold and musing about the sources of his wealth: it comes from dealings with the "Samnites" in Italy, "the men of Uz" in the Middle East, and the "Arabians"; and from trade with "Spanish oils, and wines of Greece", which are transported on "Persian ships", and ships sent "for Egypt and the bordering isles", "smoothly gliding (...) through our Mediterranean sea" (1.1.2-48). Barabas has been described as both the quintessential (proto) capitalist (Bartels, 1993: 100) and the embodiment of anti-Jewish stereotypes, "a semimythical figure linked in the popular imagination with usury, sharp dealing, and ruthless cunning" (Greenblatt, 1978: 293). As such, Barabas served as a model for Shakespeare's Shylock and perhaps also offered a blueprint for

Richard III (Shapiro, 1988: 271). Important as these readings are, I want to read this passage neither from the perspective of character and theme, nor from that of influences and sources. Instead, my essay takes its point of departure from the observation that Barabas's speech performatively establishes, through a plethora of geographical references, a distinct *space*: the Mediterranean Sea.

The centrality of the Mediterranean in the early modern (English) imagination has already been discussed in a considerable number of studies. Whereas earlier publications studied the Italian, Latin or Greek sources of Shakespeare and his contemporaries, as well as their constructions of Italy, contributions since the early 2000s have shifted the focus to the eastern Mediterranean and English encounters with the Ottoman Empire (Matar, 1998; Barbour, 2003; Vitkus, 2003; Dimmock, 2005; MacLean, 2007). Goran V. Stanivukovic describes this "growing interest in the Eastern Mediterranean" as a "remapping" of scholarly attention, "mov[ing] forward from the vision of the Mediterranean as a socioeconomic and Eurocentric place" (Stanivukovic, 2007: 5). With frequent reference to Fernand Braudel's seminal study *La Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen à l'époque de Philippe II* (1949), and a critique of its Western Eurocentric bias, the early modern Mediterranean has been described as a space of cultural hybridity, liminality, and transformation (Vitkus, 2003: 22; Cantor, 2006: 900). Scholars have addressed the dramatic negotiations of transnational trade relations and of cultural and religious encounters; they have discussed the drama of conversion to Islam, as well as the aesthetic fascination with foreign people, commodities, and customs. My essay is indebted to this strand of research to which I have contributed elsewhere (Schülting *et al.*, 2012), but it is also strongly inspired by a suggestion made by Bernhard Klein and Gesa Mackenthun in their introduction to *Sea Changes: Historicizing the Ocean* (2004). Their attempt is to "recover in the history of the sea a paradigm that may accommodate various revisionary accounts – revisionary in the sense of seeing things in new ways, of seeing them differently – of the modern historical experience of transnational contact zones" (Klein and Mackenthun, 2004: 2).

There seems to be an urgent need for such a revisionary perspective on the Mediterranean Sea, which in recent years has become a lethal border zone separating Europe from North Africa and the Middle East. The UNHCR estimates that more than 2,200 refugees lost their lives or went missing in 2018 in the attempt to cross the Mediterranean Sea and apply for asylum in Europe (UNHCR, 2019). It is important to understand that the Mediterranean Sea does not constitute a natural border between Europe and Africa – actually, there are no natural borders, as contemporary border theorists have reminded

us (Schimanski / Wolfe, 2017). Instead, borders are symbolic acts, cultural figurations imposed on the landscape (or seascape, as it were), and in the course of negotiations within and across border zones, borders are redrawn, extended, or transformed. This is particularly true of the sea with its constant movement and lack of stable boundaries.

In addition, borders and border zones have changed over time. Around 1600, the Mediterranean Sea was considered less a border than a contested arena of international trade and commerce for various actors: Christian, Jewish, and Muslim; Western, Southern and Eastern European as well as Northern African. In the course of the sixteenth century, trading activities in the Eastern Mediterranean dropped, not least due to the decline of the Venetian influence. This was the moment when English traders stepped in. In 1592, the Levant Company, merging the Turkey and the Venice companies, received its charter, and by 1620, English merchants had become "the undisputed leaders in the Levant trade" (McGowan, 1981: 21). Their economic supremacy followed a series of successful diplomatic missions with the Ottoman Empire, including those of William Harborne (c. 1578-88), Edward Barton (1588-97), and Henry Lello (1598/9-1607). In the "Epistle dedicatory", addressed to Sir Robert Cecil, to *The Second Volume of the Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques and Discoveries of the English Nation* (1599), Richard Hakluyt proudly comments on this economic activity in the Mediterranean, which he describes as "the happie renuing and much increasing of our interrupted trade in all the Leuant" and "the traffike of our Nation in all the chiefe Hauens of Africa and Egypt: the searching and haunting the very bottome of the Mediterran Sea to the ports of Tripoli and Alexandretta, of the Archipelagus, by the Turkes now called The white sea, euen to the walles of Constantinople" (Hakluyt, 1599: n. p.).

I want to suggest that a reconsideration of early modern English plays from the perspective of the Mediterranean Sea may encourage us to understand "Shakespearean negotiations" (Greenblatt, 1988) not merely, and perhaps not even primarily, as the circulation of social energy in Renaissance England but as emerging from an increasingly expanding world in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in which the Mediterranean Sea played an important role. This historicist focus is closely connected to a presentist concern: whereas the debates in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks of 2001 offered the backdrop to the study of English encounters with the Islamic East, the current scenario of migration across the Mediterranean Sea invites a shift of attention from the cultural encounters and cultural hybridity in the Mediterranean area to a consideration of the Mediterranean Sea itself and its dramatic and cultural functions.

Representing the Mediterranean

The expansion of maritime travel and trade in the early modern age fundamentally changed the conception of the world's oceans "whose vast size and potential were beginning to become apparent to statesmen, navigators, and literary artists" (Brayton, 2012: 2). Daniel Brayton suggests a "thalassalogical" perspective (from Greek *thalassa*: the sea) on Shakespeare's plays, through which he seeks to gain "fresh insights about both environmental history and the environmental present" (Brayton, 2012: 4). Even though my paper moves in a different direction, Brayton's observation about what he calls the "major conceptual 'discovery' of early modern European navigators and cartographers", namely "the vastness of the global ocean" (Brayton, 2012: 2), is also relevant for my discussion. It poses the question as to how this vastness could ever be represented within the narrow confines of the early modern stage.

One obvious strategy of spatial representation on stage is verbal mapping. In the introductory quote from *The Jew of Malta*, the naming of regions and places – from Persia to Spain, from Greece to Italy, and from Alexandria via Candy (Crete) to Malta – rhetorically delineates the Mediterranean Sea and constructs it as a space of vast dimensions. Barabas is concerned about his ships that he "sent for Egypt and the bordering isles" (1.1.42) and hopes that his "argosy from Alexandria, / Loaden with spice and silks" (44-45) is on its way back to Malta. It turns out that two of his ships, whose nearly simultaneous arrival is reported in the following lines, have missed each other although both have returned from Egypt. In his dialogue with the First Merchant, Barabas wonders: "Thou couldst not come from Egypt, or by Caire / But at the entry there into the sea, / Where Nilus pays his tribute to the main. / Thou needs must sail by Alexandria" (73-76). The Second Merchant explains that the ship may have taken a different route from Egypt to Malta past the shores of Crete: "Belike they coasted round by Candy shore / About their oils or other business" (91-92). Both reprimand Barabas for risking his wealth on the sea, on long-distance trade-routes: "But this we hear some of our seamen say, / They wondered how you durst with so much wealth / Trust such a crazed vessel, and so far" (78-80). By this moment in the play the audience would have gained a rough understanding of the spatial dimensions of the maritime trading networks interconnecting Egypt, Greece, and Malta.

The first scene of the play therefore goes beyond the characterization of Barabas as a member of the "scattered nation" (120) of the Jews, whose Mediterranean trading network helps them to accumulate great riches, as

Barabas boasts: "There's Kirriah Jairim, the great Jew of Greece, / Obed in Bairseth, Nones in Portugal, / Myself in Malta, some in Italy, /Many in France, and wealthy every one (123-126). Perhaps more importantly, the scene serves to map the Mediterranean, from the Levant to Malta, and from thence to Portugal, Italy and France – the bases of the other Jewish merchants, who like Barabas "mak[e] the sea their servant" (109). With the arrival of a Spanish ship bringing slaves from Corsica in Act Two (2.2.10) and that of the Turks in Act Three, driven by "the wind that bloweth all the world besides, / Desire of gold" (3.5.4-5), the play has not only brought together the three major religions of the early modern Mediterranean – Judaism, Roman Catholicism, and Islam – but also offered a geographical and cultural chart spanning the Mediterranean, from West to East and North to South. Malta appears as the centre of this large maritime network, attracting the various European and North African powers, not least because of its favourable geographical position. "And now I see the situation, / And how secure this conquered island stands", the Turkish leader Calymath describes Malta. "Environed with the Mediterranean Sea, / Strong countermured with other pretty isles; / And toward Calabria backed by Sicily" (5.3.5-9). As "the crossroads of the maritime Mediterranean, (…) where Christian and Muslim powers overlapped" (Vitkus, 2006: 63), Malta, with its strategic function for military and economic ventures, is the play's centre of gravity.

Whereas Marlowe's play has only this one setting, in Shakespeare's *Pericles* the action moves across a large part of the Eastern Mediterranean, covering an area that includes modern Lebanon, Turkey, and Greece. The respective settings – Antioch, Tyre, Tarsus, Pentapolis, Mytilene, and Ephesus – are identified by the place names in the lines of the characters and of the chorus. These settings are palimpsests: an early modern audience would have been familiar with the places from Greek mythology and the Bible, but the names would also have evoked the contemporary enterprises in the Levant. For Sir Philip Sidney, such a constant shift of dramatic setting represented a massive flaw. He criticized plays "where you shall have Asia of the one side, and Afric of the other, and so many other under-kingdoms, that the player, when he comes in, must ever begin with telling where he is, or else the tale will not be conceived" (Sidney, 1967: 134). The 1616 Folio version of Ben Jonson's *Every Man in His Humour* (1598) subscribes to the same ideal when it begins with the Prologue's promise that the play will do without a "Chorus [that] wafts you o'er the seas" (Jonson, 2012: Prol. 15). But other early modern playwrights were apparently more interested in taking their audiences on imaginary sea-journey than in following Aristotelian precepts.

Shakespeare's *Pericles*, for instance, explicitly comments on the metadramatic analogy between "the experience of theatrical 'transportation'" (Vitkus, 2003: 40) and that of seafaring, between the stage and the ship. Gower encourages the audience: "In your imagination hold / This stage the ship, upon whose deck / The sea-tossed Pericles appears to speke" (10.58-60).[1] Tobias Döring has explored this intersection of "the notion of *theatrum mundi* (…) with the notion of the *mare mundi*", suggesting that Shakespeare's plays can be read "as passages across an open sea, risky performances into an open future" (Döring, 2012: 16, 25). Theatrical performance, in turn, constructs the sea in the spectators' imagination. It takes the audience, as it were, across the Mediterranean Sea, "From bourn to bourn, region to region". (18.3-4), and "toss[ing]" them, like Pericles, "from coast to coast" (5.34).

Early modern drama then evokes, through its plot structures, the large spatial distances across the Mediterranean and the long durations of early modern sea travel. The distance between Tyre and Tarsus seems to be so great, *Pericles* suggests, that it takes years for Pericles to venture on a new journey to see his daughter Marina whom he had to leave with Cleon and Dionyza. In *The Merchant of Venice*, the possibility that Antonio lose his ships and be unable to pay back the bond is suggested from the very beginning. But it takes five acts for his "argosies" to "richly come to harbour" (5.1.276-78) and prove the fast-travelling rumours about a shipwreck off the North African coast wrong (3.1.92). In *The Tempest*, it remains unclear whether information about the shipwreck will ever make it from Naples across to Tunis. Assuming that neither Alonso nor Ferdinand have survived, Antonio considers usurping the throne of Naples. He is convinced that the real heiress Claribel, recently married to the king of Tunis, will remain ignorant of Alonso's supposed death and therefore never claim the throne: "She that is Queen of Tunis; she that dwells / Ten leagues beyond man's life; she that from Naples / Can have no note – unless the sun were post / The man i'th'moon's too slow – till newborn chins / Be rough and razorable (…)" (2.1.242-246). The distance between Naples and Tunis, Antonio's metaphor implies, can only hardly ever be covered in a man's lifetime. Geographical and cultural remoteness are conflated in this hyperbolic rendering. The actual distance between the two cities, approximately 350 miles (or 300 nautical miles), would not have created a major problem for sixteenth-century carracks and carvels, which were indeed able to cover long distances (cf. Unger, 2017: 26). In comparison, Sebastian's response is more matter-of-fact when he admits laconically that between Tunis and Naples "There is some space" (2.1.258). In contrast to Antonio, who seems to assume there is an insurmountable divide between Tunis and Naples, Sebastian

sees the two cities as forming part of the same world, and the distance between them geographical rather than symbolic.

One could argue that Sebastian's imaginary map is based on the geometrical measuring of space brought about by the Copernican revolution. Since the fifteenth century, geographical maps had replaced the medieval T-O maps, in which the circular O comprised the (known) world: the northern hemisphere. The circle was subdivided by a T formed by the Nile, the Don, and the Mediterranean, with the latter representing a spiritual and symbolic divide between Europe and Africa (see e.g. Klein, 2001: 17-19; Smith, 2008: 2). Michel de Certeau has described the triumph of geometry in European map-making of the fifteenth to the seventeenth centuries as a totalizing gesture which colonized space (de Certeau, 1988: 121). And yet, this gesture was one that located different parts of the earth on the same plane, related to each other through a grid of geometric coordinates rather than cosmological interpretation. It conceptualized the world as a homogeneous space.

Along with the voyages of discovery, the idea of the Mediterranean as the centre of the world, the Roman *mare nostrum*, changed. The Mediterranean in Homer's *Odyssee* does not merely function as the setting of Ulysses' travels but also demarcates the world as it is known. This world was expanding considerably in the course of the sixteenth century, at least in the European imagination – a shift that Jyotsna Singh, Daniel Vitkus, and others have described as a first phase of globalization (Singh, 2009; Vitkus, 2009). The Globe Theatre carried the reference to a 'widening' world in its name. Around 1600, the name did no longer (exclusively) refer to the idea of man's earthly existence as a cosmic play, which was replicated on the stage. Drama and theatre "registered England's growing awareness of the foreign worlds beyond its borders" (Degenhardt, 2012: 433). They communicated knowledge about these new worlds and created them on stage, with "topical references" as in my introductory quotes from *The Jew of Malta*, or "outlandish" props and costumes (as in the Turk plays) metonymically evoking far-away lands. Even city comedies frequently alluded to English dreams of overseas riches – satirically as in George Chapman, John Marston, and Ben Jonson's *Eastward Ho!* (1605) and Frances Beaumont *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* (1607), or affirmatively as in Thomas Dekker's *The Shoemaker's Holiday* (1599).

Despite this early modern 'globalisation', the Mediterranean remained one of the major arteries of international maritime trade. In *The Tempest*, all three ships arriving on Prospero's island come from a Mediterranean port: the first is from Algiers, bringing Sycorax and her child Caliban (1.2.265-270); the second is the Milanese bark with Prospero and Miranda on board (1.2.144-171); and the

third is Alonso's ship, which has been thrown off from its course from Tunis to Naples. The setting of the island remains unclear, even if it is not Mediterranean, it seems to be spatially connected with the routes across the Mediterranean – from and to both Italy and North Africa. As has been explored in numerous studies, *The Tempest* responds to journeys to and accounts of the "New World". And yet, it does so from the perspective of trans-Mediterranean travel and cultural encounters (Fuchs, 1997; Hess, 2000: 121). Between Algiers, Tunis, Naples, and Milan, it seems, there are new worlds to discover. This is also true for early modern drama, which emerges from these very routes.

Marine Plots

Seafaring and the dangers of crossing the oceans have offered plots for millennia. They are at the basis of ancient myths and epics and have provided fundamental metaphors of being in the world. Hans Blumenberg contends that despite the fact that "humans live their lives and build their institutions on dry land, (...) they seek to grasp the movement of their existence above all through a metaphorics of the perilous sea voyage" (Blumenberg, 1997: 7). It is not surprising that these plots took centre stage when seaborne trade was rapidly expanding, and ships were sent out on long voyages of discovery. Early modern plays show or tell stories about sea journeys and shipwrecks, about merchants shipping their wares on risky voyages and making good fortunes, about pirates and sea-battles. References to sea-journeys are even inserted in genres and plays that are far remote from the Mediterranean: In *2 Henry IV*, Pistol yearns for "Africa and golden joys" (5.3.93). In the third scene of *Macbeth*, the First Witch concocts her revenge against a sailor whose wife has refused to share her food with her: "Though his barcque cannot be lost, / Yet it shall be tempest-tossed" (1.3.23-24). And again and again, it is the "waywardness" of the sea that seems to function as a catalyst for the plot: in *The Comedy of Errors*, where two sets of twin brothers separated by a shipwreck are reunited after many years; in *The Tempest*, where the ship carrying Prospero's enemies is brought to his island; in *Othello*, where the Turkish fleet is destroyed by a storm; in *Twelfth Night*, where Viola and Sebastian are washed to the shores of Illyria after a shipwreck. *Pericles* is indeed "soaked in Mediterranean saltwater", as Vitkus claims (Vitkus, 2003: 40), when almost every shift of scene is motivated by another sea journey. The episodic plot of the play, which has been described as "preposterous" (Cohen, 1997: 2709), makes perfect sense if it is seen as a structural response to "the wayward seas" (18.10) of the eastern Mediterranean.

Connoting risk, transformation, and alterity, the ocean provided early modern dramatists with plots about social, political, and individual crises whose solution is suspended for a while. With the 'fluidity' of the sea, identities, political order, economic power, gender and cultural hierarchies all become precariously unstable. Ariel's song in 1.2 refers to the "sea-change" of the human body under water, into "coral" and "pearls", "into something rich and strange" (1.2.401-402). "The song", Mentz writes, "suggests that, to match the sea, humans and poetic forms must open themselves to disorder. (…) A new marine logic replaces the landbound world" (Mentz, 2009: 9). This 'marine logic' defies social rank, names, and individual ownership, not only in *The Tempest*. Shipwrecked on the coast of Illyria, both Viola and Antonio fear for their safety and think it wise to hide their identities. Pericles is "tossed" "from coast to coast" (5.34-35) and loses everything: his ship and possessions, his wife and daughter, as well as his status as a prince. When he arrives at Pentapolis, he admits that "What I have been, I have forgot to know" (5.106). He cannot even lay claim to his rusty armour when it is salvaged out of the sea. The fishermen hand it over to him so that he can participate in the tournament at king Simonides's court, but they remind him that it is now theirs – "'twas we that made up this garment through the rough seams of the waters" (5.182-183) – and that they expect some kind of monetary compensation from him.

The characters who accept the risks of seafaring, are often rewarded at the end of Shakespearean drama. In the last act of *The Merchant of Venice*, Antonio learns that "three of [his] argosies / Are richly come to harbour suddenly" (5.1.275-276). In *Twelfth Night*, *The Tempest*, *Pericles*, and *The Comedy of Errors*, the castaways are reunited with their families and many of them find romantic love. Indeed, these plots seem to be endorsing Hugo Grotius's notion of the universal right of free travel, barter, and communication across the sea as developed in *Mare Liberum* (1609) (Muldoon, 2016: 18). However, the wish to cross the sea is not met with unconditional approval. In *Merchant*, for example, Antonio's laudable adventures are contrasted with the desire of another character crossing the Mediterranean: Morocco. He is sent back, without the wealth of Belmont, and Portia wishes that "all of his complexion choose (…) so" (2.7.79). In *Merchant*, then, this unsuited suitor represents the dangers coming with the idea a *mare liberum*: foreign ownership, which is both sexualized and racialized. Then as today, crossing the Mediterranean is easier (and more permissible) for some than for others: Viola and Sebastian are welcomed in Illyria and are allowed to settle and to marry – a right that Morocco is denied and Othello can only briefly enjoy. The Turkish fleet in *Othello* is destroyed in a storm; the play thus has the elements thwart the Ottoman plans to conquer the island of Cyprus and control the Eastern Levant.

Shipwrecks with Spectators

"Shipwreck symbolizes loss, deprivation, separation – the condition towards which tragedies work, and from which comedies start" (Edwards, 1997: 147). In early modernity, the allegory of seafaring as the *conditio humana* together with the well-known topos of shipwreck functioned as "a powerful symbol of mortality adrift in a hostile universe" (Mentz, 2008: 166). However, I would insist that seafaring in early modern drama oscillates between metaphorical and referential meanings. Theatre audiences would also have connected these marine plots to actual voyages in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries and have been reminded "of the dangers faced by English sailors in the contemporary Mediterranean" (Vitkus, 2003: 40).

In this context, it is crucial to note the transformation of the classical constellation of "shipwreck with spectator", which Blumenberg explores in his essay. For Lucretius, he argues, the role of the uninvolved spectator was particularly interesting since it marked the position of the philosopher and the ideal of "an inviolable, solid ground for one's view of the world" (Blumenberg, 1997: 26) while seafaring, in contrast, functioned as a metaphor of the vanity of human struggle (*ibidem*). These ideas also informed Renaissance writing. Montaigne, in his essay "Of Profit and Honesty", quotes Lucretius to argue that witnessing the suffering of others evokes both compassion and pleasure: "for in the midst of compassion, we inwardly feele a kinde of bitter-sweete-pricking of malicious delight, to see other suffer; and children feele it also:

> *Suaue mari magno, turbantibus aquora ventis,*
> *E terra magnum alterius spectare laborem.*
> Tis sweet on graund seas, when windes waues turmoyle,
> From land to see an others greeuous toyle.
> (Montaigne, 1603: 475)

For Blumenberg this passage conceptualizes the problem of the "shipwreck with spectator" through the constellation of the theatre (Blumenberg, 1997: 16), thus merging "shipwreck metaphorics and theater metaphorics" (*idem*, 46).

Shakespearean drama, however, diverges from both the Stoic ideal of distanced observation and Montaigne's insistence on the cruel pleasures of spectatorship. The first scene of *The Tempest* turns the audience into doubles

of Miranda witnessing the shipwreck. The mariners cry "We split, we split, we split!" (1.1.36) and Gonzalo yearns for a "dry death" (60). But here, as well as in other plays, the reaction shown by the spectator in the world on stage is neither detached reflection nor pleasurable enjoyment of the scene. Instead, Miranda expresses her affective involvement and compassion: "O, I have suffered / With those that I saw suffer!" (*Tem*, 1.2.5-6). In *The Winter's Tale*, the Clown reports of "the most piteous cry of the poor soules" (3.3.84-85) that were shipwrecked off the shore of Bohemia. The tragedy on sea is mirrored by a tragedy on land where Antigonus is devoured by a bear, and the Clown's comparison between the two reduces the pathos of the narrative and turns it into a farce. Yet, the question remains whether his lament or the audience's potential laughter is the more appropriate response to the two catastrophes. Pericles's shipwreck is observed by the Fishermen, who mourn the death "of the poor men that were cast away before" them and express their grief about the "pitiful cries" of those who were perishing (5.58-62). In contrast to them, Pericles remains stoical; although he will later mourn the loss of his wife and daughter in a storm, he ignores the death of his own sailors. Such an emotional distance is complemented, and challenged, through other voices, albeit those of the lower orders, a young woman, and a clown, who do show compassion for the victims and sympathize with them. Their affective reaction sharply contrasts with the evil pleasure of the three witches in *Macbeth*, who truly enjoy the sight of the sailor "dwindle[ing], peak[ing], and pin[ing]" (1.3.22). "Show me, show me" (25), demands the Second Witch greedily, thus offering a figuration of the "malicious delight" Montaigne mentions.

In *Pericles* and *The Tempest*, the constellation of "shipwreck with spectator" is performed on stage and duplicated when the audience see themselves mirrored in the compassionate spectators of the shipwreck. As Evelyn Tribble has argued, both anti-theatricalists and "early modern playwrights and players were keenly aware of the susceptibility of audiences to the affective states of others" (Tribble, 2017: 195). By contrasting strong affective responses to the suffering of others with disinterestedness (or even cruel pleasure), the plays contributed to the early modern debate on the contagious affects of the stage, challenging the ideal of stoicism and suggesting an ethics of active compassion that still resonates today.

Contact Zone

To summarise: I have argued that early modern Mediterranean plays – and the references to the Mediterranean Sea in other plays – responded to a world that around 1600 was expanding through seaborne journeys. Plays as different as *The Jew of Malta*, *Twelfth Night*, and *Pericles* do not merely map the Mediterranean, but they also construct plots around maritime networks and the risks of seafaring. The Mediterranean Sea represented in these plays is characterized by its openness to encounter, trade, and communication on the one hand, and insecurity and danger on the other. I do not want to suggest a naïve presentist endorsement of this idea – and indeed, it would seem more than cynical to celebrate the risks of sea journeys at a time when several thousand men, women, and children die annually in their attempt to cross the Mediterranean. And yet, a rereading of early modern Mediterranean plays may offer ways of approaching the pressing ethical and political challenges posed by migration across and shipwreck on the Mediterranean Sea – approaches beyond nationalism, nativism, and the logic of borders. Such a revision may also help Shakespeare scholarship move beyond its national frameworks and develop ways of conceptualizing early modern literature and culture as emerging from and across the contact zone that the Mediterranean established.

Notes

1. All Shakespeare quotations are from Greenblatt, 1997.

Works cited

Barbour, Richmond (2003), *Before Orientalism: London's Theater of the East, 1576-1626*, Cambridge, Cambridge UP.

Bartels, Emily C. (1993), *Spectacles of Strangeness: Imperialism, Alienation, and Marlowe*, Philadelphia, U of Pennsylvania P.

Blumenberg, Hans (1997), *Shipwreck with Spectator: Paradigm for a Metaphor of Existence*, trans. Steven Rendall, Cambridge, MIT Press.

Brayton, Daniel (2012), *Shakespeare's Ocean: An Ecocritical Exploration*, Charlottesville, U of Virginia P.

Cantor, Paul. A. (2006), "The Shores of Hybridity: Shakespeare and the Mediterranean", *Literature Compass*, vol. 3/4, pp. 896-913.

Cohen, Walter (1997), "Introduction" to *Pericles, Prince of Tyre*, in Stephen Greenblatt (ed.), *The Norton Shakespeare*, New York, W. W. Norton, pp. 2709-2715.

de Certeau, Michel (1984), *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall, Berkeley, U of California P. Originally published in 1980 as *L'Invention du quotidien*, *Arts de faire*, coll. 10/18, U.G.E., Paris.

Degenhardt, Jane Hwang (2014), "Foreign Worlds", in Arthur F. Kinney (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Shakespeare*, Oxford, Oxford UP, pp. 433-457.

Dimmock, Matthew (2005), *New Turkes: Dramatizing Islam and the Ottomans in Early Modern England*, Aldershot, Ashgate.

Döring, Tobias (2012), "All the World's the Sea: Shakespearean Passages", *Shakespeare Jahrbuch*, vol. 148, pp. 11-30.

Edwards, Philip (2001), *Sea-Mark: The Metaphorical Voyage, Spenser to Milton*, Liverpool, Liverpool UP.

Fuchs, Barbara (1997), "Conquering Islands: Contextualizing *The Tempest*", *Shakespeare Quarterly*, vol. 48, nr. 1, pp. 45-62.

Greenblatt, Stephen (1978), "Marlowe, Marx, and Anti-Semitism", *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 5, nr. 2, pp. 291-307.

— (1988), *Shakespearean Negotiations: The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England*, Berkley, U of California P.

— (1997) (ed.), *The Norton Shakespeare*, New York, W. W. Norton.

Hakluyt, Richard (1599), *The Second Volume of the Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques and Discoveries of the English Nation*, London, George Bishop, Ralph Newbery and Robert Barker.

Hess, Andrew C. (2000), "The Mediterranean and Shakespeare's Geopolitical Imagination", in Peter Hulme / William H. Sherman (ed.), *"The Tempest" and Its Travels*, Philadelphia, U of Pennsylvania P, pp. 121-130.

Jonson, Ben (2012), *Every Man in His Humour* (1616), ed. by David Bevington, in David Bevington *et al.* (ed.), *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*, vol. 4, Cambridge, Cambridge UP, pp. 617-728.

Klein, Bernhard (2001), *Maps and the Writing of Space in Early Modern England and Ireland*, Basingstoke, Palgrave.

Klein, Bernhard / Gesa Mackenthun (2004), "Introduction: The Sea is History", in Bernhard Klein / Gesa Mackenthum (ed.), *Sea Changes: Historicizing the Ocean*, New York, Routledge, pp. 1-12.

MacLean, Gerald (2007), *Looking East: English Writing and the Ottoman Empire before 1800*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan.

Marlowe, Christopher (2009), *The Jew of Malta*, ed. James R. Siemon, London, Bloomsbury.

Matar, Nabil (1998), *Islam in Britain, 1558-1685*, Cambridge, Cambridge UP.

McGowan, Bruce (1981), *Economic Life in Ottoman Europe: Taxation, Trade and the Struggle for Land, 1600 – 1800*, Cambridge, Cambridge UP.

Mentz, Steve (2008), "Shipwreck and Ecology: Toward a Unifying Theory of Shakespeare and Romance", *International Shakespeare Yearbook*, vol. 8, pp. 165-182.

— (2009), *At the Bottom of Shakespeare's Ocean*, London, Continuum.

Montaigne, Michel de (1603), *The Essayes or Morall, Politike and Millitarie Discourses of Lo: Michaell de Montaigne*, trans. by Jon Florio, London, Val. Sims for Edward Blount.

Muldoon, James (2016), "Who Owns the Sea?", in Bernhard Klein (ed.), *Fictions of the Sea: Critical Perspectives on the Ocean in British Literature and Culture*, London, Routledge, pp. 14-27.

Schimanski, Johan / Stephen F. Wolfe (ed.) (2017), *Border Aesthetics: Concepts and Intersections*, New York, Berghahn.

Schülting, Sabine et al. (eds.) (2012), *Early Modern Encounters with the Islamic East: Performing Cultures*, Farnham, Ashgate.

Shapiro, James (1988), "'Which is the Merchant here, and which the Jew?': Shakespeare and the Economics of Influence", *Shakespeare Studies*, vol. 20, 269-279.

Sidney, Philip (1967), *An Apology for Poetry* (1595), ed. by Geoffrey Shepherd, London, Thomas Nelson.

Singh, Jyotsna (2009), "Introduction: The Global Renaissance", in Jyotsna Singh (ed.), *The Global Renaissance: English Literature and Culture in the Era of Expansion*, Malden, Wiley-Blackwell, pp. 1-27.

Smith, D. K. (2008), *The Cartographic Imagination in Early Modern England*, Farnham, Ashgate.

Stanivukovic, Goran V. (2007), "Introduction", in Stanivukovic (ed.), *Remapping the Mediterranean World in Early Modern English Writings*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 1-20.

Tribble, Evelyn (2017), "Affective Contagion on the Early Modern Stage", in Amanda Bailey / Mario DiGangi (eds.), *Affect Theory and Early Modern Texts: Politics, Ecologies, and Form*, New York, Palgrave, pp. 195-212.

Unger, Richard W. (2017), "Ships and Sailing Routes in Maritime Trade around Europe 1300-1600", in Wims Blockmans *et al.* (ed.), *The Routledge Handbook of Maritime Trade around Europe 1300-1600*, London, Routledge, pp. 17-35.

UNHCR (2019), Operational Data Portal. Mediterranean Situation, https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean, accessed 28 March 2023.

Vitkus, Daniel (2003), *Turning Turk: English Theater and the Multicultural Mediterranean, 1570-1630*, New York, Palgrave.

Vitkus, Daniel (2006), "Turks and Jews in *The Jew of Malta*", in Garrett A. Sullivan *et al*. (ed.), *Early Modern English Drama: A Critical Companion*, New York / Oxford, Oxford UP, pp. 61-72.

Vitkus, Daniel (2009), "The New Globalism: Transcultural Commerce, Global Systems Theory, and Spenser's Mammon", in Jyotsna Singh (ed.), *The Global Renaissance: English Literature and Culture in the Era of Expansion*, Malden, Wiley-Blackwell, pp. 31-49.

3.2. "Wheeling strangers of here and everywhere": Present Issues of Integration and the Early Modern Crisis of Conversion

Lieke Stelling
Universiteit Utrecht

ABSTRACT

The "crisis of religious conversion" that took place in early modern Europe, and how this manifested itself in Shakespeare's comedy *The Merchant of Venice* and tragedy *Othello*, offers a thought-provoking historical perspective on current questions of immigration and integration. This chapter interprets the two plays in the light of the 2015 European refugee crisis and shows how they help us recognize and better understand the parallels between early modern English concerns about religious conversion and contemporary European anxieties about the integration of non-Western refugees, immigrants and other people who are perceived as "other".

Shakespeare's exploration of the theme of conversion is helpful, as he was concerned not so much with the specifics of religious confessions as with societal and social implications of religious conversion. As such, his conversion plays present powerful narratives on what it means to be a minority or newcomer in a society that is anxious about the stability of its collective identity, allowing us to better understand some of the persistent contradictions that are part of the debate about immigrant integration and the position of minorities. Paradoxically, the ostensible desire for Christianization and assimilation exhibited by many Western societies reveals an even stronger urge to label converts or non-Western immigrants as aliens who reassuringly confirm boundaries between other and self.

In her monograph on religious conversion in the British empire and nation-state, Gauri Viswanathan claims that "by undoing the concept of fixed, unalterable identities, conversion unsettles the boundaries by which selfhood, citizenship, nationhood, and community are defined, exposing these as permeable borders" (Viswanathan, 1998: 16). I will argue that this observation can be seen as a key to understanding two interrelated developments in the history of the Western world: one that precedes Viswanathan's study and concerns the early modern period, the other that follows it, relating to present issues of integration. To begin with the latter, according to the SCP (*Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau*), the Dutch government agency which conducts research into the social aspects of all areas of government policy, the theme of immigration and integration has over the past years consistently been ranked as one of the most pressing problems in Dutch society (den Ridder *et al.*, 2018: 19-27). Many are of the opinion that people with minority backgrounds, including refugees and other (non-Western) immigrants ought to do more or should behave differently to become fully-fledged members of Dutch society. This is problematized, however, by the notion that the Dutch disagree on what it means to be Dutch and what "Dutchness" entails. Manifesting themselves in fierce debates, for instance, about the holiday tradition of *Sinterklaas* and its blackface character *Zwarte Piet* (Author Unknown, 2013), these issues are often described in terms of a national identity crisis and have parallels in several other nations, especially the ones with a colonialist past (Salm, 2017; Moldenhauer, 2017; Duhamel, 2015; Hirsch, 2018). The recent developments of the refugee crisis, which concerns all European nations, and Brexit, which cannot be disentangled from the complexities of international migration flows, makes this issue more urgent.

The "crisis of religious conversion" that took place in early modern Europe, and how this manifested itself Shakespeare's comedy *The Merchant of Venice* and tragedy *Othello*, offers a thought-provoking historical perspective on current questions of immigration and integration, allowing us to better understand some of the persistent paradoxes that are part of the debate about immigrant integration and the position of minorities. In addition, I will show that Shakespeare's exploration of the theme of conversion is helpful, as he was less concerned with the specifics of religious confessions than with societal and social implications of religious conversion. As such, his conversion plays present powerful narratives on what it means to be a minority or newcomer in a society that is anxious about the stability of its collective identity.

As a steady stream of recent publications and projects on the topic has shown, the early modern period was truly an age of religious conversion (Shoulson,

2013; Mazur, 2016; Ditchfield / Smith, 2017; Norton, 2017; and Shinn, 2018).[1] The Protestant Reformation, but also increased encounters between Christians, Jews and Muslims in the Mediterranean, and native pagan inhabitants of Asian and American territories opened up new possibilities for religious conversion and proselytization. Early modern English theatre testifies to the appeal conversion had on its creators and audiences, offering tragedies, comedies, and all genres in between, about converts, conversions and near conversions across every imaginable religion. However, in my book on this topic, I argue that rather than simply celebrate conversion, as their medieval predecessors had done, playwrights were more interested in reassuring their audiences that new Christians would never be able to revert to their old faith, for instance by having these characters assassinated by evil former co-religionists immediately after their transformations (Stelling, 2019). Similarly, conversion comedies ridicule the potential Christianization of caricatural Jews, Muslims, and Pagans. Playwrights adopted these narrative strategies because conversion posed a quandary in two respects. Ostensibly desired, and, according to some, in the case of Jews even seen as an essential foreboding of the Second Coming, the adoption of the true faith also implied that converts were capable of radical change and thus of relapse. It is for this reason that converts were looked upon with suspicion, regardless of the faith they embraced. In addition, the phenomenon of conversion rendered religions exchangeable, undermining the absolute value of true Christianity. This becomes apparent from the fact that many plays draw explicit parallels between religious conversion and commercial transaction.

Important about Viswanathan's observation is that religious conversion is inextricably associated with secular issues of citizenship, nationhood, and community. Indeed, it was in the early modern period that religion came to be employed as an instrument to fashion national selves and barbarous others to an unprecedented extent (Stelling, 2019: 5). More so than before the Reformation, the exchange of one religion for another was perceived as a betrayal, or, depending on one's confessional outlook, embrace, of a nation. It is because of this early modern association – and often conflation – of religion with secular issues that many of the mechanisms underlying the treatment of converts by their new communities are still recognizable today and comparable to the ways in which today's societies deal with immigrants.

While the world is significantly more secular than it was in the early modern period, with some Western European countries having populations where more than half say they are not religious, immigration is the new conversion as regards social crises. What is more, religion has, of course, not disappeared from today's

societies and continues to play a defining role in debates about immigration and integration. This is notably so with regard to Islam, whose compatibility with what are described as "Western" values is often called into question. In relation to this, (religious) extremism and radicalization are often inseparably bound up with questions of integration. Religious conversion is, moreover, part of discussions about immigration, for instance when it is claimed that Muslim refugees convert to Christianity to increase their chances of being granted asylum (Author unknown, 2017; Nawa, 2018).

The Merchant of Venice

In fact, the notion that Christianization could facilitate a smooth integration into a new community is also found in Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*,[2] when the Jewish Jessica announces that she intends to turn Christian so that she can escape her detested life that is governed by her strict father and marry the man she loves. *The Merchant of Venice* is the best known early modern English conversion play, offering, in addition to Jessica's, also the forced Christianization of her father Shylock. The play is furthermore interspersed with literal and metaphorical references to conversion, including the unwitting and derogatory allusions to Shylock's conversion, articulated by several Christian characters, and Portia's assertion, after Bassanio's success in the test of the caskets, that "myself, and what is mine, to you [Bassanio] and yours / Is now converted" (3.2.166-67). Nevertheless, the play, like other early modern English drama, steers clear of portraying any fully-fledged conversions, let alone exploring the meaning of a true and radical transformation of religious identity.

As regards the storylines of Shylock and Jessica, the comedy is one about outsiders and addresses the question as to whether they can truly become insiders in Venice. Shylock's very obvious status as an outsider is often explained with the example of the insults he receives at the hands of Antonio, Bassanio and Gratiano, or with Shylock's own claim that he refuses to "eat", "drink", or "pray" with Bassanio, but the most poignant and powerful illustration is when Shylock is convicted for the attempted murder of Antonio (1.3.33-34). Shylock faces a legal penalty in the form of the confiscation of possessions and house, not so much because of the attempt itself, but because there is a specific law against "alien[s]" who "seek the life of any citizen", and Shylock is considered an alien (4.1.345, 347). There is no reason to assume that Shylock was not born and raised

in Venice, so the only reason he is labelled as such is because he is a Jew. Thus, precisely by *not* problematizing Shylock's status as an alien, the play shows how in early modern England religious identity had started to merge with citizenship and social identity.

The branding of Shylock as a foreigner despite his likely Venetian origin is similar to the way in which present-day minorities are considered alien despite being native-born. In his 2017 analysis of Shakespeare's comedy in *The New Yorker*, Stephen Greenblatt recalls how as a student and prospective research assistant at Yale he was treated as a greedy "alien", trying to "wheedle money out of Yale University", simply because of his Jewish name and despite the fact that he was "born in this country, as [his] parents had been, and [he] donned [his] Yale sweatshirt without a sense of imposture" (Greenblatt, 2017). Greenblatt notes that he still feels "outrage" about this incident, and "wonder inflected by [his] recognition of the fact that African-American students have had it much worse, and that other ethnic groups and religions have now replaced Jews as the focus of the anxiety that afflicted my interlocutor" (*ibidem*). Indeed, a recent example exposing a similar treatment of minority citizens of a different ethnic background is the 2018 Windrush scandal, which concerned British subjects, born in the British colonies, in many cases people who had migrated to Great Britain as children (Gentleman, 2022). They were faced with deportation and sometimes even lost their jobs and homes because they were no longer considered full British subjects after renewed immigration checks.

The implication of Shylock's conversion is, of course, that he exchanges his position as a Jewish outsider for that of a Christian insider. Yet, other than this very theoretical interpretation, there is nothing to suggest that Shylock actually becomes an insider, either from his own perspective or from that of the Christians. To begin with, the play is strikingly evasive about Shylock's Christianization. Faced first with the death penalty, and later with the threat of having to surrender his house and possessions, Shylock is offered 'Christian mercy' and told to convert, or "presently become a Christian" (4.1.383). This phrase betrays the utter implausibility of Shylock's true conversion to Christianity, as he is not given the time to prepare himself and study the Bible and is expected to instantly transform into a Christian. Instead of suggesting that Christianity is a belief and conviction that can be embraced, the phrase points to a social identity that is extremely difficult to shed or assume, perhaps only by a Pauline miracle of instantaneous conversion. Of course, Shylock's reluctant decision to accept the punishment and, more importantly, his permanent disappearance from the stage as well as from the narrative does not help in envisioning his true

conversion and integration into the Christian community. What makes matters worse are the deeply ironic comments that unwittingly anticipate his conversion, including Antonio's: "the Hebrew will turn Christian, he grows kind" (1.3.174).

While also Jewish and a figure of conversion, Jessica seems to be Shylock's positive counterpart. She is repeatedly contrasted with her father and described as his opposite. The Clown, it is intimated, finds it difficult to believe that her father was not a "Christian" (2.3.11-12), and Salarino, for instance, asserts that there is "more difference between [Shylock's] flesh and [Jessica's] than between jet and ivory, more between [their] bloods than there is between red wine and Rhenish" (3.1.34-36). In addition, Jessica's conversion is voluntary, and the audience is allowed to see her in her post-conversion identity. However, a closer examination of her offstage conversion shows that this change, like her father's, has little if no substance. Other than the references to her being her Jewish father's daughter, there are no allusions to Jessica's Jewish identity; her conversion is not religiously motivated, and after her baptism, Jessica does not talk about her Christian identity, or, say, the significance of the New Testament or Christ.

As a matter of fact, Jessica's conversion produces the opposite effect: it is precisely *after* her change that she is confronted with her status as an irreducible outsider. This happens when she and Lorenzo arrive at Portia's court in Belmont and she is ignored by Bassanio (3.2.219). Most conspicuously, the validity of Jessica's conversion is denied, and her status as a damned Jewish other is emphasized, first by Gratiano, when he welcomes "Lorenzo and his infidel" to Belmont, and second by Lancelot the Clown, who explains to her that she is damned because she is still her father's daughter and "the sins of the father are to be laid upon the children" (3.5.1-2).

Jessica's situation as an outsider who attempts to integrate into a society, only to find her "otherness" emphasized in doing so, is not unlike that of many current-day immigrants. Having obtained qualifications from institutions in their new countries of residence, they face great difficulty breaking into the job market, as potential employers are wary of hiring foreigners, or, indeed, minorities (Wechselbaumer, 2016; Wrench, Rea and Ouali 1999; Author Unknown, 2019).

While Jessica insists that "her husband (…) ha[s] made [her] a Christian", Lancelot's response betrays a deep early modern concern about the implications of religious conversion (3.5.17-18). He asserts that "this making of Christians will raise the price of hogs: if we grow all to be pork eaters, we shall not shortly have a rasher on the coals for money", referring to the notion that Jews do not eat pork (3.5.21-23). Yet while Lancelot's remark concerns Venetian economy, the underlying issue is of the association of religious conversion with commercial

transaction. The same analogy can be found in Portia's claim, mentioned above, in which she presents her own person as well as her possessions as items that can be "converted" to her husband. Likewise, and to the same effect, Jessica literally gilds herself with money when she flees her parental home to convert and marry (2.6.49-50). Similar comparisons can be found in other early modern conversion drama (Stelling, 2019: 131-133). The point is that conversion renders religion exchangeable and turns it into a commodity; unsettlingly, it becomes something that can easily be donned or cast off for reasons of opportunity.

Othello

Othello,[3] another conversion drama set in Venice, can be seen as a sequel to *The Merchant of Venice*, precisely from the point of view of conversion. While we are not given the opportunity to see Shylock after his Christianization, *Othello* is the only early modern English play entirely devoted to the fortunes of a convert in his post-conversion identity after a *radical* change of faith (unlike Jessica's). In my book I have described *Othello* as a conversion play and Othello's status as a convert (Stelling, 2019: ch. 7); in the present chapter, I would like to focus on a specific moment in the play that shows how Othello, despite his efforts at integrating as a Christian husband into his wife's community, is framed as an irreducible other, and I will compare the rhetorical strategy that is used with a current-day example.

The moment in question is when Othello is said to be an "extravagant and wheeling stranger / Of here and everywhere" (1.1.137-138), a comment made by Roderigo that is repeated by Iago, who turns it into a broad stereotype about all moors: "These Moors are changeable in their wills" (1.3.339-340). The gist of this argument is that some people have no or unclear roots, which makes them unreliable. This frame was used in 2008 by a Dutch pundit who was commenting on Barack Obama's suitability for the presidency a day before the election. "Obama's afkomst is al een raadsel [Obama's origin is already a mystery]", Bart Jan Spruyt wrote tellingly in the Dutch quality newspaper *NRC*, adding:

> Hij is de zoon van een studente uit Kansas en een
> buitenlandse student uit Kenia. Na de echtscheiding
> hertrouwde zijn moeder met een andere buitenlandse
> student, uit Indonesië. Obama ging naar school in Jakarta,
> en werd later in Hawaï door zijn grootouders opgevoed,

voordat hij in 1979 op het Amerikaanse vasteland ging studeren. (Spruyt, 2008)

[He is the son of a student from Kansas and a foreign student from Kenya. After their divorce, his mother married another foreign student from Indonesia. Obama went to school in Jakarta, and was later raised by his grandparents in Hawaii, before he went on to do a degree on the American mainland in 1979. (My translation)

Striking about this passage is the emphasis Spruyt places on Obama's alleged "foreignness". This is not only obvious from his repetition of the term itself, but also from the notion that he distinguishes between Hawaii, where Obama was raised from the age of ten, and the "American mainland", as if the latter place were somehow more "American" than the island state (*ibidem*). It is a contrast that echoes Spruyt's earlier juxtaposition between "het enigma [the enigma]", Obama, and the "all American hero" and "open boek [open book]", John McCain, the rival presidential candidate (*ibidem*). While Spruyt does mention specific nations, such as Indonesia and Kenya, the thrust of his words is that Obama's origin is a mishmash of "exotic" (a term literally used by Spruyt) cultures and influences (*ibidem*). It is the same type of reasoning used by the so-called "birthers", Obama's political opponents who question the fact that he was born in the United States, spearheaded by Donald Trump. Furthermore, and tellingly, the passage is peppered with allusions to what Spruyt wants to present as a disturbed and uprooted upbringing: a divorce and remarriage of Obama's mother and his being raised by his grandparents. Spruyt's insistence on Obama's confused otherness and ostensible lack of rootedness serves to suggest that Obama cannot be trusted, that there is no firm and solid basis to which Obama's ideas can be traced, and, by implication, that his ideas might change at will. This is more dangerous than claiming that Obama's political opinions are ill-advised, as it undermines his every potential opinion. Spruyt's attempt at mitigating his attack on Obama's trustworthiness is hardly convincing: "die exotische afkomst is natuurlijk geen politiek probleem, maar wel de zoektocht naar zijn identiteit die hem in contact bracht met rare radicale denkers en activisten [that exotic origin is, of course, not a political problem, but his search for his identity that exposed him to queer, radical thinkers and activists was]" (*ibidem*).

Spruyt continues his argument by discussing some of the people that he sees as radical thinkers, asserting that Obama was "bekeerd en getrouwd [converted and married]" by Jeremiah Wright (*ibidem*). It is interesting that Spruyt should

mention Obama's conversion. Ostensibly, this is an offhand remark, but one to which special meaning is attached by Spruyt's other main assertion, that Obama is a radical. Just as Iago obsessively employs the term "moor" throughout the play, so does Spruyt sprinkle his column with the word "radicaal [radical]" (*ibidem*). Spruyt associates what he sees as Obama's radicalism with a disparate range of figures and themes, including the "racistische dominee Jeremiah Wright, de man van God damn AmeriKKKa [racist reverend Jeremiah Wright, the man of God damn AmeriKKKa]" (*ibidem*). In addition, Obama is "geïndoctrineerd [indoctrinated]" by the Jewish activist Saul Alinksky "die zijn aanhang leerde hoe het system te infiltreren om de massa rijp te maken voor change [who taught his followers how to infiltrate the system to make them ripe for change]", and has connections to William Ayers, "lid van de terroristische organisatie Weather Underground [member of the terrorist organization Weather Underground]" (*ibidem*). Spruyt's point seems to be that Obama is a radical convert, easily indoctrinated, and therefore radically untrustworthy.

Othello and *The Merchant of Venice* thus show the reluctance of communities to accept as new members people they regard as other. Whether it is the convert who expresses this desire (Jessica and Othello) or the community itself (forcing Shylock to convert), conversion followed by true assimilation and recognition is not possible on the stage. As we have seen, conversion can even bring about the reverse effect: Jessica's change is questioned and she is called an "infidel", Shylock's is steered clear of by the play and ridiculed by other characters in earlier mocking allusions, and Othello is framed as an unreliable and dangerous enemy. In this way, the two plays present conversion as a form of continuity or stability, rather than change, betraying an early modern anxiety over its unsettling effects that appears underneath an explicit desire of Christianization. The same paradox can be found in the context of current-day issues of integration: there is a desire that "aliens", whether they be minorities or immigrants, adapt themselves to the majority society, but in their attempts, they often find themselves excluded and stigmatized, as the change itself "unsettles the boundaries by which selfhood, citizenship, nationhood, and community are defined" (Viswanathan, 1998: 16).

In 2008, the Dutch theatre director Theu Boermans staged a performance of *The Merchant of Venice* in which Shylock gradually transforms from a liberal Jew into a bloodthirsty, orthodox Jew (Stelling, 2009).[4] It is a response to the way in which he is treated by the Christian community. After his offstage conversion, Shylock remains visible as a ghostlike figure at the back of the stage, standing in a pile of garbage. Boermans' Jessica responds to the unwillingness of her Christian

environment to accept her as a new Christian by regretting her conversion. She concludes the play by lighting a menorah. Equally meaningful is her outfit when she escapes her father's house: a burqa. Of course, Boermans took great liberty in adding these elements to the narrative, but the purpose of his adaptation makes perfect sense and is close to the original, when we realize that the early modern crisis of conversion bears close resemblance to the modern paradox of immigrant integration and treatment of minorities. Boermans' most significant addition to the original is that he shows what happens to outsiders who are consistently excluded and branded as alien. Indeed, if, as Stephen Greenblatt puts it, Shakespeare offers a "cure for Xenophobia", it is because of the ability of today's teachers, theatre-makers, and other interpreters to recognize the essence of his universal genius, but also the power of his narratives as products of his own age.

Notes

1. See also "Early Modern Conversions", an interdisciplinary project that ran from 2013-2018 at McGill University and was led by Paul Yachnin, http://earlymodernconversions.com, accessed 28 March 2024.

2. All quotations are from Greenblatt, 1997.

3. All quotations are from Drakakis, 2010.

4. *De Koopman van Venetië* was performed by De Theatercompagnie and premiered in Amsterdam on 13 November 2008.

Works cited

Author Unknown (2013), "Is Zwarte Piet racism?", *The Economist*, 4 November, https://www.economist.com/europe/2013/11/04/is-zwarte-piet-racism, accessed 28 March 2024.

Author Unknown (2017), "Iranian refugees turn to Christianity in the Netherlands", *BBC*, 25 August, https://www.bbc.com/news/av/world-europe-41040163/iranian-refugees-turn-to-christianity-in-the-netherlands, accessed 28 March 2024.

Author Unknown (2019), "'I'm broken, depressed': Foreigners struggle to find work in Finland", *Yle*, 11 February, https://yle.fi/uutiset/osasto/news/im_broken_depressed_foreigners_struggle_to_find_work_in_finland/10641139, accessed 28 March 2024.

Ditchfield, Simon and Helen Smith (ed.) (2017), *Conversions: Gender and Religious Change in Early Modern Europe*, Manchester, Manchester UP.

Drakakis, John (ed.) (2010), *The Merchant of Venice*, London, Arden.

Duhamel, Alain (2015), "La crise identitaire française", *Liberation*, 13 May, https://www.liberation.fr/france/2015/05/13/la-crise-identitaire-francaise_1308861, accessed 28 March 2024; Hirsch, Afua (2018), "Why Britishness, as an identity, is in crisis", *National Geographic*, 19 April, https://www.nationalgeographic.co.uk/history-and-civilisation/2018/04/why-britishness-as-an-identity-is-in-crisis#, accessed 28 March 2024.

Gentleman, Amelia (2022), "Windrush scandal caused by '30 years of racist immigration laws' – report", *The Guardian*, 22 May, https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2022/may/29/windrush-scandal-caused-by-30-years-of-racist-immigration-laws-report, accessed 28 March 2024.

Greenblatt, Stephen (ed.) (1997), *Othello*, in Stephen Greenblatt (ed.), *The Norton Shakespeare*, New York and London, W.W. Norton & Company.

Greenblatt, Stephen (2017), "Shakespeare's Cure for Xenophobia: What *The Merchant of Venice* taught me about ethnic hatred and the literary imagination", *The New Yorker*, 10 July, https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2017/07/10/shakespeares-cure-for-xenophobia, accessed 28 March 2024.

Loftsdóttir, Kristín and Lars Jensen (eds.) (2016), *Crisis in the Nordic Nations and Beyond: At the Intersection of Environment, Finance and Multiculturalism*, London, Routledge.

Mazur, Peter (2016), *Conversion to Catholicism in Early Modern Italy*, London, Routledge.

Moldenhauer, Benjamin (2017), "Eine Nation sucht sich selbst", *Der Spiegel*, 15 April, http://www.spiegel.de/kultur/literatur/dieter-borchmeyers-was-ist-deutsch-eine-nation-sucht-sich-selbst-a-1143259.html, accessed 28 March 2024.

Nawa, Fariba (2018), "Iranians Are Converting to Evangelical Christianity in Turkey", *NPR*, 14 December, https://www.npr.org/2018/12/14/669662264/iranians-are-converting-to-evangelical-christianity-in-turkey?t=1552338440750, accessed 28 March 2024.

Norton, Claire (ed.) (2017), *Conversion and Islam in the Early Modern Mediterranean: The Lure of the Other*, London, Routledge, 2017.

Ridder, Josje den, Paul Dekker and Evelien Boonstoppel (2018), *Burgerperspectieven 2018/3*, Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau.

Salm, Harriët (2017), "Dé Nederlander bestaat niet meer, of toch wel?", *Trouw*, 23 January, https://www.trouw.nl/samenleving/de-nederlander-bestaat-niet-meer-of-toch-wel-~a10866c2/, accessed 28 March 2024.

Shinn, Abigail (2018), *Conversion Narratives in Early Modern England: Tales of Turning*, London, Palgrave Macmillan.

Shoulson, Jeffrey (2013), *Fictions of Conversion: Jews, Christians, and Cultures of Change in Early Modern England*, Philadelphia, U of Pennsylvania P.

Spruyt, Bart Jan (2008), "Europa is beter af met McCain", *NRC*, 3 November, https://www.nrc.nl/nieuws/2008/11/03/europa-is-beter-af-met-mccain-11633587-a604070, accessed 28 March 2024.

Stelling, Lieke (2009), "Bekeringskomedie als moderne integratietragedie", *Documenta*, vol. 27, nr. 1, pp. 76-80.

— (2019), *Religious Conversion in Early Modern English Drama*, Cambridge, Cambridge UP.

Viswanathan, Gauri (1998), *Outside the Fold: Conversion, Modernity and Belief*, Princeton, Princeton UP.

Vogt, Roland (ed.) (2017), *European National Identities: Elements, Transitions, Conflicts*, London, Routledge.

Wechselbaumer, Doris (2016), "Discrimination Against Migrant Job Applicants in Austria: An Experimental Study", *German Economic Review* vol. 18, nr. 2, pp. 237-265.

Wrench, John, Andrea Rea and Nouria Ouali (eds.) (1999), *Migrants, Ethnic Minorities and the Labour Market: Integration and Exclusion in Europe*, London, Palgrave Macmillan.

Yachnin, Paul (2013-2018), "Early Modern Conversions", an interdisciplinary project that ran from 2013-2018 at McGill University and was led by, http://earlymodernconversions.com, accessed 28 March 2024.

3.3. Crisis and Otherness: The Role of Language

Richard Chapman
Università degli Studi di Ferrara

ABSTRACT

The complexity of the European crisis cannot hide the essential importance of migration due to climate change, war, and persecution. Austerity in European nations has worked with perceptions of alterity to create an "us and them" attitude which is ripe for exploitation by unscrupulous politicians. The chapter examines aspects of the friend-enemy postulate and its clear inadequacies.

Since 1945 Europe has perhaps considered itself above this problem due to the increasing, and largely successful, effort to create a multilingual society. However, a brief look at the language associated with the so-called migrant crisis challenges this comfortable assumption. Identity (claims, representations, and impositions of identity) has become key, and language is vital as the medium for these identity struggles to be played out. In the securitized state (Bauman) migrants described as arriving illegally, in waves, and as a dangerous other easily become an enemy undeserving of our care or hospitality.

Knowing this supposed "enemy" in order to recognize her/his true humanity is essential but requires great linguistic skill: not merely using a common language but possessing a common ethos of understanding (Derrida). While the state seems ponderous and unable to prevent the skilfully described outrages caused by migrants, language is our only humane response, as language is hospitality (Levinas).

Parvum dictum, sed immensum aestimatione, tot gentium sermones, tot linguae, tanta loquendi varietas, ut externus alieno paene non sit hominis vice!
[It is easily said, but immense to evaluate, that so many languages, so many dialects, such various forms of expression, appear among the races that to a stranger a foreigner almost appears non human].
— Pliny the Elder, *Natural History.*

It is only our words which bind us together and make us human.
— Michel de Montaigne, 1:9. *On liars.*

And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain / To tell my story
— Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, v. ii. 332-333.

The crisis of the European Union in 2018 is intense and multifaceted, encompassing the tribulations of Brexit, the economic after-effects of the banking crash of 2007/8, a crisis in the feeling of genuine political representation among many European populations, and, perhaps most acutely of all, the supposed migrant crisis. The narrative goes something like this: an unprecedented wave of dispossessed, desperate (and potentially dangerous) people is sweeping into Europe unchecked, crossing the Mediterranean in the flimsiest of craft and so slipping into Europe at its geographically and economically weakest point (the coastlines of Greece, Italy and Spain). These newcomers bring difference, and a potential threat to the religious and ethical assumptions and values of European states and the Judeo-Christian tradition. And the fracture lines of European unity have been mercilessly exposed, with promises of acceptance of asylum seekers on the part of European states not on the frontline that are absurdly low, and then consistently not maintained.

Perhaps the sense of panic and confusion, underlined by far-right demonstrations in Dresden in 2017 and incidents in Chemniz in August 2018,[1] by increasingly aggressive political rhetoric from certain politicians in most European countries (e.g. Prime Minister Orban in Hungary and Minister of the Interior Salvini in Italy) and by a singular lack of concerted and effective action by the institutions of the Union, is exaggerated, however. Rather than being of immeasurable extent, the so-called migration crisis is one of perception.

Numbers are difficult to obtain and are often unreliable, but the UNHCR estimates that there are around 68.5 million forcibly displaced people worldwide at present (UNHCR *apud* Garland, 2018). While this figure is probably an underestimate, as counting displaced subjects is by definition a demanding task with many presumably slipping through the net, and the expression "forcibly displaced" being a rather narrow label to describe migrants in the early 21st century, we are nevertheless reminded that the "migration crisis" is hardly that: its numbers are not enormous in comparison with the world population and, instead of constituting some existential threat, they are more likely to be an acute reminder of the issue of world overpopulation as a whole. Indeed, Europe has seen repeated instances of population movements over time: the Roman

Empire can be said to have depended on a constant influx of foreign slaves, refugees and soldiers to function (Garland, 2018). Europe's recent history is full of significant migrations (e.g. the movement of people from the south of Italy to the more industrialised north [especially Piedmont and Lombardy] during the economic boom of the sixties and seventies). While these precedents were not without difficulties and social tension, there seems to be a completely new feeling surrounding the migrations of the last ten years.

The European migrant "crisis" owes its particular intensity to a variety of factors, not least the contingency with economic difficulties hardly resolved and perhaps exacerbated by austerity policies which hit the lower ranks of European society hardest, but the specifics of the refugee situation should make us reflect on the concept of the "other" and the varying levels of alterity perceived by receiving communities. Indeed, a bipolar, "us and them" reading of the migration event in Europe risks being far from the mark, not only because of any moral considerations, but quite simply because "us and them" is a naïve dichotomy, negating or concealing the complexities and shades of difference and otherness in any immigration experience. Indeed, as we shall see, most philosophical examinations of the issue founder precisely because of the inadequacy of the friend-enemy postulate and fail to equip the European mind to grapple with questions that are at once immediate and profound.

Pliny in the *Natural History* (Pliny the Elder, Book VII) gives a sense of the potential depths of a crisis of this kind in the suggestion that we cannot fully recognise as human someone who speaks a different tongue. Such is the variety of language and linguistic behaviour that we do not have the faculty to appreciate the humanity of someone speaking in a different way: their humanity is diminished because we cannot recognise, appreciate or interpret it to an adequate degree. Besides the implicit assumption that language is something that defines our humanity, his observation is perhaps mostly one of awe: we are incapable of dealing with the sheer complexity and richness of the world and so refute the intimate reality of linguistic diversity. In good times, or from a position of power, this awe might provoke curiosity or a sort of patronising concern; in times of economic difficulty the other side of awe, which is fear or even panic, could arouse feelings of suspicion or hostility.

There may be a temptation to think we have gone beyond Pliny: it is easy to refute some of his stranger descriptions of the exotic parts of the world and so our multi-cultural and multilingual Europe, where bilingualism (at least) is increasingly the norm (European Commission / Eurydice 2017) and negotiations between 27 different nation states go on without obvious difficulty, might expect to be

ideally equipped to deal with the other, and to appreciate her/his humanity. The "migrant crisis" however, forces us to question this, and to explore the theoretical underpinning of Europe's occasionally open hostility to clearly desperate people.

Nigel Farage, the doyen of the Brexit campaign, gives support to Pliny's suggestion, implying that those who do not speak the same language cannot really be our friends: "Our real friends in the world speak English",[2] allowing the suspicion that even those that are ostensibly friendly, but in a foreign tongue, are potentially deceiving us. This might be part of a political discourse centering on diplomacy, state-level decision-making and national elections, but we are immediately left to ponder whether the coincidence of this rhetoric of suspicion with outright hostility towards migrants on the part of certain groups in Europe is entirely down to chance.[3] All the more so because politicians, including Farage himself, have made this connection explicit on occasion (e.g., in Farage's case when discussing the "threat" of future mass immigration from Turkey if the United Kingdom remained in the European Union).

At this point it becomes politically imperative to identify who is not your friend, to classify the visitor, migrant, or uninvited guest as (exceptionally) friend or, more probably, foe. Europe has an unfortunate theoretical tradition in this regard. Karl Schmitt (*apud* Derrida, 1997) postulates the friend-enemy distinction as the essence of politics:

> If *the* political is to exist, one must know who everyone is, who is a friend and who is an enemy, and this knowing is not in the mode of theoretical knowledge, but in one of *practical identification*: knowing consists here in knowing how to identify the friend and the enemy. The practical identification of self – and from one self to another – seem to be sometimes conditions, sometimes consequences, of the identification of friend and enemy. (Derrida, 1997: 116)

Identification, and so identity, becomes key, both politically (as Schmitt proposed) and in social relations. And what is more indicative of provenance, of culture and of mind-set than language? As a shorthand for identification, language has an obvious role, and this might be the tongue or dialect spoken, or the accent and cadences with which it is spoken. "Group identity is based on important narratives and the language in which they are told". (Edwards, 2009: 254). The evaluative nature of the reception of speech is analysed effectively by Garrett (2010), who emphasises the influence even the slightest phonological idiosyncrasies can have on the listener.

But the role of language in this is manifold and complex as much as it is important, if not decisive, for the refugee seeking asylum. Besides its most explicit role in the "migrant crisis", which is in describing the very crisis itself, selecting terminology with rhetorical effect (Aristotle's *lexis* in its truest sense – the skilful, artful use of words and language)[4] and so framing the narration of the events in politically slanted terms. An example might be the repeated use of war vocabulary to describe what is essentially a political, social or perhaps economic question: "invasion"; "hordes"; "army of migrants". A more striking example is the political slogan utilised by Matteo Salvini in June 2018 immediately after he became Minister of the Interior in the new coalition government: "È finita la pacchia" [the party is over], colouring immigrants' stories with a careless linguistic sleight of hand, and defining them as freeloaders who should be packing their bags in readiness to leave (we might observe that few, if any, have ever arrived with the luxury of a suitcase) (Author unknown, 2018a). Here we note how the language used imposes a significant identity on (all?) migrants: that they are numerous and are trying to get something for nothing.

This is, however, probably merely the most explicit (even blatant) aspect of the role of language in Europe's crisis of otherness. A second, deeper mechanism might be found in the assumptions of the narratives associated with *who* these people are, most of all in the sense of *what kind of people* they might be. Rather than a subtle appreciation of national or regional cultural diversities, this is largely an imposed generalised view of other, non-European arrivals, using vague or catch-all epithets such as *asylum-seekers* or *migrants*. The greatest challenge to attempts to welcome or offer refuge to migrants in Europe probably comes from suggestions as to what they are doing or might do in the future: the safety of the nation or of the general public is at stake, along with the cultural integrity of the autochthonous community. Bauman's concept of "securitization" (2016: 24-25), the re-casting of various phenomena as instances of insecurity is relevant here, and the neologism reminds us of the intimate connection between language and society. This involves branding the arrivals either as potential terrorists, or at the very least, as people with radically different lifestyles, morals, and spirituality[5]. The "other" in every sense. These differences are naturally described in language. The cultural fears are mediated by linguistic behaviour. Language can become a fundamental part in the systematic imposition of the status of "enemy" on an individual or a group, thus realising Schmitt's idea of political action.

In *The Politics of Friendship* (1997, *passim*), Derrida explores the identification, role and possibilities of friendship, and therefore enmity, from a wide range of deep philosophical perspectives, but is perhaps guilty of making a similar

assumption that the enemy has a certain unity (is an "individual" in the most literal sense), instead of underlining the complexity and often contradictory nature of whatever and whoever the enemy may be. The likelihood of a comfortable dichotomy between the familiar and Oliver Cromwell's *providential enemy* (*apud* Derrida, 1997: 123), of Schmitt's "hostility without affect" (*apud* Derrida, 1997: 124), or simply of having a coherent picture of other humanity to identify Europeanness against, is paltry. In Derrida's defence, we should say that immediately before the passage in question he quotes Plato's idea that "the purity of the *polemos* or the enemy (...) remains unattainable" (Derrida, 1997: 114). But this is not enough. If we are to recognise the other as an enemy or as a friend, or even as a neutral figure, we need to discover her/him. Knowing the enemy is not merely a philosophical question or a moral or theological obligation. It happens in law repeatedly: the identification of those guilty of sexual assault in Germany in 2016 as refugees of one kind or another has legal ramifications.

This involves listening to the arrival; hearing, understanding, and having the means to interpret her/his (often extremely tragic, but possibly disjointed) tale. Both politically and legally this is quite a tall order, linguistically speaking. Blommaert (2010) outlines with great detail how difficult the process of establishing the "truth" of an asylum seeker's tale often is, and it is wise to bear in mind that the creation of identity by linguistic means (largely through narratives employing what linguistic repertoires the teller has at their disposal) is absolutely not a one-way process. The general perception may be that a person seeking refuge in a foreign country should be able to present documentation which presents her/his status and supports her/his claims – in other words a bureaucratic narrative with details and tangible items such as passports and visas, or should at least have a compelling explanation, presumably following a western-style (and so credible) plot, as to why these vital, life-changing pieces of paper are absent.[6] But this is only half the story. Identity is also created by the receiver; it is a dynamic process in that it can (will) change and develop over time, but also in its two-way nature. "People don't *have* an identity, but ... identities are constructed in practices that *produce*, *enact* or *perform* identity – identity is identification, an outcome of socially conditioned semiotic work" (Blommaert, 2005: 205, italics in the original). It is hardly surprising that government departments find it so difficult to name the migrant and to adjudicate her/his case efficiently and fairly. It is also worth remembering that a performance requires an audience, and that this audience might be from a different milieu each time, and will be an audience sitting in a changed social and historical environment each time the tale is told as well. Most of all, the audience might be hostile or primed with strong preconceptions,

prejudices or previous narratives which will clearly impinge upon any creation of meaning, which is of course a dialogical practice (*ibidem*).

But these audiences exist in a complex relationship to the states that claim to be "dealing with" the issue of migration; creating a discourse that might be sympathetic, questioning or highly and aggressively critical. The linguistic arena in which the migrant finds her/himself is manifold, involving not only varied media and sources of journalistic information, but also pressure groups and interests, institutional players of varying authority and resources, and a perhaps confused general public. "Ethnic identity is typically produced by, or with reference to, the state. The state there acts as the "othering" actor defining citizens in terms of an essentialised identity category, while in the same move it defines itself" (Blommaert, 2005: 208). We might add the corollary to this assertion that the state's weakness (and that of European institutions) in the face of the so-called migrant crisis risks making the state appear inept or sluggish in difficult times, and so encouraging more extreme remedies to luridly narrated dramas of contact with the other.

But language is at best an imperfect medium for these discourses which attempt to reach delicate (or harshly decisive) consensus as to social and political value. Blommaert (2010) and Pennycook (2010) both stress the part played by *locatio*n in linguistic creation of meaning: languages are not immobile, and a universalist idea of what is English, French or German, or indeed almost any other language, is of limited use when we are trying to identify, or verify the identity of a speaker, an applicant for asylum or someone accused of illegally residing in a particular place. "We need to think of truncated repertoires rather than of 'complete' languages in the traditional sense of the term, and (...) we need to see communication in globalisation as often 'unfinished', as a deployment of incomplete communicative forms" (Blommaert, 2010: 180). In other words, the linguistic description of experience is highly varied, changing according to place and milieu, and certainly will not fit snugly into bureaucratic categories or nestle conveniently under political labels. As Blommaert notes, this view of language as a collection of resources only serves to underline the inequality at its basis: any migrant will have to argue her/his case, perform identity and look acceptable with the linguistic skills available, and depending on the linguistic skills of the audience to interpret their meaning. The pragmatics of each debate or conversation becomes paramount, diverse *voices* need to gain acceptance or credibility and, due to the ever-changing nature of communicative practice (over time and place/space), *semiotics* becomes as important as linguistics in understanding the other.

This may be why stories associated with migrants seem to be so powerful narratively. It is not just a skilful mix of rhetorical devices and a certain fear of the unfamiliar, but a highly semiotic charge that episodes artfully described (or retold) can contain. Gestures, with their linguistic elements of clever soundbites or sympathetic journalism, have become the stuff of the politics of the other in present-day Europe. A few examples should suffice to underline this: the "wall" blocking the southern border of Hungary (actually a fence, and this is perhaps significant linguistically: it is the gesture that matters rather than the precise intersection of vocabulary and concrete form); the sixty-nine (a larger number than usual) Afghan refugees/asylum seekers/illegal immigrants deported by Germany on the sixty-ninth birthday of the Minister of the Interior, well-known for his hostility to migrants;[7] the 177 migrants picked up by the Italian authorities and "held hostage" by the Minister of the Interior in direct contravention of the Italian Constitution for purely propagandistic purposes (interestingly there were sixteen children among them, being held just at the time that the notorious ISIS claimed to be holding seventeen children hostage). These three actions are replete with rhetorical potential and are noticeable for the lack of any attempt to identify the "other" with any real accuracy: the only exception might be the Afghans, victims of over-zealous German officials, but even here we should mention how notoriously fluid national identity is in the post-modern world where many are without passports, languages and ethnicity do not fit political barriers and borders, and trickery and false testimony might also be used by applicants.

Thus, any conversation or dialogue aimed at identifying the other, or the enemy, will use highly varied linguistic resources, perhaps repertoires from different European and non-European languages, and will do so against a backdrop of strong, emotive narratives. In other words, it is the *pragmatics* of these dialogues that will be the defining factor, rather than linguistic structures or vocabulary in a classical sense. Many conversations might take place in a *lingua franca* context, with both parties using forms of English from different contexts and geographical spaces, in a European nation in order to identify, assign roles and accept narratives as genuine. Here the ability of a *lingua franca* as mediator might be found wanting, its pragmatics barely adequate in an extremely high-stakes situation where the idea of cooperation and the "let-it-pass principle" (see Chapman, 2015, for a critical discussion of this) are probably far from sufficient to enable competing and controversial stories and explanations to be received and accepted as true. Jenkins claims that English as a *lingua franca* communication is "by its very nature, inclusive" (Jenkins, 2007: 71), but we have to question this in contexts of great inequality (e.g. journalist speaking to refugee, or refugee to border official), where the migrant will have to achieve audibility within a dominant discourse (*idem*, 205).

The *lingua franca* solution to communication between state and the other, or the other and society in general is probably inadequate precisely because of the complexity of the issues involved: it is the context of situation that makes language simultaneously have to carry so much weight and be unable to do so. The meanings are not merely too detailed and subtle, but they are also dependent upon a politics which is in flux and a society which is insecure. Bauman's concept of the "precariat" (Bauman, 2016: 47-49) gives greater contextual information to all this: the working classes of Europe (like the middle classes of America) are anxious because they might lose employment and fall out of the system at any time, so creating a fertile environment for tales of a privileged coloured or migrant population (see Salvini's *pacchia* mentioned earlier). And while the context is difficult, the essence of language is deeply divisive, as well as unifying: "Speaking the same language is not only a linguistic operation. It's a matter of *ethos* generally" (Derrida, 2000: 133). We might have more in common with the speakers of another tongue, if there are cultural, social and psychological similarities, but how much more difficult will this communication be if both the ethos and the linguistic tools are distant and diverse?

The greatest danger is, of course, as Pliny warned us at the start, that we dehumanise the visitors in our midst, empathising how they came unannounced ("No-one invited you here" – Milos Zeman, Czech President, quoted in Bauman, 2016: 85), and attributing to them all manner of crimes, with the added advantage that a dehumanised subject might quite likely commit anti-social acts (Bauman, 2016: 85/6). Agamben (2005: 80) describes an aspect of sovereignty in Roman Law allowing a citizen who is deemed a threat to the security of the state to be declared a *hostis iudicatus*, deprived of his belongings and legal status and liable to be put to death. Of course, the times and the contexts are wholly different, but there are interesting parallels: sovereignty under threat arrogates enormous power to itself over the person and, negating customary rights, the enemy is ill-defined and so must be named as such by a judicial procedure, and the consequences for the individual might be devastating. *Hostis* is much discussed by Derrida (1997), especially in contrast to *nimicus* (a private enemy), but we can see that this dichotomy is far from adequate when we are dealing with thousands of migrants from different countries, crises, and scenes of desperation. With the stakes so high, language must be used with pragmatic delicacy, deep human understanding and political caution if we are ever to recognise a real enemy accurately and treat friends or acquaintances with kindness. St. Augustine is credited with the ugly epigram, "even a dog we do know is better company than a man whose language we do not know" (*apud* Montaigne, 2003: 35), but it is this

283

very humanity that we need to recognise, using all of our linguistic resources. Montaigne stresses the role falsehood would have in destroying companionship (*ibidem*), and so we are forced to strive for the opposite: a profound effort employing all linguistic and social repertoires to enable each and every migrant to tell their story. Hamlet invokes the assistance of Horatio in death to affirm his humanity, and he needs dialogue to achieve it. In de-humanising our migrant visitors we risk in some way dehumanising ourselves. A possible solution is language, for language, as Levinas (*apud* Derrida, 1997: 134) said, is hospitality.

Notes

1. After the death of a German man late at night during celebrations for the 875th anniversary of the city, there were repeated clashes of right-wing demonstrators with police, Hitler salutes were allegedly in evidence and people perceived as foreign were chased through the streets. German media suggested the police were caught unawares and members of the AfD in the Bundestag seemed to lend their sympathies to the demonstrators. All this is to be seen in relation to Chancellor Merkel's controversial attempt to welcome a million refugees to Germany in 2015 (Connolly, 2018).

2. Nigel Farage, Conservative Political Action Conference, February 2017 (Owen and Smith, 2017).

3. An example, among very many, of the kind of rhetoric used might be the infamous quotation from an article by media personality Katie Hopkins in the *Sun* newspaper in 2016: "These migrants are like cockroaches". It is interesting to note that the comment was immediately followed by a fearful recognition of the hardiness of these unwanted guests: "they are built to survive a nuclear bomb". This, perhaps inadvertently, encapsulates both the contempt and fear of the other (Williams, 2018).

4. See Ricœur, *The Rule of Metaphor*, Chapter 1, for an analysis of Aristotle's suggestion that the meaning of lexis is linguistic dexterity informed by profound understanding of vocabulary and language in general.

5. Perhaps the most striking example of this would be the New Year's Eve controversy surrounding events in Cologne, Germany in 2015: reports circulated widely in Europe in the early days of January 2016 describing apparently coordinated attacks by largely Muslim immigrants on defenceless (exclusively white) female victims. The debate following the events became accentuated when it was found that for four or five days the German media chose not to report the story (the TV channel ZDF later apologised for this editorial failure), despite mounting evidence on social media. The police response on the day was generally seen as inadequate, and prosecutions were fewer than might have been expected, and these mostly for theft rather than sexual assault. Though attacks did take place, the element of organisation was found to be lacking, but became a significant element in descriptions of events, leading to a terrorist-threat narrative. For us, an interesting linguistic point is highlighted by the fact that when only three of 58 arrested suspects were defined as "refugees" by the media, Cologne's chief prosecutor was quick to point out that "The overwhelming majority of persons fall into the general category of refugees. They have various legal statuses, including illegal entry, asylum-seekers and asylum applicants. That covers the overwhelming majority of suspects". A clear reminder of the importance of linguistic choices in highly charged narratives (Gutteridge, 2016).

6. It is tempting to expect that a lack of documents might be caused by administrative incompetence in "third world" countries of origin, compounding the difficulties of the hapless asylum seeker, or might be due to the breakdown of government in a war-torn region, but it should be noted that the Windrush scandal which erupted in the United Kingdom in 2018 was provoked by an absolute lack of documentation by the British Home Office which does not produce identity cards for citizens or residents and destroyed a substantial raft of arrival information pertaining to Caribbean citizens in 2010 following the closure of a storage depot. As many as 60,000 residents in the United Kingdom face the threat of having to prove their date of entry (as many as fifty or sixty years ago) without any state apparatus to help them to do so (Davies, 2018).

7. "Of all things on my 69th birthday – and I didn't order this – 69 people were sent back to Afghanistan", Mr Seehofer said. "That's way above the usual level so far". Horst Seehofer quoted in an article, "German minister jokes as Afghan migrants deported" (Author unknown, 2018b). It behoves us to note that the Minister laughed at their fate while they were being sent back to a country not regarded officially as safe. Fifty was the agreed maximum for a single day, and it is perhaps significant that fifty-one of the deportees were from Seehofer's home state of Bavaria and he was in the midst of a highly charged political scrap with his ally in government, Angela Merkel.

Works cited

Agamben, Giorgio (2005), *State of Exception*, trans. Kevin Attell, Chicago, U of Chicago P.

Author Unknown (2018a), "Salvini: 'È finita la pacchia per i clandestini, preparatevi a fare le valige'", *La Stampa*, 3 June, https://www.lastampa.it/video/agenzie/2018/06/03/video/salvini_e_finita_la_pacchia_per_i_clandestini_preparatevi_a_fare_le_valige_-191180/, accessed 29 March 2024.

Author Unknown (2018b), "German minister jokes as Afghan migrants deported", *BBC*, 10 August, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-44778737, accessed 29 March 2024.

Bauman, Zygmunt (2016), *Strangers at Our Door*, Cambridge, Polity Press.

Blommaert, Jan (2005), *Discourse*, Cambridge, Cambridge UP.

— (2010), *The Sociolinguistics of Globalisation*, Cambridge, Cambridge UP.

Chapman, Richard (2015), "The Deceiving ELF. Can English really fulfil the role of a Lingua Franca?", *Lingue e linguaggi*, vol. 15, pp. 113-127.

Davies, William (2018), "Weaponising Paperwork", *London Review of Books*, May.

Montaigne, Michel de (2003), *The Complete Essays*, trans. M.A. Screech, London, Allen Lane, The Penguin Press.

Derrida, Jacques (1997), *The Politics of Friendship*, trans. George Collins, London, Verso.

— (2000), *Of Hospitality / Anne Dufourmantelle invites Jacques Derrida to respond*, trans. Rachel Bowlby, Stanford, Stanford UP.

Edwards, John (2009), *Language and Identity: An Introduction*, Cambridge, Cambridge UP.

European Commission / EACEA / Eurydice (2017), *Key Data on Teaching Languages at School in Europe – 2017 Edition. Eurydice Report*, Luxembourg, Publications Office of the European Union.

Garland, Robert (2018), "The Big Question: How has migration changed the world?", in Matt Elton (ed.), *BBC World Histories*, Issue 11, August/September.

Garrett, Peter (2010), *Attitudes to Language*, Cambridge, Cambridge UP.

Gutteridge, Nick (2016), "Cologne rapists WERE refugees: Prosecutor slams reports exonerating migrants as 'nonsense'", *The Daily Express*, 19 February, https://www.express.co.uk/news/world/644379/Cologne-attacks-German-prosector-New-Years-Eve-rapists-migrants-refugees, accessed 29 March 2024.

Jenkins, Jennifer (2007), *English as a Lingua Franca: Attitude and Identity*, Oxford, Oxford UP.

Owen, Paul and Smith, David (2017), "Nigel Farage says Brexit and Trump win are 'beginning of global revolution'" *The Guardian*, 24 February, https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/feb/24/nigel-farage-cpac-speech-trump-brexit-global-revolution, accessed 29 March 2024.

Pennycook, Alastair (2010), *Language as a Local Practice*, Abingdon, Routledge.

Pliny the Elder (1991), *Natural History: A Selection*, trans. John F. Healy, London, Penguin Books.

Ricœur, Paul (2003), *The Rule of Metaphor*, trans. Robert Czerny, Abingdon, Routledge [1978].

Williams, Zoe (2018), "Katie Hopkins calling migrants vermin recalls the darkest events of history", *The Guardian*, 19 April, https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/apr/19/katie-hopkins-migrants-vermin-darkest-history-drownings, accessed 29 March 2024.

3.4. LOL and *LLL*

Nathalie Vienne-Guerrin
Université Paul-Valéry Montpellier 3 / CNRS

ABSTRACT

In February 2019 in France, a group of journalists, a kind of boys' club that went on social networks under the pseudonym "la ligue du LOL" (Laugh Out Loud League), was denounced for having harassed mainly female colleagues through that faceless, anonymous medium. The collective abuse which took women as targets was supposed to make the group "laugh out loud". It could have been "no abuse", as Falstaff says in the second part of *Henry IV* but it seems, on the contrary, that jesting turned into mockery and mockery into insult and abuse. In fact, these words circulating mainly on Twitter caused many cases of trauma and had a concrete impact on the victims' careers and lives.

Shakespeare's world, like ours, was obsessed with the insulting impact of words. From the LOL league scandal the author developed the idea that the mechanisms at work in the scandal could illuminate *Love's Labour's Lost*. The chapter focuses on the performance of the Pageant of the Nine Worthies which can be seen as an episode of collective mockery. Then it argues that *LLL* is a kind of Facebook, that is a book of faces or a play that reveals a preoccupation with one's *face*. And finally, it briefly suggests that the end of the play shows a way out of crisis by rejecting a bad use of laughter and promoting a good usage of it.

Contemporary society is obsessed with and suffers from the offensive impact that words can have. The web has obviously become the playground of evil tongues and the ideal and easy medium for abuse, mockery, slander, verbal humiliation or hateful speech, all speech acts that create or are signs of crises. In February 2019 in France, a group of journalists and a kind of boys' club that went under the pseudonym "LOL" (Laugh Out Loud League) on social networks was denounced for having harassed mainly female colleagues through that faceless, anonymous medium. The collective abuse which took women as targets was supposed to make the group "laugh out loud"; it could have been "no abuse", as Falstaff says in

2 Henry 4 (2.4.320),[1] but it seems on the contrary that jesting turned into mockery and insult. In fact, these words circulating mainly on Twitter caused many cases of trauma and had a concrete impact on the victims' careers and lives.

Contemporary politics concerns itself with the ways in which words must, may, or can be controlled to avoid outrageous torrents of linguistic injuries being left unpunished. Words have probably never had such an extensive, global power as they have today, at a time when they circulate quicker and at a wider scale than they ever have. In the all-virtual digital world, the power of words has never been so *real*. When referring to abusive words that are exchanged on the web, commentators and politicians refer to these words as acts, giving J. L. Austin's famous theory on "how to do things with words" (Austin, 1962) all its relevance.

In Shakespeare's days, words did not travel as fast and far as they do today, yet his world was already obsessed with the insulting impact of words. It is from this LOL league scandal that the idea of this paper emerged as it appeared to me that it could be read in relation to *Love's Labour's Lost* and that the mechanisms that are at work in this LOL scandal could illuminate *LLL*. This paper will start by focusing on the performance of the Pageant of the Nine Worthies, which can be seen as an episode of collective mockery. Then it will argue that *LLL* is a kind of "Facebook", that is a book or a play that reveals a preoccupation with one's *face*. And finally, it will briefly suggest that the end of the play shows a way out of crisis, by refusing a bad use of laughter and promoting a good use of it.

The Reign of "mockery merriment"

In Shakespeare's plays, crises are often triggered off and nourished by words, and especially by insults. By insults, we mean words that can be delivered and/or received as insults. When studying insults, one should always have in mind Évelyne Larguèche's illuminating concept of *effet injure* (Larguèche, 1983). She shows that words are not insulting *per se* but become insults if they are received as such and have an insulting effect. The first aspect that is striking in the parallel of LOL and *LLL* is that the two worlds cultivate what the princess calls "mockery merriment" (5.2.139).[2] From the beginning of the play two characters are designated as the boy's club's butts: Armado and Costard. In the austere "Academe" that they imagine, "Costard the swain" and Armado "shall be [their] sport" which will make their three years of abstinence and study seem "short" (1.1.177-178). In the "mortif[ying]" (1.1.28) life that they are planning to have,

some "quick recreation" will be granted (1.1.159). Using people as a source of collective sport: here is what the four men agree on at the beginning of the play. Armado will provide "interim" to the men's "studies" (1.1.169); he will be "used" for the king's "minstrelsy" (1.1.174). This is what the LOL league was based on: collective mockery that newspapers defined as moral harassment, to serve their personal plans and ambitions and disqualify the other as being out of place. The two characters, Armado and Costard, both coming from a lower social class, become "laughing stocks to other men's humours", to quote Sir Hugh Evans in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (3.1.76-77).[3] Longaville is identified from the start by the Princess as "some merry mocking lord" (2.1.52) in a sequence that relates wit to mocking and describes it as a blot to virtue:

> The only soil of his fair virtue's gloss,
> (...)
> Is a sharp wit matched with too blunt a will,
> Whose edge hath power to cut, whose will still wills
> It should none spare that come within his power.
> (2.1.47-51)

Dumaine is known for his wit (2.1.59), Berowne for his "mirth-moving jest[s]" (2.1.71). Wit is thus presented as both sharp and seductive. The princess then speculates on this link between mockery and wit through the aphorism "good wits will be jangling" (2.1.221) and by referring to a "civil war of wits" (2.1.222). If the battle of wits in *LLL* is balanced between the men and women, the characters rendering "mock for mock" (5.2.140), things are not balanced between the nobility and the lower status characters who ironically embody the Nine Worthies in the play within the play. As expressed by the princess, mocking is a matter of power. And this is what very strikingly appears in the Pageant of the Nine Worthies. What the lords do *to* and *with* the amateur actors at the end of the play can be compared to public bashing, collective humiliation, which Holofernes describes as such when he declares: "This is not generous, not gentle, not humble" (5.2.614) in a sequence that can be very moving on stage. Contrary to the exchanges that the princess defines as "a set of wit well played" (5.2.29), the exchanges between the audience and the actors show how what is supposed to be mere jesting may hurt. Boyet, called by Berowne "old mocker" (5.2.540), is part of the chorus of railing and mocking that the Pageant triggers off. The mocking effect is formulated by the unworthy Worthies. Costard leaves the stage by commenting on his performance: "'Tis not so much worth, but I hope I was

perfect. I made a little fault in 'Great'" (5.2.549-550), a comment that reveals
how the audience have destabilized the character-actor. The Princess notes that
Nathaniel, playing the part of the conquering Alexander, is "dismayed" (5.2.557),
while Costard becoming part of the audience describes him as "soon dashed"
(5.2.569) and "a little o'erparted" (5.2.571). Nathaniel's dismay may come from
the unsettling intervention of the audience who comment on his inappropriate
nose. Dumaine uses the pun on Judas and ass to "shame" (5.2.588) Holofernes.
The constant interruptions of the spectacle lead Armado to ask Longaville to
"rein [his] tongue" (5.2.541) and the princess to "bestow on [him] the sense of
hearing" (5.2.646-647) in a passage where Armado asks for the lord's indulgence:
"beat not the bones of the buried. When he breathed, he was a man" (5.2.644-
645). The "quick recreation" announced at the beginning of the play takes on all
its meaning when Costard and Armado's strife about Jaquenetta emerges on
stage, Costard "infamonis[ing]" Armado "among the potentates" by mentioning
Jaquenetta "that is quick by him" (5.2.659-61). The transportation of elements of
privacy onto the stage creates a moment of unease which only Marcadé's arrival
will stop. Beyond Pompey and Hector, it is Costard and Armado who become the
butts of collective scorn. The merriment that Marcadé is interrupting is a cruel,
mockery "merriment" (5.2.692), a shaming moment when characters lose face.

LLL as a Face Book

LLL is the play in which there are the most numerous occurrences (26) of the
word "face". What happens on social networks when you are a target of collective
public abuse is that you lose (your) face. In his book *Impoliteness. Using Language
to Cause Offence*, Jonathan Culpeper draws a link between face and offense
in a chapter that shows that "Notions such as reputation, prestige and self-
esteem, all involve an element of face". He notes that "In English, the term is
perhaps most commonly used in the idiom 'losing face', meaning that one's
public image suffers from damage, often resulting in emotional reactions, such
as embarrassment" (Culpeper, 2011: 24). For Culpeper, losing face means that
one's public image suffers from damage, and this creates an emotional reaction
of embarrassment (*ibidem*). "The point is that how you feel about your 'self' is
dependent on how *others* assume about you" (*idem*, 25). Face meets fame, "fame"
which is the second word of *LLL* in a passage that refers to their "brazen tombs"
(1.1.2), which may mean "shameless" tombs. Yet, as Ewan Fernie has noted in his

book *Shame in Shakespeare*, the lords feel shame in the play, especially when they are exposed to one another's eye in what Fernie calls the "shaming sequence" in 4.3.[4] Shakespeare dramatizes their "Sweet fellowship in shame" (4.3.41) in an eavesdropping scene that is based on "hiding and exposure" (Fernie, 2002: 228).

Fernie notes that the word "shame" may be derived from pre-Teutonic "skem", a variant of "kem", which means "cover". Hence the insistence on the motif of the faceless face, the visors that the lords wear when they approach the ladies as Muscovites, which can be a "sign of shame" (Fernie, 2002: 90). After this episode, the princess predicts that the four "woodcocks" will "hang themselves tonight", "Or ever but in vizards show their faces" (5.2.270-271). It is in this context that the final Pageant must be read. It is as if the lords were compensating for the shame they have felt by inflicting shame to the actors on stage. Having themselves become "shame-proof" (5.2.507), having themselves lost face, they are happy to find external targets for their mockery. This clearly appears in the following exchange:

> King: Berowne, they will shame us. Let them not approach.
> Berowne: We are shame-proof, my lord; and 'tis some policy
> To have one show worse than the king's and his company.
> (5.2.506-508)

The text regularly insists on the motif of the face, from the very beginning of the play when Jaquenetta expresses her skepticism to Armado who claims he will tell her "wonders" by exclaiming: "With that face?" (1.2.113-114), to Boyet's referring to Navarre's "face's own margin" (2.1.242), which is like a book that betrays his love, to the shaming sequence when the King notes how his fellowmen "did blush" (4.3.130). It is in the final sequences of act 5 that the face is most emphasized, precisely because the characters lose face, one after the other. First the Muscovites are unmasked, which leads to the women's mockery expressed in Berowne's words:

> Can any face of brass hold longer out?
> Here stand I, lady; dart thy skill at me.
> Bruise me with scorn, confound me with a flout,
> Thrust thy sharp wit quite through my ignorance,
> Cut me to pieces with thy keen conceit.
> (5.2.395-399).

The battle with the ladies leaves the men, especially Berowne, "out of countenance quite" (5.2.272). According to Boyet, the Lords will never "digest this

harsh indignity" (5.2.289), they are "lame with blows" (5.2.292), an expression that clearly shows the effect of mockery and points to what Judith Butler calls "linguistic vulnerability" in *Excitable Speech. A Politics of the Performative* (1997). As Boyet says:

> The tongues of mocking wenches are as keen
> As is the razor's edge invisible,
> (...) Their conceits have wings
> Fleeter than arrows, bullets, wind, thought, swifter things.
> (5.2.256-261)

The Lords are "dry-beaten with pure scoff" (5.2.263). Thus, mockery leads to losing face and losing the fame Navarre was aiming at in the opening lines of the play. After these two shaming sequences, the eavesdropping scene and the Muscovites' scene, the Pageant of the Nine Worthies, with its defects, is an easy target for the lords to restore their self-image. The actors' distress is expressed in terms of faces too, especially in the following exchange between Holofernes and the Lords:

> Holofernes: I will not be put out of countenance.
> Berowne: Because thou hast no face.
> Holofernes: What is this?
> Boyet: A cittern-head.
> Dumaine: The head of a bodkin.
> Berowne: A death's face in a ring.
> Longaville: The face of an old Roman coin, scarce seen.
> Boyet: The pommel of Caesar's falchion.
> Dumaine: The carved-bone face on a flask.
> Berowne: Saint George's half-cheek in a brooch.
> Dumaine: Ay, and in a brooch of lead.
> Berowne: Ay, and worn in the cap of a tooth-drawer. And
> now forward, for we have put thee in countenance.
> Holofernes: You have put me out of countenance.
> Berowne: False. We have given thee faces.
> Holofernes: But you have outfaced them all. (5.2.592-608)

Face and offense are here tightly connected, and we attend Holofernes's ironic loss of face as he is given too many faces. Mocking has the power to outface, that is to destroy the face, the name, the fame of the character. And outfacing the character means silencing him, as he then disappears after having just delivered

a few words, like Moth who declares a little earlier that the ladies "Do not mark [him], and that brings [him] out" (5.2.173). A lot of faces get lost in *Love's Labour's Lost*. Even Armado who is said to "make faces" (5.2.626) while playing Hector loses his during a moment of merriment that illustrates the dark side of laughter.

"Stabbed with laughter"

While attending the fiasco of the episode of the Muscovites, Boyet exclaims: "O, I am stabbed with laughter!" (5.2.80). Here he expresses the mocker's point of view who is dying of laughter. But the mocker's words here may ironically point to the damaging power laughter can have on the other. The end of the story theorizes on the good and the bad side of laughter and delineates a kind of ethics of laughter.

In her book *Shakespeare and Laughter. A Cultural History*, Indira Ghose includes a section on laughter in *LLL*, in a chapter entitled "Courtliness and Laughter" (Ghose, 2008: 15-51). She rightly notes that "the characters are not only mocked by exposing their linguistic extravagance. They are further deflated by means of the formalized, stylized structure of the plot. Every scene with the courtiers is mirrored by parallel scenes with the subplot characters" (*idem*, 37). She mentions the "harassing" of the Worthies and notes that in 5.2 "The hostility between members of the elite is now deflected to scapegoat figures from the lower ranks of society" (*idem*, 41); a phenomenon that seems to perfectly reflect what can happen nowadays on social networks. In this play, she notes, it is the ladies who have "the upper hand" (*ibidem*). The battle is not as balanced as the mathematical distribution of parts seems to suggest. Thus, it is not fortuitous that it should be the women who at the end write new rules for the men. And these new rules are based on a good usage of laughter which should generate "pleasure and not aggression" (*idem*, 43).

The end of the play tells us that laughter should no longer be "an instrument to exclude outsiders through mockery" (*idem*, 47). The Princess gives the men and our contemporaries a lesson in laughter, formulating what Indira Ghose has termed, in another essay, an "ethics of laughter" (Ghose, 2014). Mocking is identified at the end of the play as a mortifying speech act while it should be restorative and re-creative. Ghose notes that there is a "darker side to laughter" (*idem*, 56) and that "in the Renaissance, laughter continued to be equated with mockery" (*idem*, 65). She quotes a passage from the *Traité du Ris* (*Treatise on Laughter*) by Laurent Joubert which, she notes, recycles Aristotle's definition of the ridiculous:

Ce que nous voyons de laid, difforme, des-honneste,
indessant, mal-seant, & peu convenable, excite an nous
le ris, pourveu que nous n'an soyons meus à compassion.
(Joubert, 1579: 16)
[What we see that is ugly, deformed, improper, indecent,
unfitting and indecorous excites laughter in us, provided
we are not moved to compassion. (Joubert, 1980: 20)]

Emphasizing the gap or tension between laughter and compassion, Ghose distinguishes benevolent from malevolent laughter, noting that Shakespeare "repeatedly calls the practice of humiliation through laughter into question" (Ghose, 2014: 65-66).

Rosaline at the end of *Love's Labour's Lost* puts into question the practice of jesting. If the Nine Worthies, and especially Costard and Armado have been the Lords' sport, the Lords' love has also been a sport for the ladies, as appears when the Princess says they "met (their) loves/ In their own fashion, like a merriment" (5.2.758). Rosaline wants to come back to a benevolent use of jesting:

Rosaline: Oft have I heard of you, my Lord Berowne,
Before I saw you, and the world's large tongue
Proclaims you for a man replete with mocks,
Full of comparisons and wounding flouts,
Which you on all estates will execute
That lie within the mercy of your wit.
(...)
to win me, if you please,
(...)
You shall this twelvemonth term from day to day
Visit the speechless sick and still converse
With groaning wretches; and your task shall be,
With all the fierce endeavor of your wit
To enforce the pained impotent to smile.
Berowne: To move wild laughter in the throat of death?
It cannot be, it is impossible:
Mirth cannot move a soul in agony.
Rosaline: Why, that's the way to choke a gibing spirit,
Whose influence is begot of that loose grace
Which shallow laughing hearers give to fools.

A jest's prosperity lies in the ear
Of him that hears it, never in the tongue
Of him that makes it. Then, if sickly ears,
Deafed with the clamours of their own dear groans,
Will hear your idle scorns, continue then,
And I will have you and that fault withal;
But if they will not, throw away that spirit,
And I shall find you empty of that fault,
Right joyful of your reformation. (5.2.809-837)

The end of the play tells us that laughter or mirth making[5] should no longer be "an instrument to exclude outsiders through mockery" (Ghose, 2008: 47). Rosaline at the end of *Love's Labour's Lost* advocates a benevolent use of jesting when she asks Berowne to put his sharp wit to the service of "the speechless sick" (5.2.819). In fact, by excluding what Ghose calls "derisive and punitive laughter" (Ghose, 2014: 66), she reformulates what Holofernes expressed in simple words: be "generous", "gentle", "humble" (5.2.614).

Making faces, blushing, laughing: you can read crisis in the book of faces. We hope that this brief paper has shown how relevant *LLL* is to understand a culture of LOL. Collective abuse, jesting that turns into insults, the exposure of one's private life, the traumatic experience of offensive words, the malevolent effect of laughter, all these facets that are present in *LLL* speak to us nowadays. This comedy shows that behind a wonderful façade, behind Navarre, the "wonder of the world" (1.1.11), there is a mortifying use of the tongue which disfigures and defaces. No wonder the play should end on the song of the owl and the cuckoo, two birds that are associated with ill omen and mockery:

The cuckoo then on every tree
Mocks married men; for thus sings he:
"Cuckoo
"Cuckoo, cuckoo! O word of fear
Unpleasing to a married ear. (5.2.863-8§7)

"Tu Whit, to who", "Tu Whit, to who" (5.2.883; 892): to quote the last words of the play, the words of Mercury, the messenger, the "twitter", are harsh indeed. It's up to us and the world of Navarre to make them more "gentle".

295

Notes

1. Quotations are from Shakespeare, 2016.

2. Quotations are from Shakespeare, 2009.

3. Quotations are from Shakespeare, 2000.

4. On shame in *Love's Labour's Lost*, see also Kingsley-Smith, 2014.

5. On the early modern culture of jesting, see Chris Holcomb, *The Rhetorical Discourse on Jesting in Early Modern England*, Columbia, U of South Carolina P, 2001.

Works cited

Austin, J. L. (1962), *How to Do Things with Words*, Oxford, Oxford UP.

Butler, Judith (1997), *Excitable Speech. A Politics of the Performative*, New York, Routledge.

Culpeper, Jonathan (2011), *Impoliteness. Using Language to Cause Offence*, Cambridge, Cambridge UP.

Fernie, Ewan (2002), *Shame in Shakespeare*, London and New York, Routledge.

Ghose, Indira (2008), *Shakespeare and Laughter. A Cultural History*, Manchester, Manchester UP.

— (2014), "Shakespeare and the Ethics of Laughter", in Patrick Gray and John D. Cox (ed.), *Shakespeare and Renaissance Ethics*, Cambridge, Cambridge UP, pp. 56-75.

Holcomb, Chris (2001), *The Rhetorical Discourse on Jesting in Early Modern England*, Columbia, U of South Carolina P.

Joubert, Laurent (1579), *Traité du ris, contenant son essance, ses causes, et mervelheus effais, curieusement recerchés, raisonnés et observés*, Paris, chez Nicolas Chesneau, http://www.bium. univ-paris5.fr/histmed/medica/cote?32084, accessed 22 April 2024.

— (1980), *Treatise on Laughter*, ed. and trans. by Gregory David de Rocher, Alabama, U of Tuscaloosa P.

Kingsley-Smith, Jane (2014), "Aristotelian Shame and Christian mortification in *Love's Labour's Lost*", in Patrick Gray and John D. Cox (ed.), *Shakespeare and Renaissance Ethics*, Cambridge, Cambridge UP, pp. 76-97.

Larguèche, Évelyne (1983), *L'effet Injure*, Paris, PUF.

Shakespeare, William (2000), *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, ed. Giorgio Melchiori, Walton-on-Thames, Surrey, Thomas Nelson and Sons.

— (2009), *Love's Labour's Lost*, ed. William C. Carroll, Cambridge, Cambridge UP.

— (2016), *King Henry IV Part 2*, ed. James C. Bulman, The Arden Shakespeare, London and New York, Bloomsbury.

3.5. Shakespeare and the Origins of European Culture Wars

Jean-Christophe Mayer

CNRS / Université Paul-Valéry Montpellier 3

ABSTRACT

Cultural wars have affected and are affecting every corner of society, including literary studies. As the world's most popular playwright, Shakespeare has been the object of much cultural – and sometimes bitter – argument. Shakespeare and literature in general may seem far remote from European cultural and political issues, but in fact, he, like other authors with strong societal auras, can be seen as particularly useful cultural tools. This was not always the case.

From a historical point of view, Shakespeare became engulfed in cultural wars in the eighteenth century, precisely at a time when the public sphere was expanding greatly. Like other cultural figures, he was used to express various agendas and as a means of broaching political and even European issues. By focusing on the beginning of Shakespearean culture wars in the eighteenth century between the two super-powers of the time, France and England, the chapter aims to raise awareness of how cultural forms, and literature in particular, can structure public and diplomatic discourse, can be appropriated and manipulated, and can even become instruments in a covert and at times overt race for political hegemony.

As both national and European politics have come under increasing criticism in the aftermath of the major 2008 financial crisis, which continues to affect most European economies, politicians have been tempted to divert their peoples' attention by focusing less on practical policy building and more on culture wars. Thus, issues such as sexual freedom, ethnic diversity, migrancy, or individuals' relationship to the state have come to the fore and are dividing Europe, as they become subjects of bitter wrangles, not only between politicians of various nations, but also between Europeans themselves.

The idea of culture wars is not new. In the late 1970s political expert Ronald Inglehart argued that in western societies, what he called "postmaterialist" values were becoming more important than traditional "materialist values" (such as the state's role in a market economy) (Inglehart, 1977). In other words, and according to Inglehart, as differences between major parties were less marked, societies tended to be structured by cultural feuds and oppositions. More recently, political scholar and columnist Michael Behrent pointed out that public issues in Europe at the moment were shaped and influenced by culture war notions (Dujin, 2019: 3). Sociologists, such as Irene Taviss Thomson, remarked, however, that "there is, of course, an intuitive appeal – a surface plausibility – to the culture war idea", but that cultural wars were more a means of diverting people's attention from unresolved economic and political problems (Thomson, 2012: 12). The cultural war idea has in fact been used in public debates although no serious study has proved its actual sociological reality.

Be that as it may, cultural wars have affected and are affecting every corner of society including literary studies. Shakespeare, the world's most popular playwright, and his works have been the site of much cultural – and sometimes bitter – argument, as proved by New Historicism at the height of its influence (Kamps, 1991). Shakespeare and literature in general may seem far remote from European cultural and political issues, but in fact, Shakespeare, like other authors with strong societal auras, can be seen as particularly useful cultural tools. As Douglas Lanier noted, Shakespeare is now "a resource for doing certain kinds of cultural work" (Lanier, 2002: 14).

This was not always the case. In what follows, I shall argue that – from a historical point of view – Shakespeare became engulfed in cultural wars in the eighteenth century, precisely at a time when the public sphere was expanding greatly. As we shall see, like other cultural figures, Shakespeare was used to express various agendas and as a means of broaching political and even European issues. By focusing on the beginning of Shakespearean culture wars in the eighteenth century between the two super-powers of the time (France and England), I hope to raise our awareness of how cultural forms, and literature in particular, can structure public and diplomatic discourse and be appropriated, manipulated, and become instruments in a covert and at times overt race for political hegemony.

So, let us first concentrate on where the story began: the first half of the eighteenth century, when the question of cultural and political dominance between European nations, and more specifically between England and France, really affirmed itself in the field of literature.

François-Marie Arouet, better known as Voltaire, was a French eighteenth-century man of letters, philosopher and also, to some extent, cultural ambassador of neo-classical values. In exile in England for almost three years from 1726 to 1728, Voltaire went to the theatre at a time when England was gaining ground politically and internationally, but when Shakespeare was almost an unknown entity in France and on the continent. Voltaire, who was at times very critical of the political system in his own country, saw England's constitutional monarchy as more progressive than France's absolutist system, but his views of the arts and of Shakespeare in particular were more mitigated. Voltaire admired Shakespeare for being "natural and sublime", naturalness being a quality arguably lacking in French theatre of the period, but there was much in Shakespeare that disagreed with the neo-classical aesthetics which were dominating so much of Europe at the time, under the aegis of France. In his *Lettres philosophiques*, written around 1729 and first printed in English in 1733 under the title *Letters Concerning the English Nation*, he wrote:

> Les monstres brillans de Shakespear plaisent mille fois plus que la sagesse moderne. Le génie poëtique des Anglais ressemble jusqu'à présent à un arbre touffu planté par la nature, jetant au hazard mille rameaux & croissant inégalement & avec force; il meurt, si vous voulez forcer sa nature & le tailler en arbre des jardins de Marly. (Voltaire, 1917: 87-88)
> [Shakespeare's brilliant monstrosities please a thousand times more than today's elegance. The poetic genius of the English still seems more like a bushy tree planted by nature, branching out at random, growing unevenly and strongly; it dies if you try to alter its nature and prune its branches into the topiary gardens of Marly. (Voltaire, 2007: 74)]

Marly was a castle built under the reign of Louis XIV, whose gardens were famous for being pristine. While the description is a touch condescending, the horticultural metaphor also underlines in passing the potential for growth of the arts in England and perhaps already their potential for growing wildly and for invading other gardens and well-kept neo-classical territories such as France. During the first half of the eighteenth century, Voltaire continued nevertheless to see Britain as more advanced than France, politically speaking, and confessed his admiration for English philosophy and science to his friend, the British merchant and later diplomat Sir Everard Fawkener in the dedication of his play *Zaïre* in 1736:

> Vous devez vous soumettre au rêgles de notre théâtre, comme nous devons embrasser votre philosophie. Nous avons fait d'aussi bonnes experiences sur le coeur humain que vous sur la physique. L'art de plaire semble l'art des Français, et l'art de penser paraît le vôtre. (Voltaire, 1877, vol. 2: 554)
>
> [You have to submit yourselves to the rules of our theatre, as we have to embrace your philosophy. We have made as good investigations of the human heart as you have in physics. The art of giving pleasure seems to belong to the French, while yours appears to be the art of thinking. (My translation)]

Voltaire's attitude gradually changed during the second half of the eighteenth century, as both the cultural and political terrain shifted. The Seven Years' War, which was in effect a world war involving several European nations from 1756 to 1763, but which also set Great Britain against the Bourbon dynasty (France and Spain) over trade and colonial dominion, no doubt precipitated these changes. The cultural balance was also shifting – Shakespeare's fame began to grow in Europe as Britain sought to establish its cultural and political authority and the playwright was appropriated increasingly to serve English nationalist agendas.

On the cultural terrain, a few significant salvos were fired, as a couple of articles translated from the English and comparing Shakespeare to Corneille and Otway to Racine appeared respectively in October and November 1760 in the French *Journal encyclopédique.* Both articles underlined the superiority of the English authors. Not long after, in December 1760, Voltaire shared his displeasure in a letter to Marie de Vichy-Chamrond. Interestingly, the letter simultaneously refers to the loss of the city of Pondicherry on the Indian subcontinent (one of France's colonial outposts besieged by the English in 1760) and to the claim of Shakespeare's alleged superiority:

> (…) D'ailleurs je suis fâché contre les Anglais. Non seulement ils m'ont pris Pondicheri à ce que je crois, mais ils viennent d'imprimer que leur Shakespear est infiniment supérieur à Corneille. (Voltaire, 1967: 62)
>
> [(…) and, for that matter, I'm angry at the English. Not only is it my belief that they've taken our Pondicherry, but they've just printed that their Shakespeare is far superior to Corneille. (My translation)]

In 1761 Voltaire published his "Appel à toutes les nations de l'Europe des jugements d'un écrivain anglais" ("Appeal to all nations of Europe regarding the judgement of an English writer"), pointing out that Shakespeare, unlike Racine, for instance, was hardly known outside Britain and called upon all nations "from Saint Petersburg to Naples" to decide whether he was right and – implicitly – to support French cultural supremacy (Voltaire, 1967: 63-80). As the Seven Years' War was still not over, Voltaire began working on an edition of Corneille in 1762. That same year, Henry Home, Lord Kames, brought out his *Elements of Criticism*, in which he wrote rather disparaging words on Corneille and Racine – even ridiculing passages in some of their work – and sang the praises of Shakespeare. Voltaire reviewed Kames's book in the *Gazette Littéraire* in April 1764 in a tone that was part angry, part ironical, as Voltaire obliquely wondered how a Scottish judge like Kames who wrote on literature as well as gardening could pretend to become an arbiter of taste (Voltaire, 1967: 88).

That same year, in a letter to the Count and Countess of Argental, Voltaire talked about his review of Kames's *Elements,* and made the following extraordinary statement:

> Tant que les Anglais se sont contentés de prendre nos vaisseaux et de s'emparer du Canada et de Pondicheri, j'ai gardé un noble silence. Mais à présent qu'ils poussent la barbarie jusqu'à trouver Racine et Corneille ridicules, je dois prendre les armes. (Voltaire, 1953-65, vol. LIV: 42)
> [As long as the British have been content to take our vessels and seize Canada and Pondicherry, I have been content to maintain a noble silence. But now that they push barbarity to the point of finding Racine and Corneille ridiculous, I have to take up arms. (My translation)]

Voltaire ceased to be diplomatic as soon as he perceived that literature, and Shakespeare in particular, was employed for nationalistic reasons by the British. This may explain why he had chosen to treat warfare and literature separately until then, but now employed a military vocabulary as a form of resistance to what he considered as attempts on behalf of the British to establish their cultural as well as military dominance. Of course, losing battles in the two main theatres of the Seven Years' War, North America and India, was no mere detail and while Voltaire could be intellectually dismissive about these losses, they would nonetheless lead ultimately to Britain's linguistic and cultural dominance in those parts of the world. In other words, French cultural dominance was on its way out.

More than a decade later, with the war of American independence serving as a backdrop this time, the cultural battle around Shakespeare continued to rage between the British and the French. In 1776, the first complete translation into French of Shakespeare's works by Pierre Le Tourneur was published. The twenty volumes, in which Le Tourneur praised Shakespeare with an enthusiasm that was also self-serving, were sold by subscription. Voltaire was horrified to discover that King Louis XVI was at the top of the list of subscribers, as well as other persons from all over Europe. The writer and philosopher Denis Diderot had also ordered six copies, which, for Voltaire, was the equivalent of high treason. What upset Voltaire particularly was that he himself had been partly responsible for this situation and had let the enemy inside the walls through his early-mitigated praise of Shakespeare at a time when hardly anyone had heard of him. Voltaire's words were blunt as he wrote again to the Count of Argental in 1776:

> C'est moi qui autrefois parlai le premier de ce Shakespear; c'est moi qui le premier montrai au Français quelques perles que j'avais trouvées dans son énorme fumier. (Voltaire, 1967: 175)
> [It was I who was the first to speak of this Shakespeare at an earlier time; it was I who was the first to show the French people some pearls that I found in his huge heap of dung. (My translation)]

Voltaire was exaggerating his distaste for Shakespeare, of course. What annoyed him most was the wave of Anglomania that was threatening to submerge France at a time when the British seemed still in a position to crush the hopes of the American revolutionaries whom Voltaire supported. To counter what he perceived as an assault also on French culture and values, he asked his friend Jean Le Rond d'Alembert, who was secretary of the *Académie française*, to read out a letter of protest. The letter, in which Voltaire underlined Shakespeare's shortcomings and criticized Kames's disrespectful treatment of Racine in his *Elements of Criticism*, was read out on 25 August 1776 at the *Académie* in the presence of the British ambassador and Elizabeth Montagu, who had specifically attacked Voltaire in her *Essay on the Writings and Genius of Shakespeare* (1769). Revealingly, Voltaire's correspondence in those months is full of military vocabulary, as he saw himself waging war and conducting battles under "General" D'Alembert, as he calls him in one of his letters (Voltaire, 1967: 182-183).

D'Alembert himself had fully embraced Voltaire's project and delivering his friend's speech to the Académie was like accomplishing a warlike mission. In a letter written to Voltaire on 20 August 1776, D'Alembert hoped that French men of letters would accomplish a better mission on the terrain of cultural warfare than French generals and soldiers did on the battlefield. He also had vowed to punish all traitors:

> Enfin, mon cher maître, voilà la bataille engagée et le signal donné. Il faut que Shakespear ou Racine demeurent sur la place; il faut faire voir à ces tristes & insolens Anglois, que nos gens de lettres savent mieux se battre contre eux que nos soldats & nos généraux. Malheureusement il y a parmi ces gens de lettres bien des déserteurs et des faux frères. Mais les déserteurs seront pris & pendus; ce qui me fâche, c'est que la graisse de ces pendus ne sera bonne à rien; car ils sont bien secs et bien maigres. Adieu, mon cher et illustre ami. Je crierai dimanche en allant à la charge, Vive s[t] Denis Voltaire & meure George Shakespear! (Voltaire, 1967: note 6, 180-182)
>
> [At last, my dear master, the battle has begun and the signal has been given. Either Shakespear or Racine will be left standing; we have to show these sad and insolent English that our men of letters can fight them better that our soldiers and our generals. Unfortunately, there are quite a few deserters and false brothers among those men of letters. But the deserters will be caught and hanged; what annoys me is that the fat of these hanged men will be good for nothing; for they are quite dry and lean. Adieu, my dear and illustrious friend. As I mount the charge on Sunday, I shall cry 'Long live Saint Denis and Voltaire, and death to George Shakespear!' (My translation)]

Clearly, Shakespeare's reputation was at the centre of a war of words, but also of deeds. While, in the past, Voltaire had had a measure of admiration for some aspects of Shakespeare's works, as well as for the English constitutional system, he was now forced to fight against what he no doubt considered as a form of "regressive nationalism" (Prince, 2012: 282), which mobilized Shakespeare as an instrument in a war of propaganda.

The British had in fact also been using warlike language to defend Shakespeare against Voltaire's attacks for quite a while. In his review of Samuel Johnson's edition of Shakespeare in 1765, William Guthrie accused Johnson of pandering to French taste too much and of judging Shakespeare by "the rules of the French academy", whereas, according to Guthrie:

> [Shakespeare] proceeds by storm. He knows nothing of regular approaches to the fort of the human heart. He effects his breach by the weight of his metal, and makes his lodgement though the enemy's artillery is thundering round him from every battery of criticism, learning, and even probability. (*apud* Rhodes, 2004: 220)

Shakespeare had been used in England as a counter-establishment writer in the first half of the eighteenth century. Indeed, in the words of Michael Dobson, "Shakespeare became national poet in the 1730s as an Opposition playwright rather than an Establishment one" (Dobson, 1992: 136). Shakespeare's defenders in those days were part of the Patriots, an anti-Walpole faction within the Whig party, which often used Shakespeare criticism and quotations to criticise the government, particularly in *The Craftsman*, a newspaper that was an important Patriot mouthpiece. Yet, in the second half of the eighteenth century, Shakespeare was appropriated by the agents of a more conservative British nationalism, to which progressive men like Voltaire could react violently.

In his correspondence with D'Alembert, Voltaire expressed his disappointment at seeing the American Revolution apparently failing. However, the former encouraged him to carry on the fight against bardolatry in France, because, as D'Alembert put it, "since philosophy and reason have been conquered in New York, they must at least prevail in their own small domain" (*apud* Prince, 2012: 288). That, in Voltaire's mind, Shakespeare's rise to prominence was allied with British imperialism, and its concurrent desire to crush American liberties, is made extremely evident in his letter of October 1776 to French statesman Jacques Necker:

> Grand homme vous même, Monsieur; mais je ne consentirai jamais que Shakespear en soit un si redoutable pour la France, et qu'on lui immole Corneille et Racine. Je suis assez comme ceux qu'on appelle les insurgens d'Amérique, je ne veux point être l'esclave des Anglais. (Voltaire, 1967: 215)

[You are a great man, Sir, yourself, but I will never let Shakespeare become a fearful figure for France, one for whom Corneille and Racine could be burnt at the stake. I tend to be on the same side as those we call the American insurgents – I do not wish to be a slave to the English. (My translation)]

Conclusion

As we know, Voltaire was wrong about the fate of the American Revolution, but his nightmare of British cultural dominance through Shakespeare turned out to be true in some regards. Shakespeare entered the sphere of respected printed literature first through his folios and in the ensuing series of eighteenth-century editions. Despite their still controversial nature and the multiple wrangles between editors, eighteenth-century textual studies made great strides thanks to Shakespeare and to the dual enterprise of establishing his text and developing reliable philological tools – Samuel Johnson's mutually dependent projects of a *Dictionary* (1755) and of an edition of Shakespeare's works (1765) being good examples.

While early eighteenth-century critics had sought excuses for what could be considered as wild extravagances in the works of Shakespeare, when compared to French neo-classical norms in particular, the various conflicts, which set the British nation against its neighbours and particularly France changed the way the national corpus of literature came to be regarded by the end of the century. Several of Shakespearean plays, where the theme of international relations was prominent, and which lent themselves well to topical interpretations, were of course popular: *Henry V*, *Coriolanus* or *Cymbeline* especially, served such purposes (Prince, 2012: 277).

By the end of the eighteenth century, Shakespeare was on a safer textual ground and was being exported to other lands and to the confines of the British colonial empire. This was partly the Shakespeare that Voltaire disliked so much – one whose works, especially after the French Revolution – ceased to be regarded as a disordered garden, but became synonymous with "notions of order, self-restraint and authority" (Prince, 2012: 291) and were in fact set against Republican disorder. Thus, Edmund Burke would use Shakespeare to try to "impose order on the chaos of the French Revolution" (*ibidem*). Yet Voltaire's pessimism was, of course, largely blind to the fact that Shakespeare

would be repeatedly transformed and appropriated by other countries and that it could again become an instrument of cultural and political negotiation between nations other than the British and French. As the British had liberated themselves from the yoke of French neoclassicism, they themselves had to resist the rise of German Romanticism in the early nineteenth century, the German Romantics famously seeing Shakespeare as theirs: "ganz unser" (completely ours), as August Wilhelm Schlegel called him) (Paulin, 2012: 323), thus opening the way for further national appropriations of Shakespeare worldwide.

Shakespeare's works, like other important art forms, continue to be at the heart of culture wars today. That art forms are exploited in this way poses an important problem for any society. Crucial art will always be appropriated, and this is a normal process – it is its manipulation by political or market forces that threatens societies. Indeed, a society or a group of nations such as the European Union suffers from those who claim that culture wars exist and that they are tied to that other great fantasy: the clash of civilisations. If this were true, as sociologist Irene Taviss Thomson points out again:

> A society experiencing a culture war would face grave difficulties. It would lack common standards and assumptions, and as a result, the ability to make public policy decisions would be severely compromised. Indeed, a society without such common ground could barely function. (Thomson, 2010: 12)

Fortunately, not everyone buys into the fantasy of the superiority of certain values in the current so-called culture war, in which famous European artists can be manipulated in order to stand for alleged decent values. Even a quick look at academic Shakespearean criticism or at current theatrical productions would be enough to dispel these illusions. However appealing and politically convenient the idea of culture wars in Europe might be, it relies on a misconception touching the notion of culture itself. Since the end of the twentieth century, the concept of culture has come under scrutiny in academic circles. How could culture wars be a social reality, when social reality itself is devoid of concrete structures, coherence, and stability? Those of us who study Shakespearean adaptation, for instance, know full well that culture is more akin to a "toolkit", or a "repertoire of skills and styles", with which artists create mediation and pastiches (Thomson, 2010: 13). It is my hope that this brief exploration of the origins of and reasons for the exploitation of Shakespeare's works for nationalistic and ideological reasons has gone some way towards throwing light on these issues.

Works cited

Dobson, Michael (1992), *The Making of the National Poet: Shakespeare, Adaptation and Authorship, 1660-1769*, Oxford, Clarendon Press.

Dujin, Anne (2019), "Cliver pour mieux régner", *Le Monde*, 19 January, section 2, pp. 2-3.

Inglehart, Ronald (1977), *The Silent Revolution*, Princeton, Princeton UP.

Kamps, Ivo (ed.) (1991), *Shakespeare Left and Right*, New York, Routledge.

Lanier, Douglas (2002), *Shakespeare and Modern Popular Culture*, Oxford, Oxford UP.

Paulin, Roger (2012), "Shakespeare and Germany", in Fiona Richie and Peter Sabor (ed.), *Shakespeare in the Eighteenth Century*, Cambridge, Cambridge UP, pp. 314-330.

Prince, Kathryn (2012), "Shakespeare and English Nationalism", in Fiona Richie and Peter Sabor (ed.), *Shakespeare in the Eighteenth Century*, Cambridge, Cambridge UP, pp. 277-294.

Rhodes, Neil (2004), *Shakespeare and the Origins of English*, Oxford, Oxford UP.

Thomson, Irene Taviss (2010), *Culture Wars and Enduring American Dilemmas*, Ann Arbor, U of Michigan P.

Voltaire [François-Marie Arouet] (1917). *Lettres philosophiques*, ed. Gustave Lanson, vol. 2, Paris, Librarie Hachette.

— (1877), Œuvres *complètes de Voltaire*, ed. Louis Moland, Paris, Garnier Frères.

— (2007), *Philosophical Letters, or, Letters Regarding the English Nation*, ed. John Leigh, trans. Prudence L. Steiner, Indianapolis and Cambridge, Hackett Pub. Co.

— (1953-65), *Voltaire's Correspondence*, ed. Theodore Besterman, Geneva, Institut et Musée Voltaire.

— (1967), *Voltaire on Shakespeare*, ed. Theodore Besterman, *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century*, nr. 44, Geneva, Institut et Musée Voltaire.

3.6. Shakespeare's Diplomacy: A European Language in Conversation with the World

Nathalie Rivere de Carles

Université de Toulouse Jean Jaurès

ABSTRACT

This chapter looks at the relationship between Shakespeare's drama and early modern as well as contemporary official and non-official diplomacy. Examining early modern to contemporary historical examples of diplomatic uses of Shakespeare's theatre, it explores the nature of a Shakespearean diplomacy and its uses beyond the sole projective outlook of the English nation-state. It examines two plays, *Hamlet* (c. 1600) and *Pericles* (1607-08), as well as scenes from Shakespeare's *Tempest* and histories, in relation to diplomats' analytical writings spanning from *Sir Thomas Smithes voyage and entertainment in Russia* (1605) to Jules Jusserand's *School of Ambassadors* (1922) or Saint-Aulaire's *Richelieu* (1932). Performance analysis of productions such as Cheek by Jowl's 2018 version of *Pericles* is used as instance of the artist's diplomacy and contrasted with the inward-looking use of *The Tempest* (1611) during the 2012 London Olympics opening ceremony to offer a different view of how Shakespeare is and can be used as diplomatic instrument. His plays or their adaptations can be a language of true productive transnational conversations rather than a delusional picture-perfect or conquering view of Shakespeare's birth-culture.

What can Shakespeare do for us and what can we do with Shakespeare? These are the questions. His plays tell us how to see through the tempting snares of populism which please individual instincts at the expense of the individuals themselves and for sure at the cost of a sense of a collective present, notwithstanding the future. Populism is a conversation with a blind and deaf self. Shakespeare's theatre is about negotiating our local self with the unknown wider collective and leaving us entirely free whether to perform such negotiation. Shakespeare's drama is the stuff of diplomacy.

Anyone who has been on an exchange programme or even been a tourist has assumed the position of symbolic ambassador *extraordinary* who carried their local conversations and tried to make them chime with new ones. This is what Shakespeare does when he creates a sonnet or play: he is a borrower and a lender. This is what European cultural and citizen diplomacy is about: borrowing and lending ideas, concerns, actions in Europe and beyond. Shakespeare's drama contains its own specific diplomacy, a European diplomacy in conversation with the World, a diplomacy which has been damaged because it has been used in a socially and territorially homogeneous way. It is time to reclaim Shakespeare as the ambassador of an open Europe, living up to the motto *in varietate concordia*.[1]

Based on the combination of new diplomatic history (Watkins, 2008: 1-14), literary and performance analysis and the sociological methods of surveying and data analysis, as part of a wider study of Shakespeare's diplomacy, this chapter tentatively looks at the relationship between the Bard's drama and early modern as well as contemporary official and non-official diplomacy. Examining early modern to contemporary historical examples of diplomatic uses of Shakespeare's theatre, this chapter raises the question of the nature of a Shakespearean diplomacy and its uses beyond the sole projective outlook of the English nation-state. It examines two plays, *Hamlet* (c. 1600) and *Pericles* (1607-08), and how they became at the time of Shakespeare and in his after-history a diplomatic language.[2] Both plays either feature a diplomatic content (*Hamlet*) or were used as diplomatic gift (*Pericles*). These play's plots, as well as scenes from Shakespeare's *Tempest* and histories, are confronted with their uses in diplomats' analytical writings from *Sir Thomas Smithes voyage and entertainment in Russia* (1605) to Jules Jusserand's *School of Ambassadors* (1922) or Saint-Aulaire's *Richelieu* (1932). The historical and literary analysis of these sources is paired with a survey of Shakespeare-based French and European cultural and educational policies archived in *Bibliothèque Diplomatique Numérique* and international and local projects and festivals from the end of the nineteenth century until now. Using performance analysis of productions such as Cheek by Jowl's 2018 version of *Pericles* as instance of the artist's diplomacy and contrasting them with the inward-looking use of *The Tempest* (1611) during the 2012 London Olympics opening ceremony, this chapter offers a different view of how Shakespeare is and can be used as diplomatic instrument. The combination of methodological approaches (historical, literary, performance analysis) fits the heterogeneous nature of the Shakespearean script. It aims to show that his plays (or adaptations of his plays) can be a language of true productive transnational conversations rather than a delusional picture-perfect or conquering view of Shakespeare's birth-culture.

First, besides their gift and entertainment values, Shakespeare's plays were used as an idiom within the diplomatic language as soon as they were staged. Thus, his theatre progressively became a *lingua franca* for the diplomat and the layperson. Used to code and decode, Shakespeare's plays eventually outgrew their idiomatic status to be the inspiration and the substance of a diplomacy emphasising a shared European culture in conversation with the world. However, the shortcomings of such diplomacy (whether governmental or non-governmental) are real and should be the basis of a redefinition of an internationalist Shakespearean diplomacy.

The Ambassador's Shakespeare: *Hamlet* as Diplomatic Language

While residing at Oxford between 1607 and 1619, Richard Zouche, a jurist and one of the founders of international law, penned *The Sophister* (c. 1614), a comedy which provides a scholarly and dramatic view of Renaissance diplomacy (Rivere de Carles, 2016: 121). After becoming a professor of civil law at Oxford and serving as a member of a special commission appointed by Oliver Cromwell for the trial of the Portuguese ambassador's brother who had committed murder in a brawl, Zouche wrote *A Dissertation Concerning the Punishment of Ambassadors Who Transgress the Laws of the Countries where They Reside* (1657), which was widely circulated in Europe. In this essay, he uses theatre-writing as the instrument for a systemic approach to the ambassador's identity and performance.

The symbiotic relationship between theatre and diplomacy extends to the analytical level. Plays are not only an instrument of representation of diplomacy for an audience. Shakespeare's plays with their multiple layers, characters and spaces, and their elastic sense of time became a language to untangle diplomatic complexity: a practice shared by diplomatic and non-diplomatic actors which started in Shakespeare's own time and developed throughout the centuries. Let us see how Shakespeare and his plays became a diplomatic idiom to understand and explain complex others and situations, as well as the meaning they acquired in the diplomatic sphere, and how they became an unexpected form of soft power (Nye, 2004: 99-100).

Diplomacy is famous for its use of coded messages, and Shakespeare's plays have been part of diplomatic coding since the Renaissance as the reference to *Hamlet* in *Sir Thomas Smithes voyage and entertainment in Russia* shows. The *Voyage* recounted the journey of English commercial diplomats to Russia and

the succession crisis rocking the kingdom of Muscovy. In September 1604, King James I of England sent Sir Thomas Smythe along with a few other men to Boris Godunov to negotiate privileges for English merchants. However, the diplomatic party landed in the middle of a transnational dynastic feud known as the *Smuta* involving a dead emperor (Feodor Ivanovich), his brother-in-law (Boris), and the emperor's dead-then-resuscitated brother (Dmitry). Dmitry, backed by the Polish Nobility and the papal nuncio, challenged Boris' accession to power after Feodor's death (Griesse, 2014: 58-59).

The *Voyage* is based on real diplomatic accounts and is thought to have been put together by William Scott, a member of the diplomatic party.[3] Being at a loss for an explanation of the complex political landscape in Russia and Poland, the travelogue's editor chose Shakespeare's *Hamlet* to describe the situation:

> that his fathers Empire and Gouernment, was but as the *Poeticall Furie in a Stage-action*, compleat yet with horrid and wofull Tragedies: a first, but no second to any *Hamlet*; and that now *Revenge*, iust *Revenge* was coming with his Sworde drawne against him, his royall Mother, and dearest Sister, to fill up those Murdering Sceanes: the *Embryon* whereof was long since Modeld, yea, digested (but unlawfully and too-too viue-ly) by his dead selfe-murdering Father: such and so many being their feares and terrours; the Diuell aduising, Despair counselling, Hell it self instructing. (Author Unknown, *Sir Thomas Smithes voyage*, 1605: K1)

Using *Hamlet* could be just a topical parallel with a play reprinted many times between 1603 and 1637 and a way to charm the readership. Yet, the *Hamlet* analogy could also betray a desire to explain the situation clearly and thus to use the dramatic language to clarify diplomatic complexity on both sides: at this stage of the narrative, the point for the ambassador is to try to give a birds-eye view of the feud, but it also reflects the approach required from diplomatic staff when dealing with a political and territorial other. Making use of theatre to make a complex issue clearer shows that theatre is part and parcel of the performance of diplomacy beyond mere ceremonial gestures and theatrical uses of space. Theatre, and most particularly Shakespeare, is also part of the vocabulary of the ambassador and of his tools to understand complex situations and to report on them as clearly as possible.

Shakespeare is not only the language of early modern English ambassadors or diplomatic agents. A survey of the French digital diplomatic archives reveals that Shakespeare, the man as well as his plays, is part and parcel of the language of non-English diplomats whether they address English issues or not. In *The School of Ambassadors*, a 1922 essay written for the education of diplomats, Jean-Jules Jusserand, a French ambassador to the United States, quotes Jean Hotman regarding the way ambassadors should report incidents and public slandering of their master:

> Hotman agrees [with Danès], adding one proviso, however, that is: except when the conveying of such information can only cause useless irritation and diminish the chances of that good understanding between nations, which is, as we have seen, the chief object of diplomacy. If however any untoward incident has been public the ambassador has no choice: "The matter would be different, if, in full council of the prince, or in the pulpit by preachers, or on the stage by comedians, or by writings or lampoons, the ambassador saw his master's honor defamed, for then he must send the information at once (...) using however moderation to make the harm greater than it is, for the case is similar to that of ladies who often by over-defending their honor render it more suspected and doubtful". The lady, Shakespeare thought, should not protest too much. (Jusserand, 1922: 452)[4]

In the 1603 treaty, *The Ambassador*, Hotman concluded his advice with Tacitus and the common place of virtuous feminine discretion: "*Convicia, si irascare, agnita videntur, spreta exolescunt*" (Hotman, 1603: 87-88).[5] Jusserand, an erudite reader of and writer on English medieval and Renaissance theatre, glosses Hotman's advice and replaces Tacitus' *Annals* by Shakespeare's *Hamlet*.[6] He borrows the words from Gertrude about the actress during the play within the play that "The Lady protests too much" (3.2.216). The latter remark was generalized to the form "Too much protesting makes the truth suspected" and became proverbial (Tilley, 1950: 614). Resorting to paroemia being a characteristic of diplomatic speech, Jusserand's swapping a classical proverb in Latin for an early modern English phrase emphasises how much Shakespeare's plays and the English language have by that time become a *lingua franca*.

The latter is known as a common language adopted by speakers whose mother tongues differ. Latin was the common language for centuries, but at the time of Shakespeare, the shift to vernacular languages had already started in the diplomatic sphere. The Latin quotations in the second edition of Hotman's treaty *The Ambassador* in 1604 were tellingly removed and the author insists on ambassadors speaking the vernacular of the court they were sent to on top of their Latin (Hotman, 1604: 13-14). This progressive transformation of the linguistic practices should make us consider another meaning of *lingua franca* in the late medieval and early modern eras, that of *sabir*, the Mediterranean *lingua franca*. The latter is a mixture of Italian with French, Greek, Arabic, and Spanish and its absorptive nature should be paralleled with that of the early modern English language and with the Elizabethan literature's enthusiasm for macaronism (*the mixture of languages within a sentence or a paragraph*). Although Shakespeare often mocks the macaronic style as pedantic, he nonetheless adapts it. His words and his tales, with their local and foreign sources, are absorptive and recreative, granting his drama the fundamental features of a *lingua franca*. Shakespeare's theatre is inherently apt to become a bridge, or rather a crossroad language, that enables cultures and histories to mesh.

Jusserand chooses a dramatic performance, a public event, as the context of a potential incident. He pairs it with an implicit portrait of the ambassador as actor whose performance should be as natural as possible, as repeatedly advocated in *Hamlet*.[7] In Hotman's text, plays in performance are singled out as important but volatile political events.[8] In Jusserand's, theatre takes a new dimension: Shakespeare's plays offer an education, a language and a behavioural pattern for the ambassador.

The absorption and use of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (and other plays) as part of a diplomatic *lingua franca* is not purely incidental or ornamental. Diplomats making use of Shakespeare exploit the synchronicity of his plots and language to perform an act of diplomacy, whether for peace or war. "Compte-rendu de *Richelieu* par le comte de Saint Aulaire", published in *Revue d'histoire diplomatique* in 1932, notices how the biography by Saint-Aulaire, the ambassador of France to London, contains an analysis of diplomatic history reflecting his knowledge of both the French and the English diplomatic and cultural traditions: "Les souvenirs de son ambassade lui suggèrent des rapprochements ingénieux" [The memories of his embassy inspired him ingenious connexions] (Duc de la Force, 1932: 423). Saint-Aulaire portrayed the French king, Louis XIII, as "a Hamlet who would have Richelieu in place of his will", a monarch whose "soul is heavy with great action and unable to perform it".[9] Saint-Aulaire juxtaposes Lamartine's analysis of

Hamlet, the character of Hamlet, the founding figure of French diplomacy and a French King as if he were addressing a dual audience about two different topics. First, using Shakespeare in an analysis of French diplomatic history is a subtle reassertion of the common culture and history shared by France and Britain and a reminder of the Entente Cordiale, thus furthering his task as ambassador to Britain. Besides, Saint-Aulaire offers a means to understand the part of the diplomat in statesmanship and might suggest a possible response to a head of state's paralysis.

Shakespeare's *Hamlet* is again a synthetic analysis of a political situation, but Saint-Aulaire also uses it to perform some subtle European diplomacy. Saint-Aulaire displays a very diplomatic conception of time and memory which appears to be both diachronic and synchronic. The introduction of Lamartine's comment on *Hamlet* introduces another temporal layer to those of early modern France and Saint-Aulaire's own epoch. His analysis of Richelieu through Shakespeare is a way to discuss his own historical time and the lessons that can be taken from days of yore. However, Shakespeare is not used as a nostalgic literary artefact but as a temporal and territorial dissonance that automatically triggers critical distance.

Ironically or deliberately, Saint-Aulaire plays with Richelieu's use of theatre for diplomatic purposes and with the recurring use of Shakespeare for nationalistic exaltation in Britain since the French Revolution. At the end of the Thirty Years' War, Richelieu commissioned three court entertainments: the *Ballet de la félicité* (1639), the *Prospérité des armes*, and *Europe, comédie héroïque* (1642). Ellen R. Welch explains that "with *Europe*, the pedagogical dimension of allegory teaches the spectators to want above all else the well-being of this abstract entity who bears the continent's name" (Welch, 2017: 82-106; 82). No doubt, the Cardinal, then prime-minister, made use of drama to posit his own idea of Europe, but Saint-Aulaire's use of Shakespeare alters the initial diplomatic strategy. Indeed, turning the Cardinal into a playwright is not a random act of literary ornamentation, it is significant of Saint-Aulaire's literary diplomacy. He follows in the steps of Richelieu's dramatic diplomacy but gives it a twist: turning Richelieu into Shakespeare, the very playwright who had often been used for jingoistic nationalistic praise of the British Empire, is a way to tone down both the French and the English unmeasured ambitions, to reaffirm the Entente, and to assert the existence of a transnational culture in Europe. Richelieu's entertainments relied on allegory and classical mythology, but Saint-Aulaire uses another language to foster an embryonic sense of European commonalty: Shakespeare and his plays.

What Kind of Shakespearean Diplomacy?

A systemic approach to the use of culture in international relations allows us to identify three main types of diplomatic use of Shakespeare today. The first one is based on government-funded initiatives through education and subsidised cultural policies emphasising a shared European culture. The second use is tied to a country's public diplomacy, such as the use of one's own culture abroad to promote one's own interests (Berridge *et al*, 2012: 368). And the third use can be defined as an artist-based diplomacy which involves both public and private funds to favour a shared European culture in conversation with itself and the rest of the world.

Public diplomacy is primarily one-sided, which explains its tendency to fail whether in the short or long-term. The involvement of Shakespeare in public diplomacy is more a matter of imposition than conversation. It is disconnected from the humanist ethos underpinning Renaissance literature and above all from the view of diplomacy as a means to foster a good understanding between nations. By contrast, government-funded initiatives and artist-based diplomacy include a dialogic dimension of culture. The former aims to create a dialogic sense of citizenship while the latter partakes in the collective conscience at the core of an artist's creativity. In both cases, the point is to articulate the individual level with the collective level whether we speak in terms of a single person, a community, or a nation, with other individuals, a society, other nations.

Saint-Aulaire's use of Shakespeare reflects France's "diplomatie de l'esprit" [diplomacy of the mind] to quote Marc Fumaroli's phrase and is part and parcel of a policy of cultural internationalism that starts with the European level (Fumaroli, 1994). Europe is only a first step in a gradual move towards a post-nation-state framework. One starts fostering links at the European level to show it is possible, and then one adds the global level as Europe is a global crossroads. Paradoxically, this view (minus the Habermassian post-nation-state stance) has been at the heart of French cultural policies for a long republican while now. In 1899, Georges Leygues, the minister for Public Education and Fine Arts, under attack for subsidising the performance of Shakespeare at the Comédie-Française, made the following answer:

> Pourquoi dès lors vouloir exclure du répertoire de nos scènes dramatiques et lyriques les chefs-d'œuvre des auteurs étrangers, quels qu'ils soient. Shakespeare a sa place

marquée à la Comédie-Française. (Applaudissements.)
Shakespeare est chez lui dans tous les pays du monde,
comme Molière, Voltaire, Dante et Goethe. Et ce n'est pas
dans Paris, qui lui a élevé une statue, qu'on pourra con-
tester le droit de cité à l'immortel auteur d'*Hamlet*. (…) La
fondation des théâtres subventionnés a eu pour but non
pas seulement d'assurer la représentation des œuvres
françaises, mais aussi de permettre au public français
de juger des productions du génie de tous les temps et
de toutes les races. La pensée humaine n'a pas de patrie
(Applaudissements), et ici je suis internationaliste. (*Journal
officiel de la République française*, 1899)

[Why would you exclude foreign authors from our French
theatres and operas repertory? Shakespeare belongs
to the Comédie-Française. (*Applause*). Shakespeare is at
home wherever in the world, and so are Molière, Voltaire,
Dante and Goethe. No one in Paris, in a city that erected a
statue of Shakespeare, will ever be able to challenge the
immortal author of *Hamlet*'s right of citizenship.

Subsidised theatres were founded not only to stage
French plays, but also to bring to French audiences the
productions of geniuses of all times and all races. Human
thought does not have a mother country (*Applause*), and
on this, I am an internationalist (My translation)].

Georges Leygues was not *stricto sensu* an internationalist by 1899's
standards, but it is interesting that he used the concept for a cultural policy
and thus transferred it into the realm of diplomacy. Of course, Leygues spoke
in the context of France and Britain working on what would become the *Entente
Cordiale*.[10] However, this geopolitical agenda should not obscure the core of
that speech given in the French parliament and aimed at a domestic political
audience: it emphasised the will of a government to create a dialogic culture
and not an inward-looking one. The phrase "right of citizenship" reinforced
Shakespeare as an ambassador and his plays as fostering a transnational culture
and more particularly at that stage, a European culture.

Jean-Louis Barrault, who played and directed *Hamlet* in 1939 and 1946, wrote:
"Shakespeare arrive à se libérer de son corps national et folklorique pour révéler à
l'intérieur tout ce qui touche tous les hommes" ["Shakespeare manages to liberate

himself from his own national and folkloric body to act as a reflector of what's within or what moves men" (My translation)] (Demeure, 1964a; 1964b). Shakespeare always manages to slip away from the stifling limitations of commemorations and a British soft-power redolent of imperial nostalgia. Shakespeare is not a conquering language, it is a *lingua franca*, but not only a bridge language but a shared language. By shared language we should understand the fundamentally dialogic nature of this *lingua franca*: the latter should not be viewed as a mere technical language, but the linguistic form given to commonalty. Shakespeare's writing is aesthetically and poetically too disobedient to be considered or used as a self-contained language imposing itself on linguistic and cultural others. Shakespeare's plays are a flexible idiom travelling back and forth between "this England" where he flourished and this sometimes "distracted globe" that he kept imagining (*Richard II*, 2.1.50; *Hamlet*, 1.5.97).

Between 1607 and 1608, the Venetian ambassador Giorgio Giustiniani offered a performance of Shakespeare's new play, *Pericles*, to the French ambassador, Antoine Fèvre de la Boderie, his wife, and Ottaviano Lotti, the Secretary of Florence (*Archivio di Stato di Venezia*).[11] In 2018, Declan Donnellan's company Cheek by Jowl played a version of *Pericles* in French and performed by French actors. The diplomatic channels have changed but the diplomatic canvas is still Shakespearean. Pericles and his Odyssean journey across the Mediterranean are evocative of early modern issues as well as contemporary ones.

The play is a journey in European literature with sources ranging from Apollonius of Tyre's romance to Gower's *Confessio Amantis* and George Wilkins' own prose narrative entitled *Pericles*. Performing Shakespeare in French with English surtitles in front of a British audience in Britain is a subtle way of confronting the nationalistic uses of Shakespeare. It truly shows his plays are a language that can be spoken worldwide, and which speaks not for England but about it and about others at the same time, about what transcends the national experience.

Donellan's production is set in a contemporary hospital room and alternates three narratives: the story of a man in a coma named Michel who is surrounded by his family, the history of Saint Paul and the Mediterranean played on a radio in Michel's room, and Shakespeare's story of Pericles. Michel is both himself now and Pericles then; he dreams the play's central plot. The radio show about the travels of Saint Paul and the background 1930s French song entitled "J'attendrai" [I'll wait] are the paradoxical leitmotivs linking both plots. The radio show replaces Gower as prologue and intersperses journalistic and academic commentaries on the various places Shakespeare's Pericles and his daughter Marina travel to. The song, chosen to evoke "a song that old was sung" (1.1.1), is about expectation.

It has had a truly European life as it was covered in other European languages before World War II. It recalls Pericles' motto disclosed by Thaisa in 2.2: "in hac spe vivo" [in this hope I live]. This hope is challenged to its bitter limits by the play and the choice of the director to follow the Odyssean pattern of successive tableaux, each facing the protagonist with the woes of the forced wanderer wherever she or he goes: poverty, slavery, all forms of violence and death. The contemporary setting and costumes, the voice over of the radio show and the juxtaposition of the performance in French and the English surtitles gently bring home to the spectators that the characters' mixed reception of Shakespeare's words, "thou shalt be welcome", is also their own.

The *Pericles* experience for the spectator is decidedly transnational and confronts the spectator with a long-shared history of travellers crossing the Mediterranean in hope for some reconciled existence. The tale of *Pericles* echoes Shakespeare's speech about the "wretched strangers" written for *Thomas More* in 1603. Jonathan Bate emphasizes the dialogic diplomacy of Shakespeare: "More asks the on-stage crowd, and by extension the theatre audience, to imagine what it would be like to be an asylum-seeker undergoing forced repatriation" (Bate, 2011: 74). This Shakespearean negotiation could be paired with Donnellan's E. M. Forster-inspired statement that "if theatre does not seek to *connect* with people, it is not theatre anymore" (Romo, 2018). *Pericles* is a play about strangers performed in front of strangers in 1608 and ultimately by strangers in 2018, at a time of a new rupture between England and the continent, and at a time when the continent's humanist values are tested by the refugee crisis. The dialogic diplomacy of Shakespeare based on surrogating and empathy comes full circle here, but it is faced with a major obstacle: its target-audience.

Self-Centred Cultural Diplomacy versus Shakespearean Internationalism

In 2012, the opening ceremony of the Olympic Games in London directed by Danny Boyle started with Kenneth Branagh dressed as Isambard Kingdom Brunel speaking the words of Caliban: "Be not afeard; the isle is full of noises, / Sounds and sweet airs, that give delight and hurt not" (*The Tempest*, 3.2).[12] Britain was welcoming the world during what is the epitome of sports diplomacy: Branagh, a Belfast-born actor, celebrated for making Shakespeare popular again, impersonated Brunel, the son of a French refugee who had fled the Terror and

participated in the technological and social evolution of Victorian England. Shakespeare's words were not meant to partake in a nostalgic or jingoistic celebration, they spoke for themselves with their English music and their borderless echoes, or at least they were supposed to. Caliban's words were an apt choice for a prologue of entente, but the rest of the ceremony was not a dialogue with the world, rather a gazing-in-the-mirror moment for England alone. The show missed the Caliban target and included Shakespeare in a mission of self-aggrandisement rather than dialogic openness. This work of public diplomacy was symptomatic of a nostalgic approach to culture and history that would soon backfire. So, when we ask what Shakespeare can do for Europe (or more generally for international relations), the answer starts with his own words and continues with *how* we make them available and *to whom*.

Cheek by Jowl's French production of *Pericles* testifies to the long-standing tradition of the touring theatre companies and their role in cultural exchanges. Declan Donellan's Cheek by Jowl's English / French and Russian company tours Europe with surtitled productions of Shakespeare in English, French and Russian. Ivo van Hove tours with his company performing his own take on Shakespeare's works such as *The Roman Tragedies* or *Kings of War* in Dutch with surtitles fitting the local audience's language. He also exports his scenographies and directions worldwide to be reprised by local actors in their own mother tongue. Thomas Ostermeier does the same and has perpetuated and anchored the multilingual tradition of the Schaubühne theatre of performing Shakespeare's plays in German with surtitles when touring abroad. His Berlin theatre offers the same experience of plays in German with English and French surtitles every month.[13] Theatre, and more particularly Shakespeare's drama, is a flexible idiom that can be augmented and reinvented in the macaronic fashion of the Mediterranean *lingua franca*. These initiatives coupled with their historical precedents such as the Festival d'Avignon, for which the creation of a European culture is one of the founding tenets (March, 2012: 142-144), use Shakespeare's plays as a *lingua franca*, a language that blends with others, a vocabulary which is part of a transnational language of theatre.

The Shakespearean diplomacy relies on several artistic methods and the combination of these artistic methods with technical considerations. The previous examples of contemporary touring companies shed light on the first method in modern-day Shakespearean diplomacy: the multilingual approach to performance. The latter includes translation, surtitling and multilingual performances (when each performer speaks in a different language), with the caveat of not making multilingualism a source of obscurity for the audience.

A second method is Shakespeare-based new writing: adaptations, tradaptations of Shakespeare's plays and new writing based on his works such as Priti Taneja's King Lear-inspired novel, *We That Are Young* (2018) or Djanet Sears' transtemporal *Othello*-based play, *Harlem Duet* (2012). Thus, the Schaubühne is the home of the Festival of International New Drama where new productions from all around the world are performed in the original language of the company and/or the actors. Regularly, the programme includes companies and directors offering their take on Shakespeare's plays in the form of new drama, reworking that Shakespearean *lingua franca* linking actors, directors, and audiences. In 2017, the festival featured *Shakespeare's Last Play* (after *The Tempest*), by Dead Centre, a Dublin-based company. Bush Moukarzel, the director of the Dead Centre, explained: "Shakespeare's project is a never-ending event. We are all going to the Island to do Shakespeare, to the author to understand ourselves better" (Pearson, 2018). The discovery and the dialogue are not insular though, but dialogic in terms of languages, eras, cultures, and media as shown by the performance during the Festival's 2018 issue of Rodrigo Garcia's *Evel Knievel contra Macbeth na terra do finado Humberto*. Garcia's play is performed in three languages by two actors and a xylophone player and is set in north-eastern Brazil:

> [Garcia] appears in the guise of Orson Welles who, immersed in his film role of Macbeth, has forgotten his real existence and now, in the company of the Greek rhetoricians Demosthenes and Lysias, is trying to obliterate the traces of his own origins. But he has failed to reckon with the stuntman Evel Knievel and the Japanese Manga dragon Neronga. (Garcia, 2018)

The play relies on the collaboration between two playwrights, Shakespeare and Garcia, and a dead director famed for his film adaptions of Shakespeare, Orson Welles. Shakespeare's play is the canvas on which Garcia creates his own and literally stages the multilingual dialogue it implies and that will be transposed to the audience.

Garcia's show is itself a communal creation that implies multiple encounters between different territorial dramatic traditions. The play was co-produced by two theatres in France, one in Spain and one in Argentina. It also illustrates the third level of the Shakespearean diplomacy: the transfer of the tradition of travelling companies to the production level through multinational partnerships. This is a more technical level, but an important one as it favours concrete cultural

and social exchanges in terms of approaches to work and time. Another asset of this type of Shakespeare-theatre-based diplomacy is the involvement of local and international institutions. The Schaubühne Festival of International New Drama is supported by the German Federal Cultural Foundation, the Franco-German Youth office, New York University, Conservatoire National Supérieur d'Art Dramatique, and the Allianz Kulturstiftung for Europe.[14] The mix of government-funded and non-for-profit organizations sponsoring this festival raises interesting points. Even though the stakeholders' reasons for investing in such form of culture-based diplomacy may be prosaic, international cooperation counters the dearth of local public investment (on the condition it supplements public investment rather than replaces it). It can also be a form of check-and-balance when confronted with governmental attempts at hijacking culture for the promotion of cultural autarchy (one thinks of certain governments' recent anti-NGO legislations aimed at favouring inward-looking populist nationalism by destroying any possibility of international exchange).

However, if the various methods and approaches of established artists emulate early modern touring companies as vehicles of a common culture, we need to question their audiences. We must admit that in terms of audience, there is something missing. When one watches the audience during the filmed performance of *Pericles* at the Guildhall in London, the social and ethnic homogeneity of the group of spectators is quite striking: there is a vast majority of white urban middle-class people. Indeed, these are big touring companies speaking to very metropolitan audiences. But how do you work towards non-metropolitan, non-academic-related and genuinely socially mixed audiences? It will rely on the old methods of government-funded educational and cultural initiatives country-wide and being mindful of reaching new audiences as well as subsidising and favouring artist's initiatives to reach these new audiences outside the cultural megalopolises.

Shakespeare, just like Molière, had the ability and the will to speak to different audiences simultaneously during the span of a play. Sometimes, this inherent trait of his writing has been left aside. Witnessing the obvious divide between town and country which has become again an instrument to divide and promote a false idea of what commonalty is, and especially European commonalty, the diplomacy of Shakespeare perhaps needs to be performed in new spaces and not only through new media.

The work of a company like Antic Disposition raises an interesting question regarding how Shakespeare can bring different audiences to be entertained and to ponder on similar issues. Antic Disposition is a London-based company

which blends English and French actors, and which tours the English and French countryside with Shakespeare's plays, but also plays in bigger urban venues such as London's theatres or the national theatre of Nice. They rekindle the European tradition of traveling players performing in churches, inns, or courtyards.[15] They perform exclusively in English in front of local audiences.

The pattern is not perfect, but the principle is interesting as it calls for creative new cultural policies and citizen's artistic initiatives that would blend the urban and rural worlds through the promotion of touring companies performing in their mother tongue but with linguistic aide and expanding their touring zone outside the big urban centres. At a time when Europe seems for many to be a remote entity, Shakespeare and his blended tales of reinvented territories could be the perfect language for an artist-led diplomacy emphasising that Europe is not to be built as it is already here and has always been, it is to be perfected and the Shakespearean *lingua franca* should help.

An example of the way Shakespeare's plays can inspire internationalism that starts at home and creates inclusive culture is *Les Nuits Shakespeare*, a summer festival in the small town of Pamiers in the department of Ariège, one of the poorest territories of rural France facing economic and socio-political challenges partly due to its geographical isolation. Frédéric Lafond and Philippe Rahon, who run the festival as part of Scènes de Pamiers, the local state-funded cultural mission, in collaboration with the local town hall and a syndicate of local cultural associations (Pamiers en Scènes), launched a new theatre-based cultural rendezvous. Their aim is to energise local life, gather creative forces from the town and the outside, and articulate local and foreign stories and histories. While seeking to create a festival that is popular, not populist, they pursue collaborative endeavour that relies on creative macaronism.

Lafond invited Mala Noche, a theatre company from Franche Comté, to become a resident artist and to use local buildings such as the former Carmelite convent that had been closed to the public for decades and to create an interactive festival. Guillaume Dujardin, the director of Mala Noche, offered to work on Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* and sonnets in a mix of scaffold theatre for the play and a musical show for the sonnets paralleled with Shakespeare-themed theatre practice workshops and a ball. The point was to get the play as close to the audience as possible and to get the audience as close as possible to Shakespeare's drama. Dujardin's choice of Shakespeare made it easier as the Bard's plays already offer a template that mixes the local and the international, the high and low brow, concreteness and abstraction. Lafond and Dujardin were assisted by a violinist from the US who reinvented the French tradition of the three knocks to call the

audience: he mixed the music of world-renowned Ariège-born composer Gabriel Fauré with the bell of the convent and the sound of the local factory press. This synchronic soundtrack based on local history invited locals and visitors to hear in French the story of a Roman general and his Egyptian queen told by an English playwright. Dujardin chose *Antony and Cleopatra* because of his own familiarity with Shakespeare's play and as a way to put the festival on the map. However, very early in the creative process, Shakespeare's drama was approached as a familiar language that could be used as a *lingua franca* to speak to others.

The positive effects of such endeavours as *Les Nuits Shakespeare* are felt locally in economic terms but not only, as testified by a local festival such as The Oregon Shakespeare Festival.[16] Its impact can be measured in non-material terms: it brings self-confidence in one's own creative powers and raises the awareness of foreign influences as not being that foreign or threatening. Shakespeare's theatre is a creative language that brings diplomacy home or rather shows that international relations start at home.

Conclusion

Shakespeare is the best argument to refute the accusation of Eurocentrism thrown at those who still defend the European project. Shakespeare's theatre is not only a European language but a global language. It does not intrinsically aim to be the only one, but one amongst many practical others. It favours a European conversation with the rest of the world. It is a linguistic and cultural transnational passport that allows us to critically look at borders of the self, national communities, and beyond. Shakespeare's drama challenges the coercive or populist uses of cultural and public diplomacy and encourages new definitions of transnational diplomacy for the citizen and the artist.

Shakespeare does not pit Europe against the world, no more than he pitted England against the continent: he was too cognisant of European literatures and arts to reject them and had a sense of a common yet not homogeneous culture. That is the diplomacy of Shakespeare or maybe what could be tagged as the Shakespearean doctrine: plays that create and testify to a citizen's European conscience in the sense of a shared yet not homogeneous culture. Shakespeare tells us that Europe can thrive on a constant, sometimes tense, but ultimately fruitful, conversation and negotiation between local concerns and the wider world. Shakespeare's plays became a *lingua franca* for diplomats, and they may still nourish each European local language in conversation with the world.

Notes

1. This Latin phrase, meaning "united in diversity", was coined by French pupils during an informal contest and has been used as the motto of the European Union since 2000. See https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/symbols/motto_fr, accessed 2 April 2024.

2. Quotations are from Greenblatt *et al.*, 2016.

3. The address "To the Reader" insists on the fact that the anonymous author is rather an editor as he got the details "from the mouths of divers gentlemen that went in the Iourney, and hauing some good notes bestowed upon me in writing". A member of the 1604 diplomatic party named William Scott stated his intention to write a detailed narrative of the embassy in a letter to Robert Cecil: "the summe and argumente of the discourse is the Image of the ambassadors negotiacion, the description of the Landes" (*Calendar of State Papers*, 1605, SP 91/1, pp. 203-204). Gavin Alexander notes that the "literariness" of certain passages of *Sir Thomas Smithes Voyage* resembles the style of Scott's *Model of Poesy* (1599) (Alexander, 2013, lxxii). This would indicate that either Scott himself participated in the *Voyage* or that the *Voyage*'s editor had had access to Scott's detailed account.

4. Jusserand's quotation is adapted from Jean Hotman, *The Ambassador*, 1603, London, G4v-G5r, pp. 87-88: "It is another thing, if in full council of the prince, or in the pulpit by the preachers, or on the theatre by stage players, or by writing or libels, he see the honour of his master defamed. For he ought forthwith to advertise him of it, and withal to crave justice and amends for the same of those that ought to grant it unto him. Yet nevertheless moderating himself, for not making the mischief to be greater than it is; for so it befalls them as with women, who many times through too much defending of their honesty, make it more doubtful and suspected, especially, when they add thereto much affection and fervency, as Tacitus says *Convicia si irascare, agnita videntur spreta exolescunt*".

5. "For things contemned are soon things forgotten: anger is read as recognition", Tacitus, *Annals*, trans. J. Jackson, Loeb Classical Library, Harvard U P, 1937, Bk. IV, xxxiv.

6. Jusserand was also a scholar of English drama before, during and after Shakespeare's time: see Jean-Jules Jusserand (1855-1932), BNF, http://data.bnf.fr/12003189/jean-jules_jusserand/, accessed 2 April 2024.

7. See Hamlet's advice to actors: "Pox, leave thy damnable faces and begin" (3.2.239).

8. Hotman's discussion of public slander quoted by Jusserand starts with a survey of the places where it could happen: "It is another thing, if in full council of the prince, or in the pulpit by the preachers, or on the theatre by stage players, or by writing or libels, he see (sic) the honour of his master defamed" (Hotman, 1603: 87).

9. "Louis XIII fait songer à un Hamlet dont Richelieu serait la volonté. (…) Comme le Prince de Danemark, il avait une âme chargée d'une grande action et incapable de l'accomplir" (Saint-Aulaire, 1932: 82). Saint-Aulaire appropriates Alfonse de Lamartine's analysis of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*: "nous montrer une âme chargée d'une grande action et incapable de l'accomplir" (Lamartine, 1865: 134).

10. With thanks to A. J. Hoenselaars for emphasising the importance of Shakespeare's statue.

11. The interrogation of the interpreter Odoardo Guatz (Guazzo) mentioning the performance of *Pericles* and its diplomatic spectators is part of a collection of documents connected with the trial of former Ambassador Antonio Foscarini (*Archivio di Stato di Venezia*). For a facsimile of the report see "A Venetian ambassador sees a performance of Pericles", *Shakespeare Documented*, shakespearedocumented.folger.edu/resource/document/venetian-ambassador-sees-performance-pericles, accessed 2 April 2024.

12. See "Sir Kenneth Branagh's speech at the London Olympic Games 2012", youtube.com/watch?v=ioN5-I3Iq9c, accessed 2 April 2024. The choice of Elgar's "Nimrod" from *Enigma Variations* as background music also raises questions regarding the production's unconscious jingoism.

13. See "Surtitles", *Shaubühne*, schaubuehne.de/en/pages/surtitles.html, accessed 2 April 2024: "In addition, several surtitled performances in various languages, including mobile surtitles, are scheduled each month for our international audience".

14. See Allianz Foundation, "The Mission", allianzfoundation.org/about, accessed 2 April 2024. The Allianz Foundation, established in 2022 from the merger of Allianz Kulturstiftung (2000) and Allianz Umweltstiftung (1989), is openly performing a form of non-governmental diplomacy by funding projects in Europe, the Mediterranean and beyond with "a focus on civil society, the environment, culture and the arts" to face the rise of nationalism and authoritarianism. "Founded with the purpose of fostering social cohesion in Europe and sustaining a world worth living in", it is predicated upon a view of "Europe not just as a geographical or political entity but as a model of solidarity across borders".

15. See *Antic Disposition*, www.anticdisposition.co.uk, accessed 2 April 2024.

16. On the economic, social, and educational impact of the Oregon Shakespeare Festival see Brown, 2018.

Works cited

Alexander, Gavin (2013), "Introduction", in *William Scott. The Model of Poesy*, ed. Gavin Alexander, Cambridge, Cambridge UP, pp. xix-lxxxiv.

Author Unknown (1605), *Sir Thomas Smithes voyage and entertainment in Russia*, London, STC 22869.

Archivio di Stato di Venezia, Inquisitori di Stato, 155, fols. 72-79, 76v-77.

Bate, Jonathan (2011), *Soul of the Age: The Life, Mind and World of William Shakespeare*, London, Penguin.

Berridge, G. M., Alan James, Lorna Lloyd (2012), *Dictionary of Diplomacy*, London, Palgrave Macmillan.

Bibliothèque Diplomatique Numérique, bibliotheque-numerique.diplomatie.gouv.fr, accessed 2 April 2024.

Brown, Jeffrey (2018), "In rural Oregon, regional theater sparks a creative revival", *PBS NewsHour,* 24 August, https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/in-rural-oregon-community-theater-sparks-a-creative-revival, accessed 2 April 2024.

Demeure, Jacques (1964a), *W. Shakespeare*, Documentaire, Collection Portrait Souvenir, Radiodiffusion Télévision Française, https://madelen.ina.fr/content/shakespeare-77608, accessed 2 April 2024.

— (1964b), *William Shakespeare – Qui est Shakespeare?*, Documentaire, Éclair Brut, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p5B_Mebq7HQ, accessed 2 April 2024.

Force, Duc de la (1932), "Compte-rendu de *Richelieu* par le comte de Saint Aulaire", *Revue d'histoire diplomatique*, Société d'histoire générale et d'histoire diplomatique (France), Paris, Leroux.

Fumaroli, Marc (1994), *La Diplomatie de l'Esprit*, Paris, Gallimard.

García, Rodrigo (2018), *Evel Knievel contra Macbeth na terra do finado Humberto*, Montpellier / Ligüeria / Marseille, schaubuehne.de/en/produktionen/evel-knievel-contra-macbeth-na-terra-do-finado-humberto.html, accessed 2 April 2024.

Greenblatt, Stephen *et al.* (ed.) (2016), *The Norton Shakespeare*, Third Edition, New York, W.W. Norton and Company.

Griesse, Malte (2014), *Mutual Observation to Propaganda War: Premodern Revolts in Their Transnational Representations*, Bielefeld, Transcript Verlag.

Hotman, Jean (1603), *The Ambassador*, London.

— (1604), *De la charge et dignité de l'Ambassadeur*, Paris.

Journal officiel de la République française. Débats parlementaires. Chambre des députés: compte rendu in-extenso (1899), Paris, Séance du 1/03/1899.

Jusserand, Jules (1922), "The School for Ambassadors", *The American Historical Review*, vol. 27, nr. 3, pp. 426-464, accessed 2 April 2024.

Lamartine, Alfonse de (1865), *Shakespeare et son œuvre*, Paris, Librairie Internationale.

March, Florence (2012), *Shakespeare au Festival d'Avignon*, Montpellier, L'Entretemps.

Nye, Joseph S. (2004), *Soft Power. The Means to Success in World Politics*, New York, Public Affairs.

Pearson, Joseph (2018), "Shipwrecked with Dead Centre and *Shakespeare's Last Play*", *Theory*, 23 April, schaubuehne.de/en/blog/shipwrecked-with-dead-centre-and-shakespeares-last-play.html, accessed 2 April 2024.

Rivere de Carles, Nathalie (2016), *Early Modern Diplomacy, Theatre and Soft Power*, London, Palgrave.

Romo, José Luis (2018), "Declan Donnellan: 'Los ingleses tienen una habilidad brillante para ocultar su fanatismo'", *El Mundo*, 1 June, elmundo.es/cultura/teatro/2018/06/01/5b08472122601d075a8b459d.html, accessed 2 April 2024.

Saint-Aulaire, Auguste Félix Charles de Beaupoil, Comte de (1932), *Richelieu*, Collection Historia, vol. 24, Paris, Dunod.

Scott, William (1599), *The Modell of Poesye: Or The Arte of Poesye drawn into a short or Summary Discourse*, London, British Library, Add. MS 81083.

Tacitus (1937), *Annals*, trans. J. Jackson, Loeb Classical Library, Harvard UP.

Tilley, Morris Palmer (1950), *A Dictionary of the Proverbs in England in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, Ann Arbor, U of Michigan P.

Watkins, John (2008), "Toward a New Diplomatic History of Medieval and Early Modern Europe", *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, vol. 38, nr. 1, pp. 1-14.

Welch, Ellen R. (2017), *A Theatre of Diplomacy*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press.

Zouche, Richard (1639), *The Sophister*, London.

— (1657), *A Dissertation Concerning the Punishment of Ambassadors Who Transgress the Laws of the Countries where They Reside*, published in Latin in 1657, republished in translation by D. J., 1717.

3.7. Crisis: Meeting the Other and the Philosophy of Dialogue

Marta Gibinska

Jagiellonian University in Kraków

ABSTRACT

The chapter examines the philosophy of dialogue in relation to the problem of facing the other as a situation of crisis of acceptance, tolerance and understanding. The ideas of Martin Buber, Emmanuel Levinas and Jozef Tischner are briefly discussed to demonstrate how the three trends in the philosophy of dialogue define and treat the situation in which two human beings meet. Their highly ethical project helps us discover a commercial, utilitarian, and egoistical approach which most of us follow without thinking. Therein the problem of the crisis as a lack of acceptance and understanding seems to be hidden.

Derrida's ideas on hospitality and his demonstration of the aporia characterising the moment of the host facing the guest closes the chapter as a specific coda to the problem of facing the other. The situation of crisis demands change, which calls for an effort on both sides to support the assumption that I and Thou will try to reach a state of mutual good will to talk, that the Self and the Other will accept ethical obligations to each other in order to ask questions and seek answers in acting against the crisis; finally, that the aporetic hostipitality can be turned into some balance between the gift of hospitality and its acceptance. Otherwise, we shall be drawn into the ever-deepening crisis of intolerance and hatred.

Crisis is one of those terms which in popular use have acquired blurred semantic boundaries. Crisis is the point at which we recognize that things have to be changed, turned around, discussed and solved in the sense that decisions are taken and a new perspective is disclosed. Crisis involves the development of a condition of instability or danger, whether in social, economic, political, or international affairs, usually leading to a radical change. Crisis may also concern

a dramatic emotional or circumstantial upheaval in a person's life; it is then the time when a difficult or important choice must be made. In all those varied senses crisis has always accompanied our European cultures.

From an individual, subjective perspective, crisis, or rather different crises, continually mark our life making us face changes, re-orientations and resolutions with which we respond to critical moments that occur on various levels. The result is that our political, social and/or economic environment appears as a highly unreliable and unstable structure within which we have to deal with acceptable values as well as with negative and unwanted ones, harbouring feelings of disharmony and doubts, if not of straightforward antipathy or hostility. Therefore, if the phenomenon of crisis is an inevitable condition of life, we have to learn to live with it and make the best of it. Very often people react to critical situations by developing adaptation skills which may lead to passive attitudes of abandonment and resignation, or even to indifference and exclusion. Such a negative position is dangerous because whatever the crisis, it always involves ethical decisions which directly concern individual scales of values. Indifference, indeed, cannot help solving crises. It is important to realize that crisis forces us to review accepted values and ingrained habits, making us aware of their adequacy or inadequacy and pushing us to (re)define our moral stance. Passivity is no solution. We have to act.

On a small scale, but immensely important, the crisis we most often face in life originates from meeting the Other, a human being whose physical looks, mental set-up, language, and behaviour can make us shrink and take a defensive position exactly because that person is 'not me'. It is a situation in which direct communication, understanding, and acceptance are difficult to achieve. Some insights from the philosophy of dialogue may offer us a chance to act positively and with good results in situations in which we face the Other directly and have to reach a resolution of that crisis.

Philosophy of Dialogue

If meeting the Other is to be discussed in terms of crisis as a turning point, we have to look for a way of communication, negotiation, dialogue. The proposition here is to discuss interpersonal crisis following philosophical ideas of Martin Buber, Emmanuel Levinas and Józef Tischner who have developed a branch of philosophy called 'philosophy of dialogue'. I would like to explore the idea of meeting a radical Other, focusing on how such an event may turn into a crisis, why the crisis takes

place, how it can be diagnosed and healed by changing the critical course (point) into a new, more promising direction. I would like to reflect on how to construct a working relation with the other rather than stay in permanent enmity.

The philosophy of dialogue concentrates mainly on relations between people. Initially touching on the metaphysical relationship with God, it has shifted its focus on the meeting of two human beings. Thus, the term 'dialogue' suggests communication between I and You (Buber), The Self (*Ipseity*) and The Other (Levinas), or The Questioning and The Questioned (Tischner). The three philosophers represent different approaches and solutions concerning the problem of humans coming face to face. Buber and his followers treat this relation as an absolute key situation which defines and constitutes human life.

Martin Buber's I-Thou Encounter

Martin Buber (1878-1965) is famous for his thesis of dialogical existence, as described in his book *I and Thou* (*Ich und Du*, 1923). "I-Thou" or "I-You" is a relationship of the mutual existence of two beings. It is a *concrete encounter*: it is important to understand that the I-Thou encounter is real and perceivable, that it is an authentic existence. In his conception it was open, free of judgement or mutual objectification. He used a variety of examples to illustrate *Ich-Du* relationships in daily life – two lovers, an observer and a cat, the author and a tree, or two strangers on a train. Simple, commonly used words describe the *Ich-Du* relationship: encounter, meeting, dialogue, mutuality, exchange.

It is important to understand that Buber did not consider the situation of crisis, rather the opposite of crisis. The meeting of I-Thou in his perspective is a situation in which the two parties are not divided by 'otherness'. However, rather than dismiss his concept as idealistic, it is worth considering it as a key to a successful *resolution* of crisis, with the stress on the mutuality of good will in the encounter. Without that mutuality, the encounter will not take place. If I and Thou do not start a dialogue, crisis will take place.

Emanuel Levinas' Concept of The Other

In his work *Totality and Infinity* (*Totalité et infini. Essai sur l'extériorité*, 1961) Emanuel Levinas (1906-1995) proposed a phenomenological description and a hermeneutic of lived experience in the world. The aspect of experience

that concerns us most here is the encounter with the world, with the human other characterized by sensibility and affectivity. Levinas invites us to look at the encounter of two totally different human beings: The Other is a person essentially different from and foreign to the 'Self' and irreducible to the 'Self'. Levinas reads such situation as that of an ethical obligation.

Levinas's ethics does not follow traditional philosophical analysis of morality. Ethics for him is the condition of the encounter with The Other; that encounter takes place in the ethical space which commands a positive response to The Other's gaze. That response is the ethical obligation of 'I'. Meeting The Other is an intersubjective experience which, as it comes to light, proves 'ethical' in the simple sense that an 'I' discovers its own particularity when it is singled out by the gaze of The Other. This gaze is interrogative and imperative. It says, "do not kill me". The Other is understood as an ethical Master Teacher. Meeting The Other provides an opportunity to learn how to be in face of The Other. Levinas describes the true meeting essentially as seeing a human being without a mask, without a protective screen; it is a case of standing *truly* face to face, confronting the truth of The Other which is the condition of confronting the truth of the Self. In that sense The Other is an ethical teacher. The resolution of the crisis of otherness means learning from and about The Other; it is the condition in which The Self is ready to accept The Other.

Another important aspect of Levinas's thinking is the idea of The Self's infinite responsibility for The Other. He reads this situation as one of utterly asymmetrical obligations: I owe the Other everything, the Other owes me nothing (in the sense that I must not expect anything from the Other). His philosophy is rooted in religious faith: the trace of The Other is the shadow of God, the God who commands, "Thou shalt not kill!". The encounter with The Other is read as The Self's total acceptance of the commandment. To meet The Other is to gain the idea of Infinity. For Levinas "meeting The Other" takes place only on these conditions. One does not, however, need to follow Levinas in these transcendental, metaphysical aspects. Faced with the crisis of acceptance, understanding and tolerance of The Other, from Levinas we learn to overcome that crisis by looking up to The Other as a source of ethical obligation. The asymmetrical obligation in terms of Levinas' conception of the encounter must be understood from the position of the Self. But in the meeting of The Self and The Other we can take a look at both sides: The Other is at the same time the other Self, while we become The Other in that reverse relation. Thus, to follow Levinas's ethical obligation we need to expect that obligation on both sides, otherwise the true meeting of face to face must change into a situation of oppression, one that is hardly ethical, but definitely critical.[1] The expectation of ethical symmetry means that in the real encounter we have to make the effort

to recognize the values of The Other expecting that our values will be equally considered. This in itself demands considerable effort on both sides. Otherwise, the crisis will continue.

Józef Tischner's Philosophy of Drama

Józef Tischner (1931-2000) developed his ideas of 'meeting the Other' within the frame of philosophy of drama. Man enters into relations with the World, which is the stage of action, and with the Other. The relation human-being-to-human-being introduces the situation of dialogue in which one asks questions and functions as The Questioning and thus puts The Other in the situation of The Questioned. The question makes The Questioned a participant in that situation, it is an invitation to dialogue. The question means that one realizes the presence of The Other. The functions are interchangeable and that is why each party gains the conscious recognition of The Other which is the condition for the dialogue to take place and eliminate the situation of crisis. The situation of dialogic encounter for Tischner is also ethical, though different from Levinas's perspective: it is a meeting of two sets of values. The success of the meeting (of resolving the critical situation which meeting the Other entails) depends on the readiness to enter the dialogue and respond to the values of The Other on both sides. Negotiation is a condition without which no resolution can take place. Tischner follows the ethical ideas of Levinas, but expands the responsibility to both parties, expects the recognition of the meeting as facing the commandment "Thou shall not kill" from both the Questioning and the Questioned.

Understanding how the three trends in the philosophy of dialogue define and treat the situation in which two human beings meet becomes a highly ethical project, in its metaphysical quality almost a utopian Project. That is exactly how we should try to internalize the idea and contrast the commercial, utilitarian, and egoistical approach most of us follow without thinking.

Derrida's Deconstruction of Hospitality and Hostility

To the reflection on meeting the Other in the philosophy of dialogue we should add the ideas of Jacques Derrida (1930-2004) on the problem of the encounter with the Other. He looks at it from yet another angle and demonstrates the inherent aporia that is at the very core of the crisis of acceptance, understanding and tolerance.

"Hospitality", according to Derrida (1999), is a word which carries its own contradiction incorporated into it, a Latin word which allows itself to be parasitized by its opposite, "hostility". The guest welcomed by hospitality is a self-contradiction: the guest is a welcomed stranger treated as a friend or ally, or a stranger treated as an enemy. Thus, the terms hospitality/hostility and friend/enemy seem to merge into one another, standing, paradoxically, in self-contradiction. Hospitality is grounded in the *law of the household* where it is precisely the *patron* of the house [the host or the hostess] who receives, who is master of his/her household (town, state, nation); he/she defines *the conditions of hospitality* or welcome; consequently, there can be no unconditional welcome, no unconditional passage through the door. The law of hospitality imposes a contradiction on the very concept of hospitality: hospitality is certainly and necessarily a right, a duty, an obligation of *greeting* the foreign other as a friend, but on the condition that the host maintains his/her own authority. In his/her own home the host looks after his/her own rights and comfort, and considers everything that concerns him/her, thus limiting the gift of hospitality and turning this limitation into the condition of the gift and hospitality. This is the principle of aporia (crisis), of the very concept of hospitality. Hospitality is a self-contradictory concept and experience which may be expressed as *hostipitality*, the term encapsulating Derrida's *differance*.

Conclusion

The aporia of hospitality and the term of *differance* – hostipitality – make us aware of the yet new concern connected with meeting the Other: we hardly ever meet on neutral ground. The space of meeting, then, delineates our understanding/misunderstanding, acceptance/refusal and resulting tolerance/intolerance. Derrida draws us, as it were, from the heights of Buber's or Levinas' philosophical idealisations down to dust; and yet, he also speaks of ethics, of human right, of the basic human right to hospitality. He begins his essay on Hostipitality by quoting Kant: "we are concerned here not with philanthropy, but with right" (*apud* Derrida 2000: 3) and comments: "it is a human right, this right to hospitality – and for us it already broaches an important question, that of the anthropological dimension of hospitality or the right to hospitality". (…) "Universal hospitality arises from an obligation, a right, and a duty all regulated by law" (…). In this context hospitality [*Hospitalität* (*Wirtbarkeit*)] means the right of a stranger [*bedeutet das Recht Fremdlings*] not to be treated with hostility when

he arrives on someone else's territory" (*ibidem*, 4). For Derrida, the basic human right is nothing else than what the host is ready to offer to his/her guest, and that depends on how he/she defines his/her own cultural and social space (his/her home and his/her threshold in Derrida's language), and on the conditions of hospitality he/she sets. It also depends on how the host treats the person s/he meets: as the Other in the sense of Enemy/Stranger/Foreigner, or as the Other in the sense of Stranger/Friend/Human Being.

The recognition of the Enemy or the Foreigner in the Other does not relieve us from the law of hospitality, that is, it does not free us from the obligation of dialogue. It is a situation of crisis which demands change and calls for an effort on both sides to avert the ever-deepening crisis of intolerance and hatred. *I and Thou* will try to reach a state of mutual good will to talk; *The Self and The Other* will accept ethical obligations towards each other in order to ask questions and seek answers to the crisis; finally, the aporetic hostipitality will reach some balance between the gift of hospitality and its acceptance.

Notes

1. See also Derrida's criticism of Levinas's ethical position and empathy in *The Gift of Death* (2008), particularly Chapter 4.

Works cited

Buber, Martin (1923), *Ich und Du*, Leipzig, Insel-Verlag.

— (1937), *I and Thou*, trans. Ronald Gregor Smith, New York, Scribners, 1958.

Bergman, Samuel Hugo (1991), *Dialogical philosophy from Kierkegaard to Buber*, New York, Suny Press.

Burggraeve, Roger (1999), "Violence and the Vulnerable Face of the Other: The Vision of Emmanuel Levinas on Moral Evil and Our Responsibility", *Journal of Social Responsibility* vol. 30, nr. 1, pp. 29-45.

Derrida, Jacques (1999), "Hostipitalité", *Cogito* 85 (1999), special issue "Pera Peras Poros", ed. Ferda Keskin and Önay Sözer, pp. 17-44.

— (2000), "Hostipitality", trans. Barry Stocker with Forbes Morlock, *Angelaki: Journal of the Theoretical Humanities*, vol. 5, nr. 3, pp. 3-18.

— (2008), *The Gift of Death*, trans. David Wills, U of Chicago P.

Levinas, Emanuel (1961), *Totalité et Infini: Essais sur l'Extériorité,* Phaenomenologica 8, The Hague and Boston.

— (1969), *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, trans. Alphonso Lingis, Duquesne UP.

Tischner, Józef (1990), *Filozofia dramatu*, Paris, Édition du Dialogue.

What Can We Do with Shakespeare? Education, Participation and Civic Engagement

4.1. Shakespearean Dreams for a New Prison

Mariacristina Cavecchi

Università degli Studi di Milano

ABSTRACT

The chapter outlines the current state of Prison Shakespeare in Italy and then focuses on a particular theatre project, "A Dream in BeKKa", based on Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and involving a group of university students and Puntozero Teatro, a non-profit youth theatre company working inside the "Cesare Beccaria" Juvenile Detention Centre in Milan.

This case study shows how Prison Shakespeare is relevant not only to the inmates/actors inside the detention centre, but also to our students. Inmates and students on stage learn to deconstruct the commonplaces of a prison, a place that constantly reminds you of who you are, thus preventing any possible metamorphosis. They learn to understand their own potentiality and opportunity for change. Indeed, the theme of metamorphosis, which is at the heart of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, functions as a powerful metaphor for the process that both the inmates/actors and the students/performers experience during the workshop, the rehearsals, and the staging of their work.

The European Union is going through one of the most critical periods in its political history. In Italy, the "Contract for Change" signed by the Lega and 5 Stars Movement parties has triggered an escalation in racist and xenophobic violence by means of populist slogans such as "Italians first" and "Stop the invasion" (of immigrants, gays, lesbians, abortionists, transgender people, etc.). As part of short-sighted policies towards anyone who is different, the government has also limited probation and penal measures that do not consider imprisonment. Indeed, contrary to facts and statistics that show how serving time in "open prisons" with a focus on rehabilitation – such as the Italian prison of Milano-Bollate – can reduce recidivism (Mastrobuoni and Terlizzese, 2014; MaBhuller *et al.*, 2016), the government has promoted (and promised) "closed prisons" in

order to guarantee higher public security and "more prisons for all". This means lengthening the duration of detentions and building more prisons to host a larger population of inmates (Stasio, 2018; Saviano, 2019).

Nonetheless, some of these chronically overcrowded prisons, which even the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg has recently defined as humiliating and unlawful (Davoli and Raffaelli, 2014), have become interesting "Shakespearean laboratories" offering theatre workshops to inmates. These workshops treat inmates "with respect for their human rights" and contribute to "facilitating their reintegration into free society", as established by the recommendation of the Council of Europe (2006). This is even more significant if one thinks that the practice of theatre in prison has a much shorter tradition in Italy than in English-speaking countries, having started, as it did, only at the beginning of the 1980s, with the phenomenon of Shakespeare's plays performed by prisoners known as Prison Shakespeare (Pensalfini, 2016: 9).

Without doubt, in our country, prison is, to quote Foucault, something like a "counter-site", "a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which (...) all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested and inverted" (Foucault, 1984: 3). Some prisons headed by enlightened directors, such as Lucia Castellano, who directed Milano-Bollate prison for nine years, have become sites of productive exchanges not only between people from different cultural, social, and ethnic backgrounds but also between the world within the prison and the world outside (Castellano, 2011).

In Italy, Prison Shakespeare has contributed to triggering reflection on key topics, such as detention, sentences, and punishment, but also, and more importantly, to experimenting with practices of creativity, freedom, and utopia, giving voice to an urgent cultural and political need for re-engagement with the idea of theatre as well as of prison. Ongoing theatre activities range from productions that have achieved significant aesthetic results to drama therapy, where the aim is rehabilitation and then reintegration into society and possibly workplaces. However, performance has questioned the very premises for fruitful collaboration among the actors as well as for the relationship between the actors and the audience. Italian critic and director Gianfranco Pedullà remarks that prison theatre, which tends to adopt the techniques and artistic references of 20th-century avant-garde theatre, is "a crossroads for different cultures and languages, a new alchemy for the stage" (Pedullà, 2012: 80), which "appears to be a collective popular experience but of the highest artistic value" (*ibidem*).

Towards an Ideal *Galera*

Armando Punzo's work in the Volterra high-security prison is one of the most important and exciting examples of a collective and even popular experience that stands out for its artistic and experimental qualities. In 2023 Punzo, a pioneer of theatre in prison in Italy, was awarded the Golden Lion for Lifetime Achievement at the Venice Biennale Teatro. The "Theatrical Laboratory in the Prison of Volterra" he launched in August 1988 with the cultural association Carte Blanche has grown and turned into the "Compagnia della Fortezza" (Fortress Company), a company involving regularly about fifty inmates, some as actors, other behind the scenes (Cavecchi, 2017a, 2017b; Ciari, 2011).[1] According to one of his actors, Aniello Arena, a former Mafia hit man, his theatre is a "practice in freedom"; it is "the freedom of thinking that you are different from what you have always been, from the way you have always seen yourself" (Arena / Olati, 2013: 198).

Indeed, Punzo wants to make his actors and audience forget they are in prison (Punzo in Marino 2006). To him, Shakespeare's plays are deadening prisons of meaning, and he urges the actors and spectators to escape from what has become the untouchable and unquestionable Western canon. He finds it impossible to stage Shakespearean plays following the traditional principles of the 'theatre of representation' and aims to dissolve the logocentric hierarchy, assigning the predominant role to elements other than dramatic logos and language. Punzo's rewritings can be interpreted in the light of the post-dramatic theatre aesthetics (Ciari, 2011): a theatre of enigmatic patterns, processes, and stories, but with hardly any plot (Lehmann, 2006). His rehearsal process takes place collaboratively and becomes a space of experimentation in which Shakespearean plays can be set free from mere repetition, and Shakespearean characters (and actors) have the possibility of freeing themselves from their written, fixed roles.

Punzo stages the revolt of the characters against "the father" (Shakespeare), who is guilty of having entrapped them in roles they do not want to interpret any longer. Being fed up with the Shakespearean world of the tragedy, in *Hamlice – Essay on the End of a Civilization* (premiered at the Festival VolterraTeatro in July 2010), Hamlet leaves the tragedy and enters the anarchic world of *Alice in Wonderland*, whereas in *Mercuzio Does not Want to Die – The True Tragedy in Romeo and Juliet* (premiered at the Festival VolterraTeatro in July 2012) Mercutio, whom Punzo regards as "the poet, the actor, the artist, the philosopher" (Punzo, 2013: 231), escapes from his written role and destiny and rewrites his story with a new

ending, in which a different world is possible. Indeed, by undermining rules and conventions, Punzo turns prison into a place of creative anarchy and freedom, a world apart from the constraints of the sclerotic and deadening theatres of the world outside and invites his spectators to deepen their perceptions and think differently about what they believe to be unchangeable, if not impossible. Punzo challenges the Elizabethan playwright as he tries to conceive the performance as "transformational", rather than merely trans-positional (Worthen, 1998: 1102), as a space for the audience's and the actor's co-authorship and co-authority.

One of the most essential features of Punzo's aesthetics and programme is his utopian impulse. Notoriously, one of Punzo's utopias is the building of a permanent repertory company in prison, with a full season, more and more productions, and a permanent theatre: the "Galera Ideale" (where the pun on the Italian word "galera" refers both to a galley and a prison). In his manifesto *Verso la Galera Ideale* (*Towards the Ideal Prison/Galley*), the fortress prison, conceived as a site of punishment, has to be transformed into "a prestigious, multiracial theatre" (Punzo, 2013: 279-280). According to his project, a group of well-known architects will re-design and turn prisons into spaces where plays can be put on and workshops for the theatrical, technical, philosophical, and literary arts can be hosted. Actors, singers, ballet dancers, musicians, technicians, and organisers will be chosen nationally at auditions in prisons all over Italy (Punzo, 2013: 279-280). Despite the difficulties, Punzo strongly believes in this dream and stubbornly pursues projects aimed at awakening the public opinion. Performances, such as a grand-scale production of *Mercutio Does not Want to Die* involving the whole community of Volterra but also touring across Italy, in regular theatres as well as in other venues, such as Palazzo Strozzi in Florence, was a very good opportunity to share his visionary project. The director invited as many people, schools, and cultural associations as he could to share Mercutio's dream of preventing the destruction of a world of love, poetry, and beauty by conceiving of a new ending to *Romeo and Juliet.* For the premiere at the VolterraTeatro Festival (the international theatre festival organized every July by *Carte Blanche* and directed by Punzo from 1997 to 2017), the performance took over the entire Tuscan town. The spectators became protagonists themselves, not only by sharing the town with the performers but also through their involvement in several symbolic actions, such as marching through the narrow streets of the medieval Tuscan town with their hands soiled with the blood of youth, in whose deaths they are all accomplices. This compelling reinterpretation of *Romeo and Juliet*, unique in its kind, merged theatre and real-life in a theatrical experience that turned the town itself into

a theatre capable of staging an alternative version of Shakespeare's play in support of a new, utopian idea of prison (Cavecchi, 2017a: 132).

A Dream at Bekka

The Prison Shakespeare workshop began in November 2016 at the Juvenile Detention Institute "Cesare Bekka" in Milan known as Beccaria, one of the seventeen juvenile detention institutes currently operating in Italy.[2] The workshop draws inspiration from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, but, also, from Punzo's utopian impulse. It also stems from the belief that inviting people to exchange experiences with prisoners is a very effective way of helping them overcome prejudices towards prisons and people in prison and stimulating reflection on topics such as prison, justice, crime, punishment, and redemption, that are very rarely discussed in Italian schools or universities. The workshop, designed with Margaret Rose, involved a group of undergraduate and graduate university students in Foreign Languages and Literatures at the State University of Milan as well as actors from Puntozero Teatro, a non-profit young people's theatre company directed by Giuseppe Scutellà[3] who has been working for almost thirty years with young inmates at Beccaria.

Through this case study, I hope to show how relevant Prison Shakespeare is not only for the inmates/actors but also for our students and how it contributes to the construction of what Mark Thornton Burnett calls "a more representative and ethically responsible Shakespeare canon" (Burnett, 2010: 114). On the stage, both inmates and students learn to deconstruct the commonplaces of prison, a place that constantly reminds one of who one is, thus preventing any possible metamorphosis. Furthermore, they all learn to understand their potentialities and opportunities for change. Indeed, metamorphosis, the core topic of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, works as a powerful metaphor for the process both inmates/actors and students/actors undergo during the workshop, the rehearsals, and the staging of their work. By engaging with Shakespeare, they are taken out of their thought habits and guided to experience and express a broader spectrum of emotions and feelings. Believing in culture as a force for positive change, Scutellà thinks that the Shakespearean comedy "offers a useful exercise of fantasy which allows the actors to discover new worlds. It is in this recital of new worlds and the creation of new contexts that prison theatre expresses all of its strength; begin with the boards of the stage to move on to the great theatre of life" (Scutellà, 2017).

The project involving Beccaria is the first in Italy involving university students from the humanities departments and young inmates, all regulated by a formal agreement between the university and a company managing theatre inside prison. In fact, activities with inmates are part the curricula for students in the Department of Social Sciences. Including a workshop of this sort in the students' curriculum and granting them credits was an unknown practice before 2016 in Italy, where workshops in juvenile institutes were, and still primarily are, mainly voluntary. It suffices to remind the case of the famed 2004 *Romeo and Juliet* project at the Juvenile Detention Institute "Pietro Siciliani" in Bologna, known as Pratello, where the production of *Romeo. La Recita*, directed by Paolo Billi, involved inmates and some "volunteers" from very different backgrounds (Patuelli and Storelli, 2005: 15-16).

Being part of the students' activities, these workshops are a crucial step towards creating new curricula for our secondary school and university courses. In my experience such workshops have a positive impact on students, as they help them understand Shakespeare as part of the literary canon and forge their civil awareness by showing how each of them can actively do something to change our way of perceiving society and, ultimately, to act in it.

In November 2016, with the support of the British Council and the Milan City Council we invited British rapper Kingslee James Daley, known as Akala, for a two-day workshop in the theatre inside Beccaria, beautifully refurbished with red velvet seats that came as a gift from the Teatro alla Scala. Akala founded *The Hip-Hop Shakespeare Company* in London in 2009 under the patronage of Sir Ian McKellen. The company pursues the much-needed goal of bringing Shakespeare to young people in deprived urban areas by "exploring the social, cultural and linguistic parallels between the works of William Shakespeare and that of modern-day hip-hop artists" (The Hip Hop Shakespeare Company).

Kingslee "Akala" Daley worked with a mixed group formed by 3 male and 20 female graduate and undergraduate university students and by youths from Puntozero Teatro company who had already been rehearsing with director Giuseppe Scutellà for a performance due to premiere at Piccolo Teatro Studio in February 2017, consisting of 2 male and 2 female young actors who were not inmates, 2 actors on parole, and 5 male inmates from Beccaria, aged 16 to 19.[4] The large number of females participating in the project was a major motivation for the offenders,[5] but the fact that they were educated made them feel inferior, inadequate, and shy. On the other hand, most of our female students encountered males whom they imagined as being very self-confident, strong, and tough.

Before undertaking the workshop in prison, we had a preliminary meeting with our students at the university to discuss Prison Shakespeare and what to expect from the workshop. We introduced them to the work of Akala, recommended they should wear comfortable outfits and have an appropriate behaviour, which meant they should be respectful and refrain from asking the offenders why they were in prison, and we warned them they would have to leave their phones and PCs at the prison entrance.

Akala, who has defined himself "like Shakespeare with a little twist",[6] and his colleague, the performing arts professional Lorianne Tika-Lemba, kept their promise, motivating the participants. Never having worked in a prison before, they also had the chance to experience something new (Bolognini, 2016b).

The participants were involved in creative writing and performance sessions. My colleague, Maggie Rose, the director of Puntozero Teatro Giuseppe Scutellà, and I were part of the group and took part in all the activities like the other participants. As a first step, Akala welcomed the group with warming-up activities meant to create a cohesive and more self-confident group as well as to bridge the distance between youth culture and Shakespeare, perceived as complex, challenging, belonging to high culture and reserved for learned, upper-class people. In her "diario di bordo" (logbook), university student G.C., who was afraid of entering the prison, wrote that she liked holding the hands of her partners while her eyes were closed because she could "experience an intimacy and a sense of trust beyond any words and explanation" (unpublished). The workshop was conducted in English with one of the actors of Puntozero providing a minimum of translation for those participants who could understand only Italian. Akala managed to communicate with the group directly and immediately through the shared language of rap, which is very common among youths, especially in Milan.

One of his warm-up exercises was the "Shakespeare or Hip-Hop Quiz" which he describes in a TED Talk (Akala, 2011). Asking the participants to guess which lines were Shakespeare quotes or hip-hop lyrics was a productive way to tackle Shakespeare's language and introduce his audience to its evocative and visual force. Besides, inmates, students, and teachers were all alike, all involved in an engaging game and, most of the time, all at the mercy of the game and its difficult questions. On the one hand, Akala's attention to the musical quality of the Shakespearean text enabled him to refashion Shakespeare's language according to hip-hop while preserving the Elizabethan metre. Showing that the scores of hip-hop and freestyle music are mostly based on a simple regular pattern and a short combination of sounds, he presented the sound pattern of iambic

pentameter as the basic rhythm of the human heartbeat. As Marco Canani, who took part in the workshop as a PhD student, notes, "by beating a hand on his chest, Akala encouraged the participants in the workshop to read out some of Shakespeare's lines by mimicking the sound pattern of their own systolic and diastolic contractions, avoiding the more complex concepts of accentual-syllabic metrics" (Canani, 2016: 132). He introduced the iambic pentameter as a homage "not to classic metrics, but rather to a basic sound pattern intrinsic to many forms of music in the Western tradition" (*ibidem*), therefore gaining the attention of the group. One of the aims of Akala's preliminary activities was in fact to introduce young audiences to the power of Shakespeare's highly imaginative language.

A session of creative writing required that the group, divided into five subgroups, should work on specific scenes from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* with the aim to discuss its meaning and transpose its themes into fragments representing the cultural universe of the participants. Acting, dancing, singing, rapping could be used without language restrictions to establish an empathic connection with the text while producing the fragments to be staged all together. Whereas the epilogue was rewritten as an Italian rap song prologue by "Pesciolino" (Little Fish), one of the inmates with a talent for rap, other scenes focused on imagery and situations rather than language and rhythm. Thus, Hermia and Lysander's escape was delayed because the girl could not miss her favourite reality show; hip-hop dancer Hermia and contemporary dancer Helena tried to seduce Demetrius through their different dance skills while Puck was cast as a womaniser; Oberon ordering Puck to fetch him the magic flower (*A Midsummer's Night Dream*, 2.1.165-169) inspired a story of drug and drug-dealers.

After a general rehearsal, we presented our work on the second day at the Beccaria theatre, that filled its 200 seats with university students and colleagues, inmates' parents, relatives, and friends, other inmates who had not taken part in the workshop, the prison chaplain, guards, and ordinary citizens. The final applause was long and loud and national newspapers, such as *La Repubblica* (Bolognini, 2016a; Bolognini, 2016b) and *Il Corriere della Sera* (Grossi, 2016), covered the event.

Thanks to the re-mediation of Shakespeare through hip-hop and rap, the group gained an understanding and appreciation of Shakespeare as still meaningful and "cool". The connection between traditional poets and rappers bridged the gap between highbrow and lowbrow cultures, and our students, who tend to be quiet and seldom take an active role, found the courage to express their opinions on the play in creative and original ways. Akala also succeeded in overcoming the gap between cultures and ethnic groups. Born in London to a

family of mixed Afro-Caribbean origins, he described himself as a contemporary black avatar of the Bard in the artistic manifesto – "William back from the dead / But I rap bout gats and I'm black instead / It's Shakespeare, reincarnated / Except I spit flows and strip hoes naked" (Akala, 2016), managing to create a cohesive group beyond different nationalities (Albanian, Italian, Maghrebian, Columbian, Italian) and social classes. In two days, the world inside and outside the prison met so successfully that students and inmates were indistinguishable while playing the Shakespearean characters, thanks perhaps to what William C. Carroll in his review of Corinne Jaber's 2005 *Love's Labour's Lost* in Kabul defined as the "mystery of dramatic representation itself", which allowed them to be "at once Shakespearean and non Shakespearean" (Carroll, 2010: 455).

The creative energy and sympathy on the stage and the richness of the materials produced bear witness to the fears, the feeling of loss and inadequacy, and the dreams experienced by inmates and students alike. Even more importantly, while the inmates had a chance to experience a new way of learning about themselves and the world they live in, our university students grasped the importance of culture as a deterrent against crime and acquired the awareness that the line that separates them from the teenagers inside is thin. Indeed, the workshop confirmed Niels Herold's conviction that "academic Shakespeareans have much to learn from inmate actors, as the inmates have shown they do from those outside – with an enthusiasm and authenticity that should in some senses be exemplary for our teaching of Shakespeare in schools and universities" (Niels, 2016: 1205).

Theatre should become a good practice in all our prisons and juvenile detention institutes as much as joint projects with juvenile detention institutes should become part of school and university curricula. Theatre can fuel alternative juvenile programmes for the reduction of re-offense and crime as well as invite reflections on the value of Shakespeare and the liberal arts in the education of future generations (Cavecchi *et al.*, 2020; Puntozero, 2023).

Notes

1. See Compagnia della Fortezza, compagniadellafortezza.org/new/carte-blanche/carte-blanche, accessed 4 April 2024.

2. The 1988 "New Code of Criminal Procedure for Minors", a specialized code for children, establishes that detention should be avoided while alternative measures (probation, community work, etc.) and strategies for inclusion in social life should be employed (Art. 1, and Art. 21 and 22). However, despite the law, the number of juvenile offenders, especially coming from the South or from abroad and lacking social support (family, school, job), has not diminished.

3. See Puntozero Teatro, puntozeroteatro.org, accessed 4 April 2024.

4. The Italian juvenile justice system applies to boys and girls aged 14 to 18 years who have committed infractions of the civil or penal code. Sentences are served at juvenile justice institutions until the age of 21 and the cognizance of Juvenile Courts lasts until they have reached the age of 25. See Meringolo, 2012, and Dipartimento della Giustizia Minorile and Direzione per l'attuazione dei provvedimenti giudiziari, 2015.

5. Beccaria does not have a division for girls; only four among the 17 Juvenile Detention Institutes operating in Italy have girls' divisions. See defenceforchildren.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/Twelve_Italy.pdf, accessed 5 April 2024.

6. "I'm similar to William but a little different / I do it for kids that's illiterate, not Elizabeth / Stuck on the road, faces screwed up / Feel like the world spat 'em out and they chewed up". For an analysis of Akala's song see Canani, 2016.

Works cited

Akala (Kingslee James Daley) (2006), *Shakespeare*, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KCcqS6AP8uI, accessed 5 April 2024.

— (2011), "Hip Hop & Shakespeare? Akala at TEDxAldeburgh", *TED-Ed*, 7 December, https://ed.ted.com/on/kg3xD9lP, accessed 5 April 2024.

Arena, Aniello / Maria Cristina Olati (2013), *L'aria è ottima (quando riesce a passare). Io, attore, fine-pena-mai.* Milano, Rizzoli.

Bolognini, Luigi (2016a), "Milano, Shakespeare va in carcere: al minorile Beccaria le sue tragedie in versione rap", *Repubblica.it*, video.repubblica.it/edizione/milano/milano-shakespeare-va-in-carcere-al-minorile-beccaria-le-sue-tragedie-in-versione-rap/259207/259507, accessed 5 April 2024.

— (2016b), "Shakespeare in hip hop per i ragazzi del Beccaria: il rapper londinese *Akala* va in carcere", *La Repubblica.it*, milano.repubblica.it/cronaca/2016/11/15/news/milano_shakespeare_in_hip_hop_conquista_i_ragazzi_del_beccaria-152034209/, accessed 5 April 2024.

Bhuller, Manudeep / Gordon B. Dahl / Katrine V. Løken / Mogstad Magne (2016), "Incarceration, Recidivism and Employment", *Banca d'Italia. Seminari 2016*, 28 November, https://www.bancaditalia.it/pubblicazioni/altri-atti-seminari/2016/28_novembre_Dahl.pdf?language_id=1, accessed 5 April 2024.

Burnett, Mark Thornton (2010), "Applying the Paradigm: Shakespeare and World Cinema", in Gregg Semenza (ed.), *Shakespeare Studies* 38, special issue *After Shakespeare on Film*, pp. 114-124.

Canani, Marco (2016), "Shakespeare in the 'Gangsta's Paradise'. Akala and the Empowering Potential of the Bard's Poetry", *Altre Modernità / Otras Modernidades / Autre Modernités / Other Modernities*, special issue *Will Forever Young! Shakespeare & Contemporary Culture*, ed. M. Cavecchi / C. Paravano / M. Rose, pp. 123-139.

Carroll, William C. (2010), "*Love's Labour's Lost* in Afghanistan", *Shakespeare Bulletin*, vol. 28, nr. 4, Winter, pp. 443-458.

Castellano, Lucia (2011), "Nove, bellissimi, indimenticabili anni", *Carte Bollate*, nr. 4, luglio-agosto, http://www.ristretti.it/commenti/2011/luglio/pdf2/carte_bollate.pdf, accessed 5 April 2024.

Cavecchi, Mariacristina (2017a), "The Bard Does Not Want To Die (Behind Bars). Rewriting Shakespeare Inside Volterra's Maximum-Security Prison", in Michael Dobson / Estelle Rivier (ed.), *Rewriting Shakespeare's Plays For and By the Contemporary Stage*, Cambridge, Cambridge UP, pp. 119-134.

— (2017b), "Brave New Worlds. Shakespearean Tempests in Italian Prisons", *Altre Modernità / Otras Modernidades / Autre Modernités / Other Modernities*, special issue *Will Forever Young! Shakespeare & Contemporary Culture*, ed. Mariacristina Cavecchi / Cristina Paravano / Margaret Rose, pp. 1-21.

— Lisa Mazoni / Margaret Rose / Giuseppe Scutellà (ed.) (2020), *SceKspir al Bekka. Romeo Montecchi dietro le sbarre dell'Istituto Penale Minorile Beccaria*, Firenze, Edizioni Clichy.

Ciari, Lapo (2011), *Armando Punzo e la scena imprigionata. Segni di una poetica evasiva*, San Miniato, La Conchiglia di Santiago.

Council of Europe: Committee of Ministers (2006), *Recommendation Rec(2006)2 of the Committee of Ministers to Member States on the European Prison Rules*, UNHCR, 11 January, refworld.org/legal/resolution/coeministers/2006/en/11978, accessed 3 April 2024.

Davoli, Alessandro / Rosa Raffaelli (2014), "Background information for the LIBE delegation to Italy on the situation of prisons, 26-28 March", www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/note/join/2014/493053/IPOL-LIBE_NT(2014)493053_EN.pdf, accessed 5 April 2024.

Dipartimento della Giustizia Minorile and Direzione per l'attuazione dei provvedimenti giudiziari (2018), *La giustizia minorile in Italia. Juvenile Justice in Italy*, Roma, CSR Centro Stampa e Riproduzione, https://www.giustizia.it/resources/cms/documents/giustizia_minorile_in_ItaliaItalian_juvenile_justice.pdf, accessed 5 April 2024.

Foucault, Michel (1967), "Des Espace Autres", March, unpublished lecture.

— (1984), "Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias", *Architecture / Mouvement / Continuité*, October, trans. from French by Jay Miskowiec, web.mit.edu/allanmc/www/foucault1.pdf, accessed 5 April 2024.

Grossi, Livia (2016), "Shakespeare a ritmo di hip hop. Il workshop all'istituto Beccaria", *Corriere della Sera*, 15 November, milano.corriere.it/notizie/cronaca/16_novembre_15/shakespeare-ritmo-hip-hop-workshop-all-istituto-beccaria-2b6cba90-ab61-11e6-ba61-2e866e9865d0.shtml, accessed 5 April 2024.

Lehmann, Hans-Thies (2006), *Postdramatic Theatre*, London and New York, Routledge.

Marino, Massimo (ed.) (2006), *Teatro e carcere in Italia*, Regione Toscana, regione.toscana.it/documents/10180/23906/Teatro%20e%20carcere%20in%20Europa/45bedab7-e0ab-49a7-976d-dd9d457f68f4, accessed 5 April 2024.

Mastrobuoni, Giovanni / Daniele Terlizzese (2014), "Rehabilitation and Recidivism: Evidence from an Open Prison", http://www.antoniocasella.eu/nume/Mastrobuoni_Terlizzese_bollate_oct14.pdf, accessed 5 April 2024.

Meringolo, Patrizia (2012), "Juvenile Justice System in Italy: Researches and Interventions", *Universitas Psychologica*, vol. 11, nr. 4, pp. 1081-1092.

Niels, Harold (2016), "Shakespeare Behind Bars", in Bruce R. Smith (ed.), *The Cambridge Guide to the Worlds of Shakespeare*, *The World's Shakespeare, 1660-Present*, vol. 2, Cambridge, Cambridge UP, pp. 1200-1207.

Patuelli, Maria Chiara / Silvia Storelli (2005), *Il diario di Romeo e Giulietta. Fare teatro in un carcere minorile*, Bologna, Pendragon.

Pedullà, Gianfranco (2012), "2.1 Theatre Italy", in Fondazione Giovanni Michelucci (ed.), *"Art and Culture in Prison" Project*, EU program: Culture Programme 2007-2013, Fiesole, http://justicia.gencat.cat/web/.content/home/departament/projectes_internacionals/serveis_penitenciaris/art_cultura.pdf, accessed 5 April 2024.

Pensalfini, Rob (2016), *Prison Shakespeare. For These Deep Shames and Great Indignities*, London, Palgrave Macmillan.

Puntozero (2023), *La Statale al Bekka*, 22 February, https://vimeo.com/801210079?share=copy, accessed 5 April 2024.

Punzo, Armando (2013), *È ai vinti che va il suo amore. I primi venticinque anni di reclusione con la Compagnia della Fortezza di Volterra*. Firenze, Clichy.

Saviano, Roberto (2019), "Quel che Bonafede non vuole sapere", *Ristretti Orizzonti*, 3 February, ristretti.it/commenti/2019/febbraio/testi/rassegna_stampa_3_febbraio.txt, accessed 5 April 2024.

Scutellà, Giuseppe (2017), "Sogno di una note di mezza estate", Piccolo Teatro di Milano, piccoloteatro.org/en/2016-2017/sogno-di-una-notte-di-mezza-estate, accessed 5 April 2024.

Shakespeare, William (1979), *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, ed. Harold F. Brooks, The Arden Shakespeare, London and New York, Methuen.

Stasio, Donatella (2018), "Carcere e recidiva, l'offensiva contro le statistiche per fermare il cambiamento (vero)", *Questione Giustizia*, questionegiustizia.it/articolo/carcere-e-recidiva-l-offensiva-contro-le-statistiche-per-fermare-il-cambiamento-vero_28-05-2018.php, 28 May, accessed 5 April 2024.

The Hip-hop Shakespeare Company, hiphopshakespeare.com/, accessed 5 April 2024.

Worthen, W. B. (1998), "Drama, Performativity and Performance", *PMLA*, vol. 113, nr. 5 (October), pp. 1093-1107.

4.2. Shakespeare in Captivity: the Avignon Festival and Le Pontet Penitentiary

An Interview with Olivier Py, Director of the Avignon Festival, by Florence March

Université Paul-Valéry Montpellier 3 / CNRS

ABSTRACT

On 14 May 2018, Florence March interviewed Olivier Py, the director of the international Avignon Festival, shortly before the 72nd edition of the festival, which included three performances of a production of Sophocles's *Antigone* co-directed by Py and Enzo Verdet on 18, 19 and 20 July. March was accompanied by Fabrice Belmessieri, a videographer at University Paul-Valéry Montpellier 3, and the interview was screened on 23 June 2018 in Montpellier. Py talked about his work with inmates of a prison house, the penitentiary of Le Pontet. Assisted by Enzo Verdet, Py initiates them to theatre practice, including Ancient Greek tragedies and Shakespeare's plays. The weekly workshops allow the inmates to put on a play, which they perform behind bars, as well as out of prison, in a venue of the Avignon Festival.

Py and March discussed what Shakespeare can do for inmates, what inmates can do with Shakespeare, why Py focuses on Shakespeare, how civic theatre, a specificity that applies both to Shakespeare and Ancient Greek drama, can facilitate rehabilitation, whether Shakespeare exerts some kind of "reparative power", to borrow Douglas Lanier's notion, whether the highly codified space of the prison challenges the theatre, pushing it to its very limits, and, finally, whether Shakespeare in prison is a utopian experience.

On 14 May 2018, Florence March interviewed stage director, actor and writer Olivier Py about his work on Shakespeare with inmates of a prison house, the penitentiary of Le Pontet.[1] Assisted by Enzo Verdet, Py initiates them to theatre practice, alternating productions of Ancient Greek tragedies with Shakespeare's

plays. The weekly workshops lead the group of inmates to put on a play, which they perform behind bars, as well as out of prison, in a venue of the Avignon Festival.

What can Shakespeare do for inmates? And what can inmates do with Shakespeare? Why does Olivier Py focus on Shakespeare in particular? How does civic theatre, a specificity that applies both to Shakespeare and Ancient Greek drama, facilitate rehabilitation? Does Shakespeare exert some sort of "reparative power" (Lanier, 2018)? To what extent does the highly codified space of the prison challenge the theatre, pushing it to its very limits? The Avignon Festival has regularly been called a utopian experience (Puaux, 1983; Loyer, 1997). Is Shakespeare in prison a utopian experience?

The interview took place in Avignon, shortly before the 72nd edition of the festival to be launched on 06 July 2018, which included three performances of a production of Sophocles' *Antigone* co-directed by Olivier Py and Enzo Verdet on 18, 19 and 20 July. Florence March was accompanied by Fabrice Belmessieri, a videographer at University Paul-Valéry Montpellier 3. The interview was screened on 23 June 2018 in Montpellier, in a panel on "Shakespeare in Captivity", during the international study day on "What can Shakespeare do for us? / What can we do with Shakespeare?" organised by the European Strategic Partnership "New Faces: Facing Europe in Crisis. Shakespeare's World and Present Challenges" (2016-2019).

Florence March. Good morning, Olivier Py! Thank you for welcoming us here, in Avignon, for an interview about your work on Shakespeare with inmates of the all-male penitentiary of Le Pontet, a conurbation of Avignon. It is a great honour for us to be here, as we know you have an extremely busy schedule. The first aspect I would like to bring forward concerns the history behind your carceral programme. I also wish to point at the relevance of staging Shakespeare in prison as it brings us back to the origins of Shakespeare's theatre in Renaissance London, at a time when public playhouses were not allowed to be erected within the medieval city but were confined to the suburbs together with houses of prostitution, madhouses and prisons.

The partnership between the Avignon Festival and the penitentiary of Le Pontet started in 2004 with Hortense Archambault and Vincent Baudriller as co-directors of the Festival. The focus was then on spectatorship: productions were performed in prison and some prisoners were also allowed to leave their cells to attend shows in Avignon. As the first artist at the head of the festival since Jean Vilar, its founder and director from 1947 to 1971, you shifted the focus to theatre practice. Prisoners perform in prison, behind bars, and also out of prison, in a

festival venue. What led you to shift the focus in the first place? Can you tell us more about the way you built up this challenging venture?

Olivier Py. I went to the penitentiary to present the show we intended to give behind bars – I can't remember what show it was – as well as the complete festival programme. The inmates could have a day off, out of prison, to see shows in the festival – at least some of them could. Those who were there asked me to come and do a workshop with them. I answered that I would try and find somebody to lead such a workshop, but they insisted "No, not 'somebody'. It has to be *you*". And I said "Well, I'll see", which is an elegant way to say "no", because I was very reluctant to do so. I felt I didn't have the strength for it. But I did it. I first worked with them for a week and I found it was even more difficult than I thought. I was tempted to stop, but they asked me to stay and I did. First, we worked on *Prometheus Bound*, a Greek tragedy by Aeschylus about a political prisoner. After that experience, I asked them what kind of play they would like to do and they said *Hamlet*. Yes, they said *Hamlet*! Again, I was a little reluctant to work on *Hamlet* with them. I knew it was already very difficult to work in prison for many reasons. Eventually I said "ok, if you say so, let's try to do a *Hamlet*". And I began to work with them. They loved it. I think that going from classical Greek tragedy to *Hamlet* helped them a lot.

Florence March. Let's focus more specifically on the dramatic corpus you just mentioned. Since 2014, when you started the project, there has been a regular alternation of Ancient Greek plays and Shakespearean plays: *Prometheus Bound* (2015 and 2016), *Hamlet* (behind bars in 2016 and outside prison in 2017), *Antigone* (behind bars in 2017 and outside prison in 2018), *Macbeth* (behind bars in 2018). Obviously, Shakespeare and ancient writers have acquired a universal dimension and are able to tell stories that are relevant to everyone even nowadays. But do you think Shakespeare conveys an alternative vision of the world that is relevant to inmates in particular?

Olivier Py. No, I don't think so. Because I don't think that inmates have any specific characteristics. They are people like you and me. Being behind bars is not an identity. Some of them are well-read, others have never read a book; some are interested in theatre practice, others only join because it gives them something to do. They do not share a common identity, they are all different. So why Shakespeare? Why the Greek? Because it's difficult. Because it's the very top. And I wanted us to be challenged. I also worked with them on a play by Jean

353

Genet, *Splendid's*, but it is too close to their lives. It didn't work the way I wanted it to. So, I returned to Greek tragedy. *Hamlet* went very well because it offered them a new range of dramatic possibilities, including comedic acting. It opened a world of possibilities for them. You can do *Hamlet* in so many different ways, in any way you want actually. They felt they were freer with *Hamlet* than with Greek tragedy. I think that's why they loved it.

Florence March. There are plays by Shakespeare in which prison is physically represented. I'm thinking for instance of *Measure for Measure*, *Richard II*, *Richard III*... But in *Hamlet* prison is evoked metaphorically in act II, scene 2, when Hamlet says: "Denmark's a prison (...) A goodly one, in which there are many confines, wards, and dungeons, Denmark being o'th'worst" (Shakespeare, 2016: 2.2.244-248). And yet he adds: "I could be bounded in a nutshell, and count myself a king of infinite space" (Shakespeare, 2016: 2.2.254-255). So how did you deal with that particular passage? Did it trigger a reflexion on the freedom of the mind? How did *Hamlet* stimulate the inmates' imagination and make them reflect on a different kind of liberty?

Olivier Py. Freedom is not the main issue in prison. The first issue is dignity. Inmates know they are in prison, that's part of the game. But they constantly fight not to lose their dignity – a loss that consists in a double sentence in a way. I think they found something in *Hamlet* to express this constant fight of theirs. Even though you experience lack of freedom, you're still a human being. Yet this is not true in prison. You're not a human being every day, every hour you spend in prison. You are a human being when you do theatre with friends. The workshop is a small community within the prison and they find some kind of dignity doing this. I think this is the whole point.

Florence March. Do you think that because Shakespeare was a humanist, staging his plays helps inmates reassert this part of humanity in themselves and in others they're fighting for, and regain confidence in themselves and in others?

Olivier Py. Maybe it does. When you're in the Globe theatre you're quite protected, but outside the Globe you can die any minute. It's a violent world outside and you feel the constant pressure deriving from the risk of dying at any time. I think that inmates understand this violent world more than the young bourgeois actors that I'm used to play with.

Florence March. When you put on *Hamlet* with the inmates of the penitentiary of Le Pontet, you used a backdrop representing *The Last Judgement* by Tintoretto. Can you expand on this choice?

Olivier Py. That was for the performance outside prison, for we weren't allowed to bring such a big set into the prison. In prison we had to perform with nothing. But when you are in prison you have the prison as a set and you have to deal with that. We were offered the possibility to perform *Hamlet* three times out of prison – which was very difficult to obtain, it took us weeks and months to negotiate this, but we succeeded in the end – and then I felt we needed some sort of a set, a powerful image.

Florence March. But why *The Last Judgement*?

Olivier Py. It's a beautiful painting and it's very rich. There are many characters in it and when the curtain rose, there were all these skulls onstage. It worked very well.

Florence March. What about *Macbeth*, that you're going to stage behind bars for the upcoming edition of the festival? There is a very striking passage in the play when Macbeth commissions two murderers to kill Banquo and his son Fleance, and they both answer they are ready to do anything because they've lost all hope in life:

> Second Murderer.   I am one, my Liege,
> Whom the vile blows and buffets of the world
> Have so incens'd that I am reckless what
> I do, to spite the world.
> First Murderer.   And I another,
> So weary with disasters, tugg'd with fortune,
> That I would set my life on any chance,
> To mend it, or be rid on't. (Shakespeare, 2015: 3.1.108-114)

Does it resonate with the state of mind of the inmates you work with? How do they react to the murderers' statement that they have lost all hope of reconciling themselves with the world?

Olivier Py. Well, it's different. It's really different. Hamlet is thinking all the time. Macbeth is fighting all the time. So, they felt it was very different. My translation of *Macbeth* is not ready, so we'll perform the play out of doors next year (Py, 2020; March, 2020). This year we went back to Greek tragedy. But we'll do *Macbeth*. You know, they worked on *Hamlet*, watched many videos, read other plays by Shakespeare. The workshop became a Greek theatre and Shakespeare workshop through the years, and I definitely want to return to Shakespeare with them.

Florence March. Since you say so, I can't help mentioning *Richard II*, the founding play of the Avignon Festival in 1947, and its prison scene in particular. Whereas Hamlet compares the world to a prison, Richard II compares his prison to the world, peopling his empty cell with thoughts generated by both his brain and soul (Shakespeare, 2002: 5.5.1-11). The prison scene left its mark on the festival as its minimalist staging by Jean Vilar – a few props, three stools and three shafts of light – came to designate his aesthetic as the "aesthetic of the three stools" (Guignebert, 1953). Is it a play you contemplate putting on with inmates in the future?

Olivier Py. I think it's a very good idea. It's the first play that was staged in the Honour Court of the Popes' Palace. You're right to say that the way Vilar staged not only *Richard II* but the prison scene itself established his aesthetics. And Vilar staged another play in 1947, *La Terrasse de midi*, a rewriting of *Hamlet*, so we can say that Shakespeare was a co-founder of the Avignon Festival.[2] Shakespeare is probably the author who has been most often performed in the festival.

Florence March. Yes, he definitely is.

Olivier Py. He is played almost every year. I could even say that the phenomenon is increasing. We don't often play Corneille or Racine, that's a pity.

Florence March. Racine had to wait until 1975 to be performed in the festival for the first time (March, 2012: 16).

Olivier Py. We play Molière, although not that often. But Shakespeare is programmed almost every year. Perhaps also because we, French people, constantly translate and rewrite his theatre. We have tons of translations of Shakespeare, as if we were running a permanent workshop on his texts. That's great because by doing this work we keep questioning Shakespeare's texts all the time.

Florence March. Perhaps Shakespeare is so regularly programmed also because he is emblematic of popular theatre, a theatre that addresses everyone?

Olivier Py. Yes and no, because when you think of Vilar's production of *Richard II* in 1947, the play had never been staged in France before. Much unlike *Romeo and Juliet* or *Hamlet*, it was absolutely unknown. And all the history plays are very much unknown to French people. We've had a huge success with Thomas Jolly's production of the three parts of *Henry VI* in 2014.

Florence March. I would like to expand a little on the challenge of practising theatre in prison. Performing behind bars pushes theatre to its very limits, doesn't it? I mean that theatre is about a constrained space, it's about creating a whole world from a black box, and in prison, theatre seems to be even more of a challenge. First, prison is designed as a vertical space. Everything is vertical in prison: bars, cells with high ceilings, bunk beds, buildings … And the hierarchy is omnipresent. How do you break or play with verticality? Then, how do you deal with the opposition between the inside and the outside? Inmates tend to close off, to keep their emotions, feelings and thoughts inside, perhaps to avoid showing their vulnerability, whereas theatre needs you to use them and play with them. Eventually, how do you deal with the dialectic of visibility and invisibility? Theatre is about seeing (*theatron* etymologically means the place where you see), and your programme aims to bring a hidden segment of society into the spotlight at the Avignon Festival.

Olivier Py. This year [2018], we're going to show our production outside prison, in the festival. It was unbelievable when I initiated the project four years ago. What I didn't know was that no audience could be allowed to get into the prison. So, when we play in prison we don't play for the regular audience of the Avignon festival, not even for the inmates' families, who are not allowed to get in either. We play for the inmates only. Inmates play for other inmates, which is great because inmates make the other inmates discover theatre. Some of them have never been to the theatre before, it's their first time attending a play, and they discover theatre through men like them. The first year I was moved to tears, not only due to the show but to the silence, to the audience's listening. They were so respectful, so very careful not to make any noise, not to disturb the actors on the so-called stage – because we had no stage in prison. That was very powerful. Concerning the inmates' behaviour onstage, the way they tend not to use their

357

emotions when they play, it's true our work began at a very slow pace. I saw these guys, some of them being young and very muscular, who, at the beginning, seemed to have no bodies and no voices. They looked very strong but when they were onstage they had no voice, no body, and it was impossible for them to touch each other, not even for a fight. That was very surprising. Step by step, things changed. But it took us more than two years to have them shout and appropriate the space. The most difficult thing for them was to stand still, because when you're in prison you never stand still, you move all the time, you walk constantly. They said to me that the most difficult thing for them was not to move.

Florence March. So far, the performances out of prison have taken place at the Maison Jean Vilar, a highly symbolic venue since Vilar was a champion of democratic, civic theatre. Do you contemplate performing in different venues in the future?

Olivier Py. We've done it in a theatre in Paris. We had such a great time. And this year we'll try another venue in Avignon. You're right, the Maison Jean Vilar was highly symbolic and we chose it on purpose, but it is small as it can only accommodate one hundred seats. And people stood in line to get in. So, we're going to try to have a bigger audience for the next festival.

Florence M. The Avignon Festival has regularly been called a utopia. Would you say that Shakespeare in prison is a utopian experience?

Olivier Py. Absolutely. It's a utopia the inmates shared with me. They probably changed my life more than I changed theirs.

Florence March. These are such wonderful words to conclude the interview! Thank you so much.

Olivier Py. Let it be the conclusion! Thank you!

Notes

1. See New Faces, 11 June 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3IpWocYFbX0, accessed 6 April 2024.

2. On Maurice Clavel's adaptation of *Hamlet* for the very first edition of the Avignon Festival, then called "A Week of Art in Avignon", see March, 2018.

Works cited

Guignebert, Jean (1953), "La Tragédie de Richard II [The Tragedy of Richard II]", *Libération*, 9 November.

Lanier, Douglas M. (2018), "Reparative Shakespeare", paper delivered on Friday 19 January 2018 at "Shakespeare Unbound", Conference of the French Shakespeare Society, Paris, 18-20 January 2018, unpublished, https://journals.openedition.org/shakespeare/3901?lang=en#tocto2n2, accessed 6 April 2024.

Loyer, Emmanuelle (1997), *Le Théâtre citoyen de Jean Vilar. Une utopie d'après-guerre [Jean Vilar's civic theatre. A post-war utopia]*, Paris, PUF.

March, Florence (2012), *Shakespeare au Festival d'Avignon. Configurations textuelles et scéniques 2004-2010*, Montpellier, L'Entretemps.

— (2018), "Translating Shakespeare into Postwar French Culture: The Origins of the Avignon Festival (1947)", *Shakespeare Studies*, vol. 46, pp. 59-69.

— (2020), "*Macbeth Philosophe* [*Macbeth the Philosopher*], after William Shakespeare, directed by Olivier Py and Enzo Verdet, Avignon Festival, the Chartreuse, Villeneuve-lez-Avignon, 19 July 2019", *Cahiers Élisabéthains. A Journal of Renaissance Studies*, vol. 103, pp. 75-78.

Puaux, Paul (1983), *Avignon en Festivals ou les utopies nécessaires [Avignon in festivals or necessary utopias]*, Paris, Hachette/L'Échappée belle.

Py, Olivier, trans. (2011), *Roméo et Juliette [Romeo and Juliet]* by William Shakespeare, Arles, Actes Sud.

— , trans. (2015), *Le Roi Lear [King Lear]* by William Shakespeare, Arles, Actes Sud.

— (2020), *Othello astrologue; Macbeth philosophe [Othello the Astrologer; Macbeth the Philosopher]*, adapted from William Shakespeare, Arles, Actes Sud.

— (2021), *Hamlet à l'impératif! [Hamlet in the imperative!]*, Arles, Actes Sud.

Shakespeare, William (2002), *Richard II*, ed. Charles R. Forker, The Arden Shakespeare Third Series, London, Bloomsbury.

— (2015), *Macbeth*, ed. Sandra Clark / Pamela Mason, The Arden Shakespeare Third Series, London, Bloomsbury.

— (2016), *Hamlet*, ed. Ann Thompson / Neil Taylor, The Arden Shakespeare Third Series, London, Bloomsbury.

4.3. Shakespearean Explorations in Captivity

Ton Hoenselaars

Universiteit Utrecht

ABSTRACT

Over the past 120 years, "Shakespeare" has been popular with prisoners of war. In their times of crisis, internees have found solace in Shakespeare. Staging the plays was also an ideal way to combat boredom behind barbed wire. Quoting Shakespeare in diaries and letters was a means of expressing complex sentiments for which many internees themselves had no words. Thus, Shakespeare became a "war poet" in times of crisis. In recent years, considerable attention has been devoted to wartime captives of the twentieth century. Seeking to identify the personal voices of the captives in diaries and letters, scholars have investigated cultural production behind barbed wire, such as newspapers, reading practices, and theatrical activity. However, there has been no sustained attempt to focus on the specific choices that the internees made of the authors or works that were read, or on the way in which we may analyse these choices and interpret texts that make up the literary canon behind barbed wire.

This chapter explores the possibility of studying "Shakespeare" not in quantitative or peripheral terms, but as a process of signification. Focusing on the camps, it does not delve into what Shakespeare means, or how successful a particular production was, but explores what Shakespeare might have signified for those involved in staging his plays, or, what the internees meant by Shakespear*e*.

> *Portant un jour le regard vers la France,*
> *Je retrouvai, à Douvres sur la mer,*
> *Le souvenir de la douceur de vivre*
> *Que je goûtais jadis dans ce pays.*
> *Sans le vouloir, je fus pris de soupirs*
> *Alors même qu'il était apaisant*
> *De voir la France où mon cœur est resté.*
> (Charles d'Orléans, 2001: 146)

The author of these lines, Charles d'Orléans (1394-1465), was the cousin of King Charles VI of France. He was a nobleman with unusual literary ambitions, and this is also how Shakespeare presents him in *Henry V*. The English dramatist even grants the rival Frenchman a certain knowledge of love poetry. When, on the eve of the battle, the Dauphin of France argues that he once wrote a sonnet to his horse beginning with the words "Wonder of nature" (3.7.39-42),[1] the Duc d'Orléans ironically notes that he has actually read a sonnet which began with those very words, only that it was dedicated to a lady. But the Duc d'Orléans was also the nobleman taken prisoner after the famous battle of Azincourt in 1415, and who was to spend the next 35 years as a hostage in England where in May 1433 he wrote, among much other verse, his Ballad 75.

It has been argued that Orléans's reference to the sonnet in *Henry V* is "anachronistic" (Coldiron, 2000: 195), but this does not seem entirely fair. In his plays, Shakespeare uses the word "sonnet" to refer to more than simply the 14-line poem with its descent from Petrarch. Also, the medieval courtly poetry with its lyrical address of the unattainable beloved – like that written by Charles d'Orléans – has been widely recognized as a precursor of the Petrarchan sonnet.

Given the fact that in the imaginary world of *Henry V* Charles d'Orléans comes into focus between the laughable Dauphin and Shakespeare himself as the "bending author" of the play's auto-referential Epilogue – "Thus far with rough and all-unable pen / Our bending author hath pursued the story" (Epilogue, 1-2) – one is tempted to surmise that the poetry of Charles d'Orléans must have held an appeal to Shakespeare. Certainly, the deft way in which the Frenchman's verse, fusing the self-expression of the sonnet and the literature of imprisonment and exile, recalls the desperate attempt of Shakespeare's Bordeaux-born king of England, Richard the Second, to become a "poet" once he finds himself behind bars at Pontefract (or Pomfret) Castle:

> I have been studying how I may compare
> This prison where I live unto the world,
> And for because the world is populous
> And here is not a creature but myself,
> I cannot do it. Yet I'll hammer't out. (*Richard II*, 5.5.1-5)

Charles d'Orléans and Shakespeare's own Richard II belong to a long line of writers who effectively captured, often in literary form, their complex experience behind barbed wire, in exile, or both, including Ovid, Casanova, Primo Levi, Varlam Shalamov, and Alexander Solzhenitsyn, as well as the poets

of Guantanamo Bay. However, this essay is concerned not so much with known writers like these, as with less well-known individuals, including also anonymous admirers of Shakespeare. It is concerned with individuals who, at one point in their lives, were held captive, as citizens or as soldiers, in times of war, but also in times of peace under the totalitarian regimes that have determined the historical landscape of the twentieth century, and who sought to survive with Shakespeare. Their choice of Shakespeare as "survival poetry" – to adopt the term used by Manfred Pfister in a recent article about the Sonnets (Pfister, 2013: 250-256) – took place in the form of reading his work and of reading it to others. It was in the form of teaching and learning. It was in the form of translation, adaptation, citation, and recitation. But it was also by way of performing Shakespeare, while celebrating his birthday or commemorating his death.

In recent years, considerable attention has been devoted to wartime captives of the twentieth century. Most of the research has been devoted to World War II and the Holocaust, but also the work on prisoners of war and civilian internees of the Great War has expanded. There has been a tendency for historians across the field to concentrate ever more on the personal voices of the captives in diaries and letters. In this connection, considerable attention has been devoted to the cultural activity behind barbed wire, like the production of POW newspapers, reading practices, and theatrical activity (Hintz, 2006; Pöppinghege, 2006). However, there has been no sustained attempt to focus on the specific choices that the internees made of the authors that were preferred or texts that were read, or on the way in which we may analyse these choices and interpret texts that make up the literary canon behind barbed wire.

As Mechtild Gilzmer, among other literary historians, rightly notes in her *Camps de femmes* – which deals with two internment camps for women during the Second World War, namely the Southern-French camp of Rieucros and that of Brens in the French Alps – the artistic life of the camps has rarely been studied in any systematic fashion. Individual studies make standard reference to a number of cultural activities behind barbed wire, but in the majority of cases this tends to come as an afterthought, following a description of the circumstances and an analysis of the historical events. Cultural activity, like reading, writing poetry, or performing plays, generally serves as an illustration of daily life in the camps, and is often put aside as a mere attempt to counter the boredom of life behind bared wire (Gilzmer, 2000: 146).

In an attempt to change this trend, this essay tries to explore, by way of an open experiment, the possibility of studying "Shakespeare" not in quantitative or peripheral terms, but as a process of signification. Focusing on the camps, it

seeks to answer not the question what Shakespeare means, or how successful a particular production of the plays was, but on what the engagement with Shakespeare might have signified for those involved in its staging, or, what the internees meant by Shakespeare.

If we wish to study the phenomenon of "Shakespeare behind barbed wire" in all its complexity, there are a number of sources to consult. These include camp journals and newspapers, the correspondence that survives, diaries, as well as posters and programmes of musical and theatrical productions, which have been preserved in large quantities, in libraries across the world, collected especially during the 1970s (when historians began to devote themselves to "history from below", the accounts of simple or anonymous individuals at the bottom of the social and military hierarchy). In addition, a vast amount of secondary literature has been produced about the experience of the camps, historical studies of wide-ranging quality. Finally, the cultural life of the prisoners has increasingly come to play a role in new musical compositions, novels, plays, films and television series, and these too, in one way or another, have to be included into the discussion, because they create an image not so much of the historical reality that I study, but of its perception in our own time, and of the perception across the cultural field: François Dupeyron's dramatised recital set in the labour camp of Rechlin, around the music of Schubert, Schumann and Hugo Wolff (*Conversations à Rechlin*: 2009); Arthur Miller's heavily contested stage play *Playing for Time* from 1985 (about the French pianist Fania Fénelon who would have survived Auschwitz/Birkenau thanks to her musical talents); movies like *La Grande Illusion* (dir. Jean Renoir, 1937), *The Captive Heart* (dir. Basil Dearden, 1946), and *To End All Wars* (dir. David L. Cunningham, 2004); or television series like *Hogan's Heroes* (1965), *Colditz* (1972-1974), or Israeli television's more recent *Prisoners of War* (2010-12).

Moreover, personal accounts by internees have never been published in larger numbers than has been the case during the twentieth century – from prisoners of war, officers, and resistance fighters, but also from ordinary citizens who became innocently involved in military or political events and were imprisoned in the camps of the two world wars, or the Gulag of the Soviet Union. Partly, it concerns memoirs here, but also (transcribed) interviews with ex-internees, so forms of oral history.

At the same time, we should not forget that this gigantic flood of publications – and I am limiting myself to ego-documents here – represents only a fraction of the total number of individual experiences that humans ever underwent in times of crisis or war. Most of the experiences were never recorded at the time, in whichever form, and we are really dealing with a deafening silence because those

who had these experiences, either did not survive, or did not have the inclination or the gift of the word to record their experiences on paper, or because they wanted to get on with their new lives after their release and forget about the past, whereas a large group of victims never told the world about their exile or captivity, because they felt ashamed, or protective.

In recent years, the theme of "silence" has received much attention, as in the work of Jay Winter, Efrat Ben-Ze'ev and Ruth Ginio into the social history of silence during the twentieth century, a phenomenon that is closely related to the cultures of memory and oblivion. The work of Winter *cum suis* demonstrates how in various social contexts (like Spain after the Civil War, South Africa after Apartheid, and the troubled Middle East of our own time) a debate has been generated around the so-called silence which should enable the traumatised citizen to come to terms with the consequences of armed conflict. The silence in such cases is a constructed social space within which certain topics are not discussed, or words uttered. This space is protected by groups or individuals who, at a given moment, wish to distinguish between what is speakable and what is not, what needs to be discussed or not, for an indefinite period (Ben-Ze'ev *et al.*, 2010).

Inspired by this work about "silence" – "silence" which sometimes proves to be permanent, and may hence induce social forgetting – I try in this essay on Shakespeare, conflict, and captivity, to develop by means of a cultural trajectory, and, more particularly, via the various kinds of activity in the literary field, to make audible again the often muted voices of the internees, make them heard, in order to rescue their often silenced experiences from oblivion. Here, it is my firm conviction, Shakespeare – the man, his work, and their unparalleled status – represent a valuable key to unlock what may seem lost. Because by reconstructing the various complex forms of engagement with Shakespeare in captivity, I believe, part of these lost experiences may again be made visible, audible, and recognized. By not primarily studying the text of Shakespeare for its own meaning, but by concentrating on the appropriation of that text, on the signification process in which the internees engaged, we should be able to reconstruct an experience which otherwise might be lost forever.

I am aware that "Shakespeare" is not and has not been the only cultural reference for people in times of crisis during the twentieth century. Even if we limit ourselves to literature – and leave aside, for the time being, the role of music, which is thought to have played an even more important role in the lives of the internees, which also explains why this has been the subject of systematic research – we are confronted with all of world literature, from canonical works during a particular

period to popular fiction, from Homer to Sherlock Holmes. In the diaries, memoirs and camp journals that have been produced, we are continually reminded of Ovid, with whom it was easy to identify because of his exile on the Black Sea; or Primo Levi, who was certainly not the only internee opting for Dante's *Inferno* as a reference point or metaphor in his work (Levi, 1959: 127-134).

In his memoirs of Camp Westerbork, Gerard Durlacher confirms this impression. "During the day", Durlacher wrote, "I forget much of the misery around me when Otto, my paternal comrade in this compound of near-corpses tells me, while adjusting our bed springs, about *Bauhaus* and Rilke, about Shakespeare and Goethe, about Mann and Schnitzler, about Mozart and Bach" (Durlacher, 1996: 81). And let us not forget the diary that Nico Rost kept, with the perfectly justified title, *Goethe in Dachau* (Rost, 1963). Even Marcel Proust was read and studied within barbed wire, as becomes clear from the remarkable Proust lecture that the Polish artist Joseph Czapski wrote during the winter of 1940-1941 when he was a prisoner of war in the Russian camp of Griazowietz (Czapski, 2011). Also, one of the stories in Varlam Shalamov's *Stories from the Kolyma* is devoted to a copy of Proust's *A la Recherche du temps perdu*, and to the disappearance of the material copy of this book which internees with a less literary bent, turned into playing cards. Not everyone in captivity had the same taste, and literary culture behind barbed wire, therefore, was also precarious (Parrau, 1995).

So, Shakespeare was certainly not the only author who was read behind barbed wire, and we know of extensive discussions also about artists and musicians. Yet, more than any other national writer, artist or musician, Shakespeare constituted a fixed part of what one should, perhaps, term the "cultural life" of the camps. Time and again, Shakespeare was taught, read, acted, discussed, and cited. A telling example of this may be found in the various journals that the British internees in Ruhleben Camp produced in World War I. It is remarkable that the quotations here are signed with the phrase, "Shakespeare, K.G." – meaning as much as "Shakespeare, Kriegsgefängner", "Shakespeare, Prisoner of War", but also "Shakespeare, Kaiser's Guest". In a process of fraternization, of identification, the author from Stratford-upon-Avon came to be perceived as a fellow prisoner, and, however paradoxical this may sound, as a "War Poet" whose verse expressed the experience of the internees better than many of them thought they themselves could.

The fact that Shakespeare was ubiquitous – not only in Ruhleben, but also elsewhere – offers many advantages for our research. A detailed reading of these manifestations enables us to establish connections, similarities, patterns, or what one might call certain "cultures of internment". These various moments

shed light on one another and, together, in the case of Shakespeare, bring into focus a unique moment in the European reception of Shakespeare. A number of examples should illustrate the life of "Shakespeare behind barbed wire", the phenomenon of internees turning to Shakespeare in order to survive.

I begin with the story of P. G. Wodehouse, the English author best known for his witty stories and novels about the idle aristocrat Bertie Wooster and his servant Jeeves. At the outbreak of World War II, Wodehouse found himself in the French town of Le Touquet (where he had been living since 1934). He was arrested and taken to Tost in Upper Silesia. Given his advanced age, however, he was released relatively quickly.

The detailed account of his captivity, in which Shakespeare plays a not unimportant role, is compulsory reading. On his liberation, Wodehouse said how much time he had devoted to packing:

> I would like my biographers to make careful note of the fact that the first thing that occurred to me was that here at last was my chance to buckle down and read the complete works of William Shakespeare. It was a thing I had been meaning to do any time these last forty years, but somehow, as soon as I had got, say, *Hamlet* and *Macbeth* under my belt and was preparing to read the stuffing out of *Henry the Sixth*, parts one, two and three, something like the *Murglow Manor Mystery* would catch my eye and I would weaken.
>
> I didn't know what internment implied – it might be for years or it might be for ever – or it might be a mere matter of weeks – but the whole situation seemed to point to the complete works of William Shakespeare, so in they went. I am happy to say that I am now crammed with Shakespeare to the brim, so, whatever else internment has done for me, I am at any rate that much ahead of the game. (Donaldson, 2014: 227-228)

In this bizarre account – the tone of which is occasionally light, if not downright flippant – a number of themes occur that we also find in many other ego-documents about captivity in wartime: the continuing uncertainty about the duration of the captivity, the fear of boredom, and, nearly as a matter of course, the search for a remedy, in books, reading, Shakespeare. The fact that the spiritual father of Wooster and Jeeves in this interview, given shortly after

his release, should sound so inappropriately glib, funny but with an unbearable lightness of being, could indicate a degree of post-traumatic stress disorder. It could also point at an attempt, by means of facetiousness, to hide any deeper emotional conflicts.

We may be inclined to give Wodehouse the benefit of the doubt, but his contemporaries certainly did not, because the utterly naïve Wodehouse made these confessions immediately following his release from captivity in Upper Silesia, on German radio, in Berlin! To speak so light-heartedly about the Nazi camps, Wodehouse was suspected of sympathising with Hitler's regime, and the matter has never been fully resolved. That he was knighted for his contribution to the nation's literature shortly before his death in 1975 was really a polite gesture of the British government, but not a measure of the support on which he could count in his native country. The recent publication of MI5 reports has not helped to solve the problem. We may never get more certainty about that strange Wodehouse, and one believes that he would have done better to limit himself to utter his hilarious statements in his novels and short stories. But his repeated allusions to Shakespeare deserve further investigation, certainly also those used in his own public defence to go on radio.

A Midsummer Night's Dream

P. G. Wodehouse was a reader of Shakespeare. However, the plays were also performed behind barbed wire during the First and the Second World War. When it comes to theatre productions, we see that the internees opted for *A Midsummer Night's Dream* on quite a number of occasions. In 1941, for example, there was a production of this comedy in the Dutch camp at the town of Westerbork, that is, before it became the infamous transit camp for the deportation of Jews, like Anne Frank, to Germany and Eastern Europe. In 1941, Camp Westerbork still served to accommodate refugees: "In the course of 1940 and 1941 an increasing number of German and Austrian refugees arrived in the camp, including a theatre director. In order to divert their mind, the residents decided to work on the production of a play – Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream*" (Abuys, 1996: 56). It is not easy to ascertain what determined the choice of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, although – as we can gather from Michael Dobson's recent *Shakespeare and Amateur Performance* – *A Midsummer Night's Dream* has always been one of the

most popular plays for amateurs. This is not in the last place due to the fact that within the play itself a company of amateur theatricals plays such an important role, a bunch of amateurs who, in the final act, also put on a hilarious production of the "Tragedy of Pyramus and Thisbe" (Dobson, 2011).

One might be tempted to think that the genre of comedy was ideally suited to entertain the internees at the time. Reading *A Midsummer Night's Dream* with some care, however, we realize that the characters who leave for the Forest of Athens in the opening act of the play, have serious problems with the authorities in the city: Hermia's father wants her to marry Demetrius, whereas she loves Lysander. If she does not comply, Theseus tells her, she could face the death penalty, and in the best-case scenario even be denied any contact with men: "Either to die the death, or to abjure / For ever the society of men" (1.1.65-66). Read in this way, the comedy becomes a fairy tale about tyrannical men (Egeus and Theseus), but also about such vulnerable individuals as Hermia and Lysander who choose to become refugees and flee from tyranny. Would the refugees from Nazi Germany, housed at Camp Westerbork in 1941 and deciding to stage *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, have been oblivious to the parallels between the play and their own political reality?

One small detail in the surviving materials suggests that this was not the case, and that the refugees knew very well what they were doing. As was the case with a production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in Ravensbrück (dealt with in greater detail below), there was music. In both cases it concerned the *Bühnenmusik* (opus 61) by Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy. But had not the music of this Jewish composer been forbidden by the Nazis in 1937? Had not even the statue of the composer been removed from the Gewandhaus in Leipzig? Surely, it had been Carl Orff who, because of his success with the *Carmina Burana* (and, of course, because of his Nazi sympathies) was invited to compose the incidental music to replace the score of Mendelssohn's *Midsummer Night's Dream*? Given the broader cultural context of the music, the situation at Camp Westerbork in 1941 suggests that – due to the choice of a forbidden composer – the production may have been more politically and emotionally loaded than the bits and pieces of the production that survive might at first sight seem to suggest.

More is known about the second production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* that took place in Ravensbrück, partly thanks to the writings of the Dutch resistance fighter and poet, Sonja Prins. At an advanced age she still remembered how, together with a group of Dutch and Polish girls, she rehearsed Shakespeare's comedy:

> In England I had been introduced to Shakespeare while at a Dalton school. On Saturday, the principal would read out loud to those who were interested. Staging *A Midsummer Night's Dream* now meant that the Polish and Dutch girls would be doing something together, and this made me happy. (Prins, 2014b)

The comedy was staged by the women and performed for the German soldiers and citizens at Christmas, and it was a great success.

In her autobiographical *Dwangarbeid en verzet in Mecklenburg 43-44* [Forced Labour and Resistance at Mecklenburg], Sonja Prins describes in greater detail how the idea for a theatre production was born as an attempt to boost the morale of the political prisoners (Prins, 1985: 43-44). Marie Pelletier in the account [Sonja Prins herself] was at the centre of it all, and adapted the text, at night, "by the light of a tiny oil lamp" (Prins, 1985: 69). Yet, everyone helped – by donating shreds of old newspapers to write on, and pencil stumps to write with. The creative preparations seem to have been almost as important as the production itself that Prins describes.

Stunning about the description of the production is the way in which the comedy was rewritten. Oberon's servant Puck was granted a central role. Puck, as Prins herself describes it, looked upon "people as enemy creatures", and this applied in particular to the man with the ass's head, in this case not the familiar Nick Bottom, but a "poacher" who offered "a parody of a drunken SS guard trying to walk in a straight line, and in a circle next, before falling asleep" (Prins, 1985: 82-83). Puck was, we read, played by an actor with a talent to improvise, someone who, in the course of the production, managed to hurl a considerable amount of wisdom into the auditorium, wisdom which, as Sonja Prins informs us, would have been cut by the censor had it been on paper, until Oberon orders Puck to relieve the "poacher" of his donkey's head, turning Puck in the model of regenerative human justice and charity (Prins, 1985: 85).

One may wonder how the text of this subversive adaptation apparently failed to alert the censor who did not take preventive action. According to Prins, it was the name of the original author that explains it. "For a week, the play was on the desk of the senior guard, Fischer", she writes, and when it came back, "no cuts appeared to have been made" (Prins, 1985: 69-70). Not without a note of irony, she adds: "How could one expect the guards to change the text of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* by Shakespeare at their own convenience? Because *this* is what the title page read: *A Midsummer Night's Dream* by W. Shakespeare, a comedy in four acts, a German adaptation" (Prins, 1985: 70).

The canonical position that Shakespeare had acquired in the course of the nineteenth centruy – in Germany he had even been elevated to the status of the third classic alongside Goethe and Schiller – offered the Polish and Dutch women at Ravensbrück of whom Sonja Prins writes, a chance to undermine the power of the authorities and to strengthen their own sense of social cohesion.

Something similar occurred in the East Bloc during the Cold War. Since the "classical" work of Shakespeare was permitted at the time, whereas the work of most modern writers was forbidden, these writers often sought refuge in Shakespeare's text, trying to translate, adapt, or perform it in order, via Shakespeare, to comment on the current political situation. For this reason, Dennis Kennedy has called Shakespeare the "Cold Warrior" *par excellence* (Kennedy, 2003). Given the parallel with the story of the women of Ravensbrück who gained a voice through Shakespeare, Shakespeare clearly also deserves recognition as a "War Poet".

Julius Caesar

When Shakespeare was staged behind barbed wire, there was no automatic preference for the comedies – although it should be obvious that their complex nature allowed sufficient room for subversive creativity. Looking at the choice of plays, it is interesting to see that for a remarkable number of internees, especially duing World War II, Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* was a favourite text. This will not only have been determined by the fact that it was easy to improvise a Roman toga with plain bed sheets. The most remarkable feature, however, certainly during World War II, is that we are dealing with a highly political text, with the murder of a tyrant as the pivotal event.

A clear example may be found in England, in 1941. Here, at the outbreak of the war, Winston Churchill had interned all refugees from Nazi-Germany (including Sebastian Haffner and Norbert Elias), for fear that a number of them might be spies, and represent a fifth column. Especially on the Isle of Man (where no less than 30,000 Germans had been interned during the First World War) a rich and varied theatre life developed among the internees, and here Shakespeare played an important role. German plays – the most obvious choice for internees from Germany and Austria – were strictly censored by the British authorities. Shakespeare, however, the popular hero of the English, created surprisingly few problems, despite the unmistakable political tenor of a tragedy like *Julius Caesar*.

This is not the place to describe the production that the internees mounted of *Julius Caesar*, in modern dress (not to lose any of the play's then current relevance), and with a remarkable variety of (involuntary) foreign accents. Important is, in any case, that the surviving materials indicate a reading that was in favour of the assassination of the Roman tyrant, who resembled the Führer and his terror from which they had recently escaped.

This amateur production of November 1940 must be regarded as one of the most politically charged and at the same time one of the most neglected theatrical events of the early years of the war. Compare this most politically expressive production with the production which premiered in Stratford-upon-Avon in mid-April 1941. In his review of 18 April 1941 John Borne (who had already served in the British army) wrote that matters at the Memorial Theatre in Warwickshire were so very dull, and so escapist: "Once upon a time – to which we should not hark back too much – men died vigorously on the Memorial Theatre stage. Now it is all very polite – even when they fall – and not a sword is bloody. Thus, we go home to use our imagination on the midnight news" (Hoenselaars, 2013: 230). Against the background of what is perhaps best referred to as establishment Shakespeare, one appreciates all the more the courage and determination of the political refugees during their detention on the Isle of Man.

The story of *Julius Caesar* and the political engagement of a tiny bunch of amateurs would not be complete without reference to the production of the same play by a contingent of German prisoners of war who had, during the final months of the war, ended up in the prison camp in the southern French camp of Hyères. They, too, played Shakespeare, but it was emphatically not a glorification of the Führer, as had been the case in Berlin during the war itself, or in the free adaptation of the Caesar story by Benito Mussolini and Gioacchino Forzano (Tempera, 2005: 336). The German POWs at Hyères now played this Shakespeare in an attempt to represent Brutus as a hero like Claus von Stauffenberg, who famously tried to assassinate Hitler, and on whose office desk at Berlin's Bendlerstraße, following the attack, the police had found a copy of *Julius Caesar* with a pencil-marked part of Brutus (something, incidentally, the POWs at Hyères could not possibly have known) (Hortmann, 1998: 143). Erich Dorn was there in Hyères and recorded his memories on paper. This production, he wrote, "unambiguously" demonstrated the will of the German soldiers to make their own contribution to the reconstruction of democracy and the cultural life in the new, postwar Germany (Dorn, 1948: 198).

Shakespeare behind barbed wire was not only performed in front of audiences made up largely of other internees. There was also a more personal, private engagement with his work. This engagement is more difficult to identify and to research, but the archives of the Imperial War Museum in London, or in the unique Liddle Collection at the Brotherton Library in Leeds, soon yield much to rely on, like the following two examples from Ruhleben Camp in Berlin. It concerns the notebook kept by the otherwise fully unidentifiable electro-technician from Leipzig, George Beringer, and the liber amicorum section of a jotter by W.E. Swale.

Like so many of his countrymen in Ruhleben, George Beringer followed a series of lectures at what has become known as the "University of Ruhleben", and, as we gather from his notebook, he also followed a course in English Literature during which, unsurprisingly perhaps, much attention was devoted to Shakespeare. Curiously, though, the notebook does not contain any notes taken during these lectures, or any form of reflection on the texts that Beringer studied. We do find a number of quotations from *Hamlet*. It is easy to underestimate the relevance of a notebook containing quotations only (Beringer, n.d.). It is important, therefore, to realize that for Beringer recording quotations was useful – as indeed it was for Hamlet in Shakespeare's play. When Hamlet learns that his father has been murdered by a Machiavellian Claudius, Hamlet exclaims:

> O villain, villain, smiling, damnèd villain!
> My tables,
> My table – meet it is I set it down
> That one may smile, and smile, and be a villain. (1.5.106-109)

The text is from Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, but the quotations that Beringer records are his own. He is Shakespeare's ventriloquist. But we hear Beringer's own voice, his quotations, and his canon. And what does Beringer record, this electro-technician who has been sleeping in the straw of a horse stable for years, with the cold air blowing straight across the terrain from Siberia, with not a single prospect of freedom, because the internees were the pawns in a political game of negotiations between the German and the British governments? What did George Beringer choose to cite?

> O that this too too solid flesh would melt,
> Thaw, and resolve itself into a dew,
> Or that the Everlasting had not fixed
> His canon 'gainst self-slaughter! O God! O God,

How weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable
Seem to me all the uses of this world!
Fie on't, ah fie! 'Tis an unweeded garden
That grows to seed. (1.2.129-136)

The next lines from Beringer's notebook evoke the comparison between man and the animal world – self-evident during the Renaissance, perhaps, but by no less so for those interned at the racecourse of Ruhleben:

What is a man,
If his chief good and market of his time
Be but to sleep and feed? – a beast, no more.
Sure, he that made us with such large discourse,
Looking before and after, gave us not
That capability and god-like reason
To fust in us unused. (4.4.23-30)

This small selection of texts from *Hamlet* – the tragedy of a hero who describes his country, Denmark, as a "prison" – exposes the helplessness and melancholy of Beringer, a prisoner for no reasons of his own making. Eventually, however, we witness an attempt on Beringer's part to accept his fate, because it might be part of God's larger plan:

There's a divinity that shapes our ends,
Rough-hew them how we will. (5.2.9-10)

Of an entirely different nature is the response to imprisonment by Beringer's fellow-internee at Ruhleben, F. C. Milner, who, in the *liber amicorum* of W. E. Swale, identifies with Shakespeare in another way, namely by signing a Shakespeare quotation with his own name. The "quotation" is a drop of real blood (meanwhile turned rusty and brown), spread across a page and a half, with, under it, the reference "*Macbeth.* Act 1. Sc. 2. Line 49". It is far from Beringer's aim, by means of Shakespeare to propagate and support a stoic view of life. In the event, the Shakespeare "reference" – "Act 1. Sc. 2. Line 49" – even proves to be fictitious, and with this pseudo-Shakespearean volley it is likely to have been Milner's intention to give vent to his anger and frustration about his predicament. In essence, the unresigned Milner states that according to him Ruhleben Camp was a "bloody mess", utter misery, an absolute disaster (Swale, n.d.).

Karolina Lanckorońska

A final example of the way in which Shakespeare could play a role in the lives of prisoners may be found in the diaries of Countess Karolina Lanckorońska. Lanckorońska was born in Austria in 1898. She studied in Vienna and became an art historian with a Renaissance specialization at the University of Lviv (then Lemberg). When the Russians occupied the city in 1939, she soon became suspected of resistance work, and was imprisoned. Lanckorońska managed to get away to Cracow and was subsequently active in the Polish resistance against the German invader who had declared war on Russia in 1941. In 1942, she was arrested by the Germans, interrogated, and sentenced to death. Thanks to her family connections – including the Swiss diplomat and historian Carl Burckhardt, who was the head of the Red Cross at the time – Lanckorońska's sentence was suspended, and she was transferred to Ravensbrück. She survived the war and left an account of her experiences in her memoirs, which appeared in the UK as *Those Who Trespass against Us: One Woman's War against the Nazis*, and in the US as *Michelangelo in Ravensbrück*. The first English translation of these memoirs appeared posthumously in 2005, several years after the death of the countess in Rome, at the honourable age of 104.

The memoirs of Lanckorońska's time in captivity are based on the diaries she kept during the war, and they directly relate to her imprisonment in Poland and in Ravensbrück. She sketches the image of an intellectual who, even under gloomy conditions, refuses to give up the struggle, the image of an academic who is determined to find solace and support in the very same culture that the Nazi's were about to destroy. In her Lemberg diary, we read:

> A fortnight ago, at my request, I was sent Shakespeare. That for me has been the most significant event of recent times. My life in prison has been totally transformed. I have read Shakespeare before and read a lot, but in my present circumstances the mind's apperception is weaker, so I did not gain as much of it as I ought to have done, whereas my sensitivity to an artistic masterpiece has decidedly increased. I have read and am reading. I note down extracts and re-read, but it is as though I had never before heard Shakespeare. (Lanckorońska, 2005: 168)

As a prisoner, Lanckorońska developed a veritable reading culture of her own, and quoted Shakespeare time and again in an attempt to unravel her own situation and in order to achieve an act of inner emigration, or, as she describes it herself, an ability "to escape into the realm of intellectual riches" (*idem*, 269). The many references to Shakespeare enable us directly to trace the events in the emotional life of the internee. The first entry of the diary that she began in the Lemberg prison on 18 September 1942, reads:

> I have been studying how I may compare
> This prison where I live unto the world:
> And for because the world is populous
> And here is not a creature but myself,
> I cannot do it; yet I'll hammer't out.
> My brain I'll prove the female to my soul,
> My soul the father: and these two beget
> A generation of still-breeding thoughts.
> And these same thoughts people this little world,
> In humours like the people of this world
> For no thought is contented … (*idem*, 161-162)

Lanckorońska takes the initiative creatively to counter life in prison – much like Richard the Second in Shakespeare's history play – by taking it as a creative challenge, and she finds that in being "contented" herself, she actually differs from the medieval monarch. Where medieval texts – as Jean Dunbabin has demonstrated – looked upon prisons and captivity as a taste of the real Hell and damnation to come, Shakespeare's Richard the Second, rewritten as an early modern monarch, seeks to import this terrene world, *not* Hell, into his cell, and proceeds to people it with his fertile brain, and it is this tradition of the humanist subject that we also find in the Renaissance art historian Lanckorońska.

However, feelings of melancholy nevertheless manage to quench her optimism at times. This explains why several days later, on 20 September 1942 to be precise, the countess spoke to herself in a stern voice, reminding herself of the words of Edgar in *King Lear*:

> What, in ill thoughts again? Men must endure
> Their going hence, even as their coming hither:
> Ripeness is all. (*idem*, 167)

This insight also prepares us for the next quotation, from *Julius Caesar*, where the stoic world view of *King Lear* is expressed even more explicitly:

> Of all the wonders that I yet have heard
> It seems to me most strange that men should fear
> Seeing that death, a necessary end
> Will come when it will come. (*idem*, 168)

These are only a few examples in the memoirs of moments when Shakespeare functions as a touchstone for her emotions, as he is read and cited to describe the unusual conditions in which she finds herself, or to serve as a source of moral strength at moments of intense emotional crisis. Together with Shakespeare the countess succeeds in approaching the thoughts and feelings that she herself cannot or will not express otherwise.

Interestingly, she appears to speak on behalf of many other internees who have not left us any testimony of their experiences. This becomes clear from Lanckorońska's diary after she has been transferred from Ravensbrück, her "homeland" – as she herself put it – into exile (*idem*, 181). For miraculously, Shakespeare made an unexpected appearance behind the barbed wire of Ravensbrück:

> In this connection, a great delight came our way. One of the
> Polish women brought with her from Auschwitz a treasure
> that, because she was travelling on with the transport, she
> had to leave with us. That was a one-volume edition of the
> complete works in English. The book was stamped with the
> number of an officers' prisoner-of-war camp, from which
> it had by some miracle been smuggled to the Auschwitz-
> Birkenau camp. (*idem*, 269)

One tries to imagine the situation: the way in which the same physical copy of the complete works of Shakespeare was in three camps of World War II, and one wonders how many internees would have read it. At Ravensbrück it was not only the countess Lanckorońska who read Shakespeare. In her own words: this copy of the complete works of Shakespeare was "secreted in my straw matress, from which I used to lend him out to the occasional reader" (*idem*, 269). This sharing was not a problem, because there were days when the countess herself did not read, although this was not the playwright's fault. Yet, when she did not read Shakespeare, she remembered what she had read:

> There were days when reading was out of the question. I had neither the time nor the energy, but for us the mere awareness that King Lear or Richard II was with us was proof that the world still existed. (*idem*, 269)

Conclusion

Via the excentric P. G. Wodehouse, the amateur thespians of Camp Westerbork, the political refugees on the Isle of Man, the German POWs at Hyères, and the notebooks of Beringer and Swale in Ruhleben, we arrive at a coterie of readers around the countess Lanckorońska in Ravensbrück. Reading Shakespeare, but also *not* reading Shakespeare, kept the memory of the poet and playwright alive, and confirm his essential presence in captivity, to convince those readers trapped in the Hell of the twentieth century "that the world still existed".

The account of the Polish countess – about the relevance of the mere existence of something called "Shakespeare", and about the way in which this might make our lives more valuable and liveable, as indeed it does – makes an important point about Shakespeare. A number of years ago, with reference to a scene in Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park*, Jonathan Bate argued that Shakespeare was part of the "constitution" of the Englishman (Bate, 1989: 3). The account of the countess Lanckorońska demonstrates that the statement applies no less to the various cultures of the European continent. Shakespeare is part of the Englishman's DNA, but it is also shared by all Europeans.

In this essay, I have looked at the phenomenon of "Shakespeare" behind barbed wire in the twentieth century. I have tried to demonstrate that, precisely by looking more closely at the various manifestations of "Shakespeare", in the hands of amateur and professional users, we may break through the existing silence, and gain a better insight into the historical experience of the internees. To break through the prevailing silence by making the camps speak through "Shakespeare" I have tried also to balance existing pessimism with regard to the human ability to remember, as expressed in one of the poems that Sonja Prins wrote in Ravensbrück in 1944:

> All has been for nothing, of no value,
> with us as captives stringing the withered
> years into a chain of memory.

Not a trace will remain of the sorrow and the pain
When we're no longer here. (Prins, 2014a)

As a critical reader of today, it seems appropriate to question the suggestion (made at another time, and under conditions that cannot be compared to ours) as though all traces of this sorrow and this pain would meanwhile have been wiped out by time. Even the words of the poet herself undermine what she claims, because they communicate to us, as the modern reader, the experience of over half a century ago. I would even go one step further and try to show that there are more traces than we tend to suspect, also when those involved in the original experience were not in a position – for whichever reason – to relate in their own words of their gruesome experiences and the effect of these on their consciousness, as individuals.

I am not suggesting, in the way P. G. Wodehouse did, that it can be so agreeable behind barbed wire if one does not forget to bring the complete works of Shakespeare. We have witnessed the existential doubt of George Beringer, and something similar may be found in the work of the American poet e.e. cummings, who was a prisoner of war in Northern France during World War I. As he describes in his novel *The Enormous Room*, he too had expected he could kill time and survive camp life with Shakespeare, only to discover that this did not always work. He explained how he managed to order the complete works in Paris and received it in the form of a heavily censored Everyman edition. Reading, however, did not have the desired effect. "Somehow or other, reading Shakespeare did not appeal to my disordered mind. I tried *Hamlet* and *Julius Cæsar* once or twice" (cummings, 1922: 263). When a less highly trained fellow-internee asked him who this Shakespeare was – "Shah-kay-spare, who is Shah-kay-spare?" – and cummings heard himself answer that "Mr. S. was the Homer of the English-speaking people", he lost all remaining faith in Western civilization (cummings, 1922: 263). Such reading experiences, too, determine the image of Shakespeare in captivity.

More research into this phenomenon needs to be done and should always look beyond national borders, in particular the borders of England. Given the near ubiquity of barbed wire, the nearly ubiquitous phenomenon of Shakespeare as a War Poet in captivity needs to be studied and contextualised from a transnational perspective. Only then will we be able to realize our ambition to make the camps truly tell us the silenced stories that we must want to hear.

Notes

1. All Shakespearean quotations are from Wells / Taylor, 2005.

Works cited

Abuys, Guido (1996), "De Buhne", in Dirk Mulder / Ben Prinsen (ed.), *Lachen in het donker: Amusement in kamp Westerbork*, Assen, Van Gorcum, pp. 56-57.

Bate, Jonathan (1989), *Shakespearean Constitutions: Politics, Theatre, Criticism, 1730-1830*, Oxford, Clarendon Press.

Ben-Ze'ev, Ben / Ruth Ginio / Jay Winter, ed. (2010), *Shadows of War: A Social History of Silence in the Twentieth Century*, Cambridge, Cambridge UP.

Beringer, George (n.d.), RUH 4, in Liddle Collection, Brotherton Library, Leeds, UK.

Coldiron, A. E. B. (2000), "Translation, Canons, and Cultural Capital: Manuscripts and Reception of Charles d'Orléans's English Poetry", in Mary-Jo Arn (ed.), *Charles d'Orléans in England, 1415-1440*, Cambridge, D.S. Brewer.

Cummings, E. E. (1922), *The Enormous Room*, New York, Boni and Liveright.

Czapski, Joseph (2011), *Proust contre la déchéance: Conférences au camp de Griazowietz*, revised and expanded version, Lausanne, Les Éditions Noir sur Blanc.

Dennis, Dennis (2003), "Shakespeare and the Cold War", in A. Luis Pujante / Ton Hoenselaars (ed.), *Four Hundred Years of Shakespeare in Europe*, Newark, U of Delaware P, pp. 163-179.

Dente, Carla / Sara Soncini, ed. (2013), *Shakespeare and Conflict*, London, Palgrave Macmillan.

Dobson, Michael (2011), *Shakespeare and Amateur Performance: A Cultural History*, Cambridge, Cambridge UP.

Donaldson, Frances (2014), *P. G. Wodehouse: A Biography*, London, André Deutsch.

Dorn, Erich (1948), "Shakespeare bei deutschen Kriegsgefangenen in Frankreich", *Shakespeare-Jahrbuch* 1948, pp. 82-83.

Durlacher, G. L. (1996), "Requiem", in Dirk Mulder and Ben Prinsen (eds.), *Lachen in het donker: Amusement in kamp Westerbork*, Hooghalen/Assen, Herinneringscentrum Kamp Westerbork – – Van Gorcum & Comp.

Gilzmer, Mechtild (2000), *Camps de femmes: Chroniques d'internées, Rieucros et Brens, 1939-1944*, trans. Nicole Bary, Paris, Éditions Autrement.

Hinz, Uta (2006), *Gefangen im Grossen Krieg: Kriegsgefangenschaft in Deutschland, 1914-1921*, Essen, Klartext Verlag.

Hoenselaars, Ton (2013), "'A Tongue in Every Wound of Caesar': Performing *Julius Caesar* behind Barbed Wire during World War II", in Carla Dente & Sara Soncini (ed.), *Shakespeare and Conflict*, London, Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 224-230.

Hortmann, Wilhelm (1998), *Shakespeare on the German Stage: The Twentieth Century,* Cambridge, Cambridge UP, 1998.

Lanckorońska, Karolina (2005), *Those Who Trespass Against Us: One Woman's War Against the Nazis*, trans. Noel Clark, London, Pimlico.

Levi, Primo (1959), *If This Is a Man*, trans. Stuart Woolf, New York, The Orion Press.

Parrau, Alain (1995), Écrire les camps, Paris, Éditions Belin, 1995.

Pfister, Manfred (2013) "Shakespeare's Sonnets *de profundis*", in Carla Dente / Sara Soncini (ed.), *Shakespeare and Conflict*, London, Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 250-256.

Pöppinghege, Rainer (2006), *Im Lager unbesiegt: Deutsche, englische und französische Kriegsgefangenen-Zeitungen im Ersten Weltkrieg*, Essen, Klartext Verlag.

Prins, Sonja (1985), *Dwangarbeid en verzet in Mecklenburg 43-44*, second edition, Den Bosch, Koöperatieve Uitgeverij SoMa.

— (2014a), "Ravensbruck", *Cubra*, http://www.cubra.nl/poezie/sonjaprins/gedichten/ravensbruck.htm, accessed 6 April 2024.

— (2014b), "Interview", *Thuis in Communicatie*, http://www.thuisincommunicatie.nl/interview_sonjaprins.htm, accessed 6 April 2024.

Rost, Nico (1963), *Goethe in Dachau: Literatuur en werkelijkheid. Dagboek 1944-45*, second edition, The Hague, Kruseman.

Stanley Wells / Gary Taylor (ed.) (2005), *The Oxford Shakespeare*, second edition, Oxford, Clarendon Press.

Swale, W. E. (n.d.), RUH 52, in Liddle Collection, Brotherton Library, Leeds, UK.

Tempera, Mariangela (2005), "Political Caesar: *Julius* Caesar on the Italian Stage", in Horst Zander (ed.), *Julius Caesar: New Critical Essays*, London and New York, Routledge, pp. 333-343.

4.4. Working with Shakespeare: The Ethics of Community Engagement and Participatory Theatre

Janice Valls-Russell

CNRS / Université Paul-Valéry Montpellier 3

ABSTRACT

This chapter provides a brief overview of theoretical – humanitarian, sociological, theatre-based – approaches to community work and, more specifically, participatory theatre, drawing on the works and experience of theorists, social workers, and practitioners such as Stella Barnes, Graeme Stuart, Augusto Boal, and Philip Parr. It then goes on to review a selection of international forms of community engagement through the arts, more specifically through participatory theatre, and within that area, Shakespeare. Finally, the legacies of such experiences and their implications are discussed, considering that an ethical thinking-through of the project seems all the more crucial when working with vulnerable communities. One key moment is the end of the project and the impact on the community. A sense of loss can reactivate vulnerability unless the community has been empowered – the ideal moment being when the community no longer needs the incoming actors.

The chapter is intended primarily for students in the social sciences and the humanities who might be interested in joining or creating participatory theatre projects or other forms of action through theatre with schools, homes for the elderly, refugee groups, other communities, or other forms of civic involvement.

Reality is the name of the game and there is nothing 'worthy' about it.
—Sam Beale (*apud Cardboard Citizens 25 Years*, n.d. [2016?]: 30)

Community Engagement through the Arts

In Terry Gillian's long-awaited movie, *The Man Who Killed Don Quixote*, released in 2018, Toby Grisoni, an advertising executive played by Adam Driver, returns to the Spanish region of La Mancha where 10 years earlier he had shot *Don Quixote*, using a cast of villagers. Underlying the bittersweet comedy, and the metafilmic experiences of moving backwards and forwards in time and playing with different cinematographic techniques to explore the multiple facets of Cervantes's novel, Grisoni's return to the village, where he discovers the negative legacy of his artistic experiment, puts its finger on the ethics of community engagement. Young Grisoni is depicted as an idealistic, somewhat self-centred artist, bent on making what he thinks is a clever and novel film, and thereby using the community, not serving it. Yet even when one wishes to serve a community, good intentions can prove ethically slippery. As Lois Keidan wrote in *The Guardian*, "socially engaged practices are a way of empowering the disempowered and including the excluded, and can achieve radical and remarkable transformations. But they are not quick and easy solutions to long-term problems" (Keidan, 2008). Graeme Stuart, from the Family Action Centre at the University of Newcastle, Australia, quotes a metaphor encapsulating the same concept: "You cannot waltz into a community and fix the world (...) no matter how well you can dance" (Stuart, 2014).

Indeed, the results can be contrary to those pursued, all the more so if one just waltzes out again, especially when working with young or otherwise vulnerable people. Such risks are put forward, for instance, in warnings published by international organisations against "orphanage tourism", where volunteers spend a period of time with institutionalised children, taking away a feel-good experience that they share on the social networks yet leaving behind a feeling of loss, a sense of disruption liable to undermine, rather than enhance, resilience, trust in adults and self-confidence. Awareness of the risks attached to a high turnover of volunteers is one of the challenges non-governmental organisations (NGOs) face when confronted with major humanitarian emergencies, such as the 2010 and 2021 Haiti earthquakes, and the longer-term aftermath. One answer to this is the empowerment of people within the community through training and other forms of assistance.

Another danger is to trap people in the stereotypes associated with their community, reinforcing the separation between "them" and "us": Marina Henriques Coutinho and Marica Pompeo Nogueira note that "escaping the stereotypes of being 'wanting' or a 'criminal' has been a problem faced by the favela dweller" of Rio de Janeiro (Coutinho / Nogueira, 2013: 175). A related risk is that the practitioners or facilitators, coming usually from outside the community, are perceived, or even end up perceiving themselves, as "saviours", thereby adopting, albeit unconsciously, a paternalistic attitude which "can end up helping to prolong [a] situation of exclusion" and a sense of inferiority (*ibidem*).

Forms of community engagement through the arts, more specifically through participatory theatre with a focus on Shakespeare will be explored with regards to theoretical approaches, a few international instances of such work, and some feedback on the legacies of such experiences and their ethical implications. The topics discussed are intended for students in the humanities who would like to join or start participatory theatre projects or other forms of community engagement through theatre with schools, homes for the elderly, refugee groups, or other communities, while they may prove valid for other forms of civic involvement.

The ethical dimension seems all the more important at a time when economic, demographic, and political tensions have further widened the range of "marginalized and vulnerable communities" and exacerbated the risks of "them-versus-us" divisions in a number of European countries. Situations of emergency, such as waves of migrants, from Syria, Afghanistan, and African countries, fleeing poverty, oppression, and war, have reactivated latent tensions resulting from multiple factors, such as the collapse of Communist regimes in Eastern Europe, the search for renewed forms of identity and meaningfulness in a market-economy context, an erosion of socio-economic wellbeing and expectations in the wake of the banking and financial crisis of 2007-2008, and budgetary restrictions affecting the quality of health and social services, to the detriment of those who need them most.

Participatory Arts

Around the world, hundreds, if not thousands, of projects have emerged over the past few decades, in response to social and community needs, addressing situations that impact vulnerable individuals, minorities and/or communities

in different ways, places and contexts: poverty, homelessness, illiteracy, war, migration, education. Different forms of response include participatory arts, and more specifically participatory or applied theatre:

> the term "Participatory Theatre" (PT) is used to cover practices referred to variously as Applied Theatre or Drama, Community Theatre, Workshop Theatre, Role Play etc. The practice ranges between work with a performance focus to process–based work aimed at personal, group and/or social development. It takes place in a wide variety of employment, political, social and community settings and practitioners come from a variety of backgrounds. Practitioners may be professional theatre performers and directors, dedicated trained facilitators, or professionals from other backgrounds e.g. social work or education. Participatory theatre is internationally associated with radical and popular theatre forms such as Theatre in Education, Young People's Theatre, Forum Theatre (Theatre of the Oppressed) and Theatre for Development. (Rifkin, 2010: 4)

Like so many participatory theatre projects around the world, the ones discussed here mostly build on the work of Paulo Freire, author of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1972), and Augusto Boal (1931-2009), author of *Theatre of the Oppressed* (1974, English trans. 1976). Boal's approach is based on Freire's work: their pedagogy grew out of their work with people experiencing poverty, hunger, and illiteracy in Brazil and Peru, respectively. They propose overcoming the gap between those who are viewed as privileged and under-privileged by generating empowerment and agency through engagement with dramatic fiction, with practitioners developing a horizontal rather than top-down interaction with the participants. In a context of political oppression, Boal encouraged the emergence of a new kind of spectator, coining the term "spect-actor" to describe the dual role of those who observe but also create dramatic action, thereby transforming a (mere) witness into a protagonist. While Boal initially sought to help people break the cycle of oppression (Boal, 2005: xxiv), he considered more broadly that "all human beings are actors (they act!) and spectators (they observe!).

They are spect-actors" (*idem*, 15). On and off stage, theatre thus offers a transformative space and process of joint exploration and creation. In *Games for Actors and Non-Actors* Boal proposes practical exercises for workshops, that have contributed to the development of community theatre practices worldwide. Freire's statement "No one frees another. No one frees himself. People free themselves together" (*apud* Coutinho / Nogueira, 2013: 170) captures the essence of the Freire-Boal model.

Dorothy Heathcote's work in Drama in Education and Theatre in Education has focused on the setting of boundaries, for instance "between the fiction of the stage and the space occupied by the audience or participants in their real lives", the emotional safety of participants and confidentiality of the work, the empowerment of participants through the practitioners choosing to abrogate their cultural "power", and a pedagogy based on questioning (Hare, 2010: 30-6). Initially Theatre in Education worked with individual schools to promote a culture of inclusiveness, then embraced the wider community, because theatre helps "nurture and provoke change by a process of collaborative learning, accompanied by a commitment to the evaluation of and reflection on practice" (Hare, 2010: 34).

The participatory theatre models presented below are based on artistic, and more specifically theatrical, engagement with(in) specific communities. Unlike arts-based therapies, that involve specialised therapists and may be used with trauma victims, or as transformative practices in restorative justice, they do not pursue specific health-related goals. Having used drama and associated participatory arts at Oval House Theatre to involve some of the most excluded and marginalised young people in South London such as young refugees, Stella Barnes clarifies: "We are acutely aware that our project is an arts project – not therapy – and ensure that the delivery team understands this distinction. (We do however acknowledge the positive therapeutic results of the work we do)" (Barnes, 2009: 37; Hayhow *et al.*, 2016). She draws attention to theatre experiences centred on a personal traumatic experience posing a danger to those narrating or re-enacting their experience as well for the audience, placed in a near-voyeuristic situation of acute discomfort: "Exploring young people's personal trauma has more potential to damage than to empower, especially if not delivered by a trained art therapist (even then they tend not to work with real life stories but work through metaphor and symbolism)" (*idem*, 40).

Why Theatre? Why the Classics? Why Shakespeare?

Empowerment comes through words that allow people to explore the world and themselves – and perhaps save themselves. "Where words prevail not, violence prevails", Thomas Kyd warns in *The Spanish Tragedy* – a favourite quote with Cicely Berry, director of text and voice for the Royal Shakespeare Company, who conducted workshops in prisons and with companies around the world, including Nós do Morro (see below). Expressing emotions with the right words is also what pushed Richard Berry to become an actor:

> Exprimer, avec le mot juste, ses émotions, c'est aussi ce qui a poussé Richard Berry à devenir comédien. Dès ses 16 ans, il prend goût à la littérature, et aux mots de "Corneille, de Beaumarchais, de Racine et de Molière". "J'étais assez inhibé à l'époque. Je n'avais pas les mots, confie-t-il. Et lorsqu'on n'a pas les mots, on devient violent", ajoute-t-il. C'est pour ça qu'il se dit avoir "été sauvé" par les auteurs classiques. "J'ai découvert des mots qui traduisaient exactement ce que j'avais envie de dire sans savoir le dire". Richard Berry a ainsi pu en tant qu'acteur "exprimer, à travers les mots des autres, des douleurs, des révoltes, des colères", de manière à l'apaiser. (Suigo, 2018)
>
> [From the age of 16, he developed a taste for literature, and for the words of "Corneille, Beaumarchais, Racine and Molière". "I was quite inhibited at the time. I didn't have the words", he confides. "And when you don't have the words, you become violent", he adds. This is why he says he was "saved" by the classic authors. "I discovered words that translated exactly what I wanted to say without knowing how to say it". Richard Berry was thus able as an actor to "express, through the words of others, pain, revolt, anger", in order to appease them. (My translation)]

Language enables happiness, self-esteem, empathy, says Cécile Ladjali, a teacher of French literature in secondary schools and university, whose novel *Illettré* (*Illiterate*), published in 2016, was adapted to the screen in 2018 by

Jean-Pierre Améris. Simultaneously, the words and plots of the classics create a safe distance from one's personal experience, providing an environment that invites collective experimentation and exploration. In her work with young refugees, Barnes drew on folklore and myth:

> We never require participants to draw on past experiences as material for the arts process, preferring to focus on the present or future if the work is related to reality; or on metaphor, symbolism, folk tale etc. as a way of protecting young people from accessing potentially painful memories. (...) When young people feel safe they may take creative risks and sometimes personal risks; they may explore and play out things that they cannot or have not yet worked through in order to begin to make sense of it. In this instance it is important to ensure the work is focused on fiction: fictional characters and contexts; so that the sharing of personal material can occur safely if the young people wish to share or explore it. (...) We need to make the distinction between fiction and reality, between the literal and the symbolic or metaphorical, the specific and the universal. Metaphor and symbolism allow for a creative transformation. The process of transformation does not water down the work or under-value the real experiences of participants but rather gives them a powerful communication tool that both protects their potential vulnerability and gives them the means to communicate to a broad audience. The process is empowering and deeply creative. (Barnes, 2009: 37, 40)

The Greek classics and Shakespeare offer words and worlds that appeal to the imagination – from the right distance. The Director of the Avignon Festival, Olivier Py, has staged Sophocles' *Antigone* (in 2018) and Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (in 2017) and *Macbeth* (in 2019) with inmates of Avignon's high-security prison. As Peter Brook noted, "Shakespeare doesn't belong to the past. If his material is valid, it is valid now. It is like coal. (...) The meaningfulness of a piece of coal to us starts and finishes with its combustion, giving us the light and heat that we want. And that to me is Shakespeare" (Brook, 2017: 95).

The book produced by Cardboard Citizens in 2016 to mark their 25th anniversary includes a quotation from *King Lear* on the "poor naked wretches" with "houseless heads and unfed sides" and the attendant need for solidarity: "Oh, I have ta'en / Too little care of this!" (3.4.28-30, 32-33).[1] The speech in *Sir Thomas More*, which is believed to have been written by Shakespeare, on the "wretched strangers, / Their babies on their backs and their poor luggage, / Plodding to the ports and coasts for transportation" (6.84-85), has gone viral, quoted by diplomats, humanitarian workers and in protest campaigns against what many perceive as the "mountainish inhumanity" of the politicians towards asylum seekers. It was one of the set pieces in the film *Whither Would You Go?*, created by Ella Smith and Emma West and directed by Jamie Lloyd for a one-night fundraising gala event in 2017, in which leading actors performed scenes from Shakespeare alongside video testimonies from refugees (Martin, 2017).

Shakespeare is a recurring vector of inspiration and investigation in community programmes around the world, in response to collective, local, global crises, some of which produce emergencies; others are the aftermath of an emergency, others still become near-endemic, or chronic.[2] Programmes frequently choose Shakespeare, alongside other world classics, to probe community experiences and foster possible responses to challenges. Telling stories, through Shakespeare, fuels conversation about change – and may thus help bring about some forms of change, personal or collective.

Community Engagement through Shakespeare

Grupo de Teatro Nós do Morro, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil[3]

"Porque a vida levada pela arte é mais bonita de ser vivida" (Because life elevated by art is more beautiful to be lived): since 1986, the company Nós do Morro has been living up to its motto (which company members quote in interviews), offering young people from the favela of Rio de Janeiro opportunities to experience culture, art and citizenship through theatre, film and the visual arts, both as practitioners and spectators. It is the ongoing story of an encounter between those who were originally described as the "long hairs", a student and artistic community living in the intermediate area between the lower edge of the favela and the more prosperous neighbourhoods, and youngsters from within

the community, the boys from the favela. While exploring the day-to-day life of the favela in plots that frequently draw on humour to avoid pathos and create the right distance, "the goal has never been to turn the stage into a space or forum to debate the problems of the community" (Coutinho / Nogueira, 2013: 174). The longevity of Nós do Morro is linked to its ability to create a loyal following within the favela with shows "produced by the community for the community" (*ibidem*). The twofold partnership, between those sharing a theatre culture and those within the favela, but also between performers and spectators, has been key to Nós do Morro's success, exemplifying Freire's "dialogic model of interaction".

In 1996, Nós do Morro opened its own theatre in the favela, Teatro Vidigal. Over the years, Nós do Morro has diversified its activity, inside and outside the favela, with, for instance, "Crescendo com Arte", theatre workshops for children aged 7 years up, and reading circles ("Cirandas da leitura"). The group has also fostered projects in other towns, based on their agenda, ethics, and methodology.

While Shakespeare is by no means the only dramatist whose works are performed by Nós do Morro, he holds a special place. A major landmark in the company's history is a 1996 production of *Hamlet* in collaboration with Cicely Berry and Dominic Barter. Teaching drama in the *favelas* of Brazil has led Barter to develop a restorative circle process to address conflict-related issues (Lyubansky, 2017: 513-20). In 2006, ten members of the group took part in a co-production of *Two Gentlemen of Verona* in the Stratford-upon-Avon Complete Works Festival; the show moved to the Barbican in 2008, and was revived in 2013. The Nós do Morro cast played alongside a Birmingham-based youth group, Gallery 37. Sharing experiences across languages and cultures during the joint rehearsal time of only two weeks, "the Brazilian actors took the main speaking roles and the English speakers demonstrated an affinity with dispossessed people as they played the Outlaws" (Bradley / Kirwan, 2007: 8). In the context of the 2014-2016 Shakespeare anniversary celebrations, Nós do Morro produced a musical version of *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Domanda a Megera*, adapted by Luiz Paulo Corrêa e Castro, directed by Fernando Mello da Costa, composed and conducted by Gabriel Moura. The modernised version with musical interludes (some 15 songs) involved two groups of actors, one of which working on a conventional version of the play, the other proposing a clownish version – thereby inviting a new take on the play-within-the-play structure through their rival versions and encouraging a humorous debate on the relevance of the play today (Monteiro, 2016).

In 2015, the Mostra, the group's annual festival, focused on Shakespeare, with *Domanda a Megera*, *Romeo and Juliet*, directed by Fátima Domingues with a

cast of teenagers, and an adaptation of *The Tempest*, *Era uma Vez a Tempestade – Um Shakespeare para Todas as Idades* (*Once Upon a Time There Was a Tempest, Shakespeare for All Ages*), directed by Cico Caseira.

Cardboard Citizens, London, UK[4]

Cardboard Citizens describes itself as making life-changing theatre with and for homeless people, refugees and asylum seekers through a participatory approach to the arts. The company grew out of a workshop led by Augusto Boal, and since its foundation in 1991, in the context of the housing crisis created by Margaret Thatcher's Housing Acts of 1980 and 1988,[5] leading practitioners of the Theatre of the Oppressed method in the UK have imposed "their distinctive brand of socially and politically minded theatre" (Walton, 2007: 59). Cardboard Citizens has gained a reputation for producing innovative, site-specific, forum theatre performed on the stage, in the street, in hostels, centres and prisons. Productions have included Maxim Gorky's *The Lower Depths*, Georg Büchner's *Woyzeck*, *Pericles*, co-produced with the Royal Shakespeare Company in 2003, and *Timon of Athens* in 2006-2007. *Pericles* was produced in two versions: a touring one, for schools, involved "five actors and two stools" (*Cardboard Citizens 25 Years*, nd [2016?]: 60); the other, performed in the multiple spaces of a hangar (The Warehouse), treated spectators like refugees arriving at an asylum-processing centre and being handed application forms. Individual tales of real-life experiences of exile morphed into the plot of *Pericles* and settings in the different spaces included countless lines of laundry hanging above the stage, occupied by a row of washing-machines. According to Kate Bassett, "Cardboard Citizens' director, Adrian Jackson, makes the Bard's meandering folk tale about the twice-shipwrecked, bereaved and beggared Prince of Tyre connect with the struggles of contemporary refugees" (Bassett, 2003). In 2006-2007, Jackson – who translated Boal's *Games for Actors and Non-Actors* – turned to *Timon of Athens* to highlight issues surrounding social exclusion and dispossession. Here is how Nick Walton remembers the performance he saw in Stratford-upon-Avon during the RSC Complete Works Festival:

> Video diaries by two homeless men were screened to break up the scenes of Timon's self-exile in the woods and at intervals throughout the production performers related

their own personal experiences of a harsh and heartless money-obsessed society. As a parallel to the scenes in which Timon's servants look to raise loans from his friends, one of the performers spoke of his personal misfortunes and the complete lack of support from his friends when he fell upon hard times. Tales of this kind served to stamp this company's sense of ownership on the play, and also served to smooth over some of the rough presentation of Shakespeare's scenes.

The sound of waves underscored the final scenes and at the production's finale the performers looked out to the audience as video footage of a man walking into the sea, and finally disappearing underneath the waves, played on the screen upstage. The final image suggested a modern moral tale told not by an idiot, but by a drowning man; a fate we are all born into, it seemed to be suggested, if society does not offer a helping hand. (Walton, 2007: 61)

Théâtre du Bout du Monde, Nanterre, France[6]

Founded in 1990 by Miguel Borras, the French company Théâtre du Bout du Monde is based in Nanterre, on the edge of Paris, in a district with 85% social housing and 30% unemployment. The company, a collective of artists, works with local primary and secondary schools, and organises workshops with different local communities, among which a shelter and day care unit at Nanterre hospital and the Emmaüs community. It takes part in local fairs with street theatre and has carried out international projects with young people from different Mediterranean countries. Over the years, it has staged adaptations of Homer's *Odyssey* (*Ulysse à l'ombre de l'olivier*, 2012), Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (2012) and Euripides' *Iphigenia* (*Notre Iphigénie*, 2018). In 2010, Théâtre du Bout du Monde launched the production of an opera by the Bulgarian composer Yassen Vodenitcharov, *The Snow Woman*, directed by Miguel Borras, with musicians and schoolchildren.

Théâtre du Bout du Monde also produced *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, renamed *Songe d'une nuit de mai*, in 2010 and 2011, and *Twelfth Night*, in 2014 (Schwartz-Gastine, 2013). *Songe d'une nuit de mai* brought together participants from several local communities: Emmaüs, a retirement home, a shelter for the

homeless, as well as primary and secondary schools. Children played fairies, designed and created props, and visited the Musée du quai Branly – Jacques Chirac in search of ideas. Théâtre du Bout du Monde invited locals to attend rehearsals and experience the making of sets and costumes, and organised debates on participatory theatre:

> The directors of this unusual *Dream* used the capacities of their amateur actors and helped them discover that physical or mental disabilities can be an advantage and meaningful. (…) In so doing, they built the self-esteem of their amateurs and produced further insights into the meaning of the play. (Schwartz-Gastine, 2013)

A local social worker who occasionally performs with the company explained: "Ce spectacle nous donne envie de continuer à nous battre pour reconstruire une humanité diverse mais qui se parle, et qui sait rire d'elle-même" ("that show makes us want to go on fighting to rebuild a diverse humanity where people talk to each other and know how to laugh at themselves", Schoumaker 2010).

Compagnia Pippo Delbono, Modena, Italy[7]

Pippo Delbono's productions usually grow out of his own ideas and scripts. Instead, *Enrico V* is a project he started developing in 1992 in collaboration with the University of Parma and more than a decade later took on an international tour which included Avignon, Paris and Stratford-upon-Avon. There he led theatre workshops with the spectators, who took part in the show along with his permanent cast of three actors.

Delbono's actors are above all people who come from all places, such as a psychiatric hospital, the Roma community or the shores of Italy where they have landed as migrants. Encounters with people confined to the margins of society have contributed decisively to his approach. In 1997, he created *Barboni*, which grew out of meetings with patients of the psychiatric hospital of Aversa (near Naples) as well as with street artists. The production received a special award for its research in between art and life, and enjoyed international success. Delbono went on to create *Vangelo*, a show about religion, suffering, beauty, and love, strongly influenced by the figure of his mother. Bringing together Pasolini, Saint Augustine and Led Zeppelin, he also included sounds

and voices from refugee camps and the Roma community, and music by Enzo Avitabile in a medley of comedy, melodrama, empathy and respect.

When *Enrico V*, his only play based on an existing one, went to Stratford-upon-Avon in 2007, it was the only Italian production of a Shakespeare play to have been invited to perform at the Royal Shakespeare Company. As in Paris and Avignon, Delbono used local performers: "The Italian company brought just three performers and Delbono's version of Shakespeare's text gave space to the twenty-five performers who were at different times participants or observers" (Parsons, 2007: 8).

Parrabbola, London, UK[8]

Parrabbola, the twenty-first-century brainchild of artistic director Philip Parr and writer, actor and researcher Brian Abbott, works with communities in the UK and Europe. The aim is to develop confidence, self-expression and talent, share a common heritage, search for new paths, for example following the closure of local industry or major employers; build on shared values and sense of place to create community identity.

A member of the European Shakespeare Festivals Network, Parrabbola has produced three Shakespeare plays in Poland, including a community staging of *Pericles* in Gdańsk, *The Tempest*, and a staging of *The Winter's Tale*, for the festivals in Ostrava and Gdańsk. For the International Shakespeare Festival of Craiova, Parrabbola produced *Romeo and Juliet* in 2016 and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in 2018. Combining community shows with festivals ensures audiences, both local and incoming, and contributes to the festival spirit and ethos of taking shows out of the theatre walls. The group works with its own creative team as well as community actors. Productions are site-specific, often feature promenade performances, such as *Pericles* and *The Winter's Tale* in Gdańsk and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, in Craiova, and are "designed and performed so that everyone in the audience can understand the action even if they have little or no experience of theatre and do not understand every word" (Cinpoeș *et al.*, 2019: 94). They are also multilingual, like *Dream* in Craiova. Every volunteer is given a part, which means that the script, even though it is prepared before the rehearsals begin, is constantly adapted so that everyone has a role, a name, and some lines. The decision to perform in English or the community's language is taken with the actors and depends on language skills, the feel of a sentence, a line in the original or in translation, and individual wishes.

The Winter's Tale, performed in three languages, explored the themes of the outsider and surveillance. Promenade performances invite a new awareness, or rediscovery under a new light, of familiar or not-so-familiar spaces: *Dream* in Craiova moved from the formal building of the university down a main street through a residential district, past a church where a wedding was taking place and then along a street lined with bridal shops.

The goal is also to involve audiences with little experience of theatregoing: indications of the "success" of a show include whether there are more spectators at the end of the show than at the beginning and, as Parr puts it, whether there is a dog, indicating that someone walking their dog decided to follow the show instead of returning home.[9]

Theatre for a New Audience, New York, United States[10]

The educational programme of Theatre for a New Audience, a non-profit theatre founded in 1979, is not, strictly speaking, participatory theatre, even though the agenda fits within the principles of participatory theatre since it works to overcome social, cultural and educational barriers. Among more than 60 productions in over 3 decades, 28 are of plays by Shakespeare.

More than 2000 students from public schools in New York City are involved each year, more than 126.000 since the programme began in 1984. It provides teachers with professional training, introduces artists in-residence to the class and brings students to matinee performances of the same award-winning productions seen by adult audiences. Students are thus involved both as performers and spectators. A Council of Scholars advises the Theatre on ways of expanding and strengthening the Humanities programmes for adults in keeping with its civic role and mission to create broad public access to the arts and bond the diverse New York community through the language, ideas and fruition of classical drama. While acquiring listening, speaking, reading, writing, and critical thinking skills, students understand the power of ideas and the benefits of engaging in language-rich activities.

Dash Arts, United Kingdom[11]

Dash Arts was created in 2005 by Josephine Burton and Tim Supple, who founded his own company, Supple Productions, in 2020. Bringing together

talents in theatre, dance, music and other forms of performance from around the world, Dash Arts does not engage in participatory theatre in the same way as Nós do Morro or Cardboard Citizens, nor did the company emerge in a context of political or social tension. Rather, it seeks to promote artistic collaboration across national, religious, linguistic, cultural, and social divides in a variety of ways, thereby addressing issues that are emerging from global, demographic challenges: tuning in to diversity in the United Kingdom, exploring contemporary Arabic identities with actors from the Middle East and North Africa, mastering theatre cultures from different regions of the world. Over the years, work has taken the company to Asia, the regions of the former Soviet Union, and Mexico.

As You Like It (2009), commissioned by Leicester's Curve Theatre, explored the contrasting facets of immigration, the harsh realities migrants are subjected to in an oppressive environment, and the dreams of hope they bring with them. It took "as its theme the Englishness of the play but, rather than hearkening back to the nation's rural past, used the text to draw attention to the cultural diversity of today's England" (Kirwan, 1999, 86). Eutopia explores what it feels to be a citizen of Europe today, how the UK got to leave Europe and what that entails in the future. Through these projects, Dash Arts seeks to understand how different traditions and cultures can work together and foster a sense of togetherness.

Supple's combined interests in Shakespeare, international cultural interaction and commitment to research came together in the *King Lear* World Theatre Workshops, a project he launched in 2015 with Queen Mary University of London Collaboration Fund, Warwick University and Warwick Arts Centre. Initially developed with Dash Arts, this peripatetic, transnational laboratory investigates Shakespeare's work from the perspective of different theatre traditions, contrasting practices, modes of expression and emotional responses.

Legacies

In *Don Quixote* Driver discovers the negative impact of his filmmaking experiment on the lives of several villagers and the community at large. Coming in with a project and then moving on can make people feel "orphaned". One of the young participants in the 2018 community production *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in Craiova wept at the end of the experience, expressing a sense of emptiness that fellow participants shared:

We are like a family (…) How's the family going to cope now the production has finished?

Today we are all looking a bit sad, it's because of that, it's really special to come in and be part of people's lives for a month, you see them every day for 12 hours, it's very intense and then it's over, it's easy to get crying about it because it's very personal.

Such reactions are a sobering reminder of the underlying risks. Hare recalls that Boal had raised "the question of the impact of the work on people's real lives" early on (Hare, 2010: 31). Florence March, a specialist of the Avignon Festival, pointed out to me that the Festival director, Py, his team and the staff of the prison are very much aware that the inmates may suffer from depression in the aftermath of the production. After rehearsing on a weekly basis for a year, a rhythm that intensifies as the performances draw near, after experiencing recognition, a sense of satisfaction with what they have achieved, they suddenly find themselves back in their cells, with no more theatre workshops for the rest of the summer – two very long, empty months to cope with. Specific support is provided by the prison staff, but quite often this is not enough.[12]

That is why practitioners like Parr take care to involve the members of the community at every stage of the project, and at every level, inviting them to work together on and off the stage, so as to foster collective and individual empowerment. Unlike charity fundraising events, for instance, community engagement is a two-way process and builds on community skills and experiences, working from a bottom-up perspective: rather than coming in as external experts with all the answers, one leads best by stepping back, so that the process of doing and learning can continue without the facilitators. One should think of oneself as a facilitator rather than an expert, as a catalyst encouraging people to do their own thing. The ability to withdraw begins almost at the very beginning and is a complex process since at the same time the facilitators are embedded in the community for the duration of the project. Hence a need for humility that entails respect and requires that control remains always within the community.

Stuart sees the role of practitioners as creating a "container", "a safe, engaging atmosphere where participants are encouraged to experiment with new behaviours, consider new possibilities or explore different ways of seeing things" (Stuart, 2012). For Luciana Bezerra, coordinator of Nós do Morro's Mostra, "O grupo Nós do Morro tem a missão de oferecer acesso à arte como

398

instrumento transformador do indivíduo, trabalhando a formação, produção e difusão artística" ("The mission of Nós do Morro is to offer access to art as a transformative tool for the individual, through training, production and artistic diffusion", Teixeira, 2015) and a window for the community to discover their work. This transformative potential, with outcomes such as a stronger sense of self-esteem and wellbeing, resembles perhaps Peter Brook's idea of what a fairy should look like, or be: "a human being who, by pure skill, demonstrates joyfully that he can transcend his natural constraints, become a reflection of pure energy" (Brook, 2017: 96). And perhaps that is what matters, especially in times of crises: everyone should be allowed to go on believing in fairies – for instance through participatory theatre and Shakespeare.

It is difficult to convince the stakeholders that fairies exist, when they ask project leaders to show tangible results or to measure the impact of these projects on the participants and their communities. Nós do Morro has been beneficial for actor Diogo Sales, who has acquired visibility by being cast in *Game of Thrones*. Legacies may rarely seem spectacular to a funding body, but they exist, as Parr explains:

> When we're talking in the UK, we're asked about legacy, what will the legacy be, they want that quantified in numbers, I refuse to do it. My return argument is that there inevitably will be one, which you can't prescribe in advance, you usually get it wrong. I give a few case studies as interesting legacy, not necessarily artistic or cultural, also around social change.

A professional photographer trained other people to take other photos, they published their own book of the making of, and their legacy was a photograph exhibition. The "Citz" from Cardboard Citizens have powerful life stories to share. Over the years the stories have formed a wide archive resonating with a sense of belonging and creativity:

> I'm looking to set up my own charity – a foundation for artists from non traditional backgrounds (…) Working with the company has given me a sense of purpose and direction, so I'm not just meandering through life leaving a vapour trail of social destruction behind me! (Simon)

Encountering the company really changed my life: I now have an actual way of expressing myself, and through this I feel like I can become anything. (Miguel)

There's something about being yourself, being creative, and communicating better, especially if you don't know the language. Mine has improved because of Shakespeare – it's all about Shakespeare baby! But don't worry, I've still got African accent. (Yolanda)[13]

Notes

1. All quotations are from Wells / Taylor, 2005.

2. The phrase "chronic crisis" is used in humanitarian contexts, to designate one of three situations: emergency, chronic crisis and early recovery, as in UNICEF and UNESCO documents. Reinhart Koselleck has defined three basic models of crisis, that may be identified individually and collectively, in a variety of combinations: permanent, or systemic crisis; iterative crisis, which can produce progress; and crisis as final decision or resolution. For a useful introduction to Koselleck see Bigliazzi, 2020: 1-21.

3. See Grupo de Teatro Nós do Morro, https://www.instagram.com/gruposnosdomorrooficial/?hl=en, https://www.facebook.com/grupo.nosdomorro/, accessed 8 April 2024.

4. See Carboard Citizens, https://www.cardboardcitizens.org.uk/, accessed 8 April 2024.

5. Thatcher's "right to buy" home ownership policy was revived by David Cameron during the 2015 election campaign: the topic of housing – and homelessness – inspired a Cardboard Citizens cycle of productions, *Home Truths: An Incomplete History of Housing Told in Nine Plays*, directed by Jackson (2017).

6. See Compagnie du Théâtre du Bout du Monde, https://www.theatreduboutdumonde.com/, accessed 8 April 2024.

7. See Compagnia Pippo del Buono, https://www.pippodelbono.it/biografia-pippo-delbono.html, accessed 8 April 2024.

8. See Parrabbola, http://www.parrabbola.co.uk/, accessed 8 April 2024.

9. This and all subsequent quotations by Philip Parr and members of the cast are from a recording of a Q&A session at the University of Craiova. I should like to thank Nicoleta Cinpoeş, Sorin Cazacu and the participants of the workshops organised during the International Shakespeare Festival of Craiova (23 April-6 May 2018).

10. See Theatre for a New Audience, http://www.tfana.org, accessed 8 April 2024.

11. See Dash Arts, http://www.dasharts.org.uk, accessed 8 April 2024.

12. I wish to thank Florence March for providing this insight and inviting me to include it.

13. See Carboard Citizens, https://cardboardcitizens.org.uk/who-we-are/our-stories/, accessed 8 April 2024.

Works cited

Barnes, Stella (2009), "Drawing a line: a discussion of ethics in participatory arts", in Stella Barnes (ed.), *Participatory Arts With Young Refugees: Six Essays collected and published by Oval House Theatre*, London, Arts in Education, Oval House Theatre, pp. 34-40.

Bassett, Kate (2003), "*Pericles*: The Warehouse, London; *Party Time/ One For The Road*: BAC, London; *High Society*: Open Air Theatre, London", *Independent*, 3 August, https://www.independent. co.uk/arts-entertainment/theatre-dance/reviews/pericles-the-warehouse-londonparty-time-one-for-the-road-bac-londonhigh-society-open-air-theatre-london-8817586.html, accessed 8 April 2024.

Suigo, Elodie (2018), "Richard Berry: 'Je fais une différence entre la sincérité et la vérité'", *France Info*, 16 August, accessed 8 April 2024.

Bigliazzi, Silvia (ed.) (2020), *Shakespeare and Crisis: One Hundred Years of Italian Narratives*, Amsterdam, John Benjamins.

Boal, Augusto (1975), *Teatro do oprimido e outras poéticas políticas*, Civilização brasileira, Rio de Janeiro [1974].

— (1979), *Theatre of the Oppressed*, London, Pluto Press.

— (2005), *Games for Actors and Non-Actors*, trans. Adrian Jackson, Second edition, London, Routledge [1992].

Bradley, Katherine / Peter Kirwan (2007), "Review of *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, directed by Guti Fraga for Nós do Morro and Deborah Shaw for Gallery 37, The Courtyard Theatre, 27 August 2006", *Cahiers Élisabéthains*, vol. 71, nr 1-sup., pp. 7-11.

Brook, Peter (2017), *The Shifting Point: Forty Years of Theatrical Exploration*, *1946-87*, London, Bloomsbury.

Cardboard Citizens 25 Years (2016?), Introduction by Adrian Jackson, London, Cardboard Citizens.

Keidan, Lois (2008), "The ethics of socially engaged art", *The Guardian*, 8 May, https://www. theguardian.com/stage/theatreblog/2008/may/08/theethicsofsociallyengaged, accessed 8 April 2024.

Coutinho, Marina Henriques / Marica Pompeo Nogueira (2013), "The use of dialogical approaches for community theatre by the group Nós do Morro, in the Vidigal favela of Rio de Janeiro", trans. David Herman, in Tim Prentki and Sheila Preston (ed.), *The Applied Theatre Reader*, London, Routledge, pp. 171-177.

Hare, Elizabeth (2010), "Appendix 1. Ethics of Participatory Theatre: A Literature Review", in Frances Rifkin, *The Ethics of Participatory Theatre in Higher Education: A Framework for Learning and Teaching*, London, The Higher Education Academy, pp. 29-36.

Hayhow, Christina / May Maani / Naqibullah Salarzai / Leslye Womack (2016), "Participatory arts with young refugees", uploaded to *Participedia*, 11 May, https://participedia.net/case/4375, accessed 8 April 2024.

Kirwan, Peter (2009), "Review of *As You Like It*, directed by Tim Supple, for Dash Arts and Leicester Theatre Trust, Curve, Leicester, 3 March 2009", *Cahiers* Élisabéthains, vol. 75, nr. 1, pp. 86-87.

Lyubansky, Mikhail (2017), "Peace Profile: Dominic Barter", *Peace Review*, vol. 29, nr. 4, 2017, pp. 513-520.

Martin, Andy (2017), "Shakespeare told us about the plight of refugees 400 years ago – it's time to revisit his works", *Independent*, 21 October, https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/ shakespeare-refugees-play-whither-would-you-go-harold-pinter-theatre-martin-freeman-olivia-williams-a8012821.html, accessed 8 April 2024.

Monteiro, Rodrigo (2016), "*Domando a Megera*", *Critica Teatral*, 2 June, http://teatrorj.blogspot.com/2016/06/domando-megera-rj.html, accessed 8 April 2024.

Parsons, Elinor (2007), "Review of *Henry V*, adapted and directed by Pippo Delbono for the Compagnia Pippo Delbono, The Swan Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, 2 February 2007, side stalls", *Cahiers Élisabéthains*, vol. 71, nr. 1-sup., p. 7-11, p. 8.

Rifkin, Frances (2010), *The Ethics of Participatory Theatre in Higher Education: A Framework for Learning and Teaching*, London, The Higher Education Academy.

Schwartz-Gastine, Isabelle (2013), "Performing *A Midsummer Night's Dream* with the Homeless (and Others) in Paris", *Borrowers and Lenders. The Journal of Shakespeare and Appropriation*, vol. 8, nr. 2 (Fall/Winter), https://borrowers-ojs-azsu.tdl.org/borrowers/article/view/134, accessed 8 April 2024.

Schoumaker, Tristan (2010), "*Le Songe d'une nuit de mai*. Création 2010", https://www.theatreduboutdumonde.com/paroles-de-citoyens, accessed 8 April 2024.

Stuart, Graeme (2012), "Facilitating workshops – creating a container", *Sustaining Community: Families, Community, the Environment*, 13 January, https://sustainingcommunity.wordpress.com/2012/01/13/facilitating-workshops-creating-a-container/, accessed 1 November 2024.

— (2014), "Bottom-up community development", *Sustaining Community: Families, Community, the Environment*, 27 August, https://sustainingcommunity.wordpress.com/2014/08/27/bottom-up/, accessed 8 April 2024.

Teixeira, Rafael (2015), "Uma conversa con Luciana Bezerra, coordenadora da Mostra Nos do Morro, que nest ano enfoca Shakespeare", *Veja Rio*, 24 July, https://vejario.abril.com.br/coluna/teatro-de-revista/uma-conversa-com-luciana-bezerra-coordenadora-da-mostra-nos-do-morro-que-neste-ano-enfoca-shakespeare, accessed 1 November 2024.

Walton, Nick (2007), "Review of *Timon of Athens*, directed by Adrian Jackson for Cardboard Citizens, 27 October 2006, Shakespeare Centre, Stratford-upon-Avon", *Cahiers Élisabéthains*, vol. 71, nr. 1-sup., pp. 59-61.

Wells, Stanley / Gary Taylor (ed.) (2005), *The Oxford Shakespeare: The Complete Works*, Second Edition, Oxford, Oxford UP [1986].

4.5. Crises of Our Time in Song of the Goat Theatre's *Island*

Agnieszka Romanowska

Uniwersytet Jagielloński in Kraków

ABSTRACT

Song of the Goat Theatre's "Island", inspired by Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, is not an adaptation of the play, but an independent theatrical project whose links with the Shakespearean romance are, at the same time, easily traceable and deliberately loose. Grzegorz Bral's ensemble uses references to *The Tempest* to establish a mental and emotional frame for a highly idiosyncratic contemplation on the human condition in today's world. The audience is submerged in a syncretic and synesthetic theatrical event which activates several channels of perception and enables a diagnosis and interpretation of contemporary crises.

The purpose of this chapter is to analyse the libretto in order to inspect the nature and function of the Shakespearean inspirations integrated in the performance. The strength of Bral's "Island" derives from the fact that, although it is inspired by the migration crisis – one of the acutest political and social problems of our world – its appeal is universal. Alicja Bral's songs depict a drama of a person trapped in chaos, violence and loss of identity which cause loneliness in the world of wars, migration, and consumerism, but the key feature of her libretto is flexibility and openness to a variety of readings. The Brals see their Prospero as an Everyman, while at the same time each of the characters is a Prospero – a refugee on an island of loneliness.

Introduction

In the programme of Song of the Goat Theatre's *Island* we read that the performance has been inspired by Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. Indeed, *Island*

is not an adaptation of the play, but an independent theatrical project whose links with the Shakespearean romance are, at the same time, easily traceable and deliberately loose. Instead of offering a modern interpretation of the early modern play, Grzegorz Bral's ensemble uses references to *The Tempest* to establish a mental and emotional frame for their highly idiosyncratic contemplation on the condition of man in today's world. Their method is, aptly, similar to the trial Prospero devises for his wrongdoers – the tempest as a total experience. It consists in submerging the audience in a syncretic and synesthetic theatrical event which activates several channels of perception and enables a diagnosis and interpretation of our time's crises on many different levels. This immersive quality has been noticed by many reviewers, one of them suggestively describing the production as a "sculpture of vibrating air", and a "tempest of breaths and gestures" which sets the whole theatrical space in motion:

> Everything around the Island is swaying. We are observing inflows and outflows – after the introduction the dominating energy is that of the polyphonic singing, then our bodies are hit by the wave of the air moved by the dance. Again. And again. (Pułka, 2016)

The visual and musical layer of the performance is irresistible, even hypnotic. What stays in the viewer's memory is the powerful music of the songs and the overwhelmingly impressive movements of the dancers – the once dynamic, once frozen images their bodies form with unbelievable acrobatic skilfulness. The verbal layer, on the other hand, does not get through easily in such density of non-verbal elements. This is mostly due to Bral's overall approach "characterised by a refusal to compromise with the idea that the text, or the story, is the most important element of performance" (Sakowska, 2014: 48). As a typical representative of what has been described as postdramatic theatre (Lehmann, 2006), he is not interested in developing characters or telling plots, but rather in creating for the viewers a sensory experience. Having this in mind, my purpose in this article is, nevertheless, to analyse the production's libretto in order to inspect the nature and function of the Shakespearean inspirations integrated in the performance. The nature of this integration is perhaps best illustrated with reference to Lehmann's definition of the performance text:

> The linguistic material and the texture of the staging interact with the theatrical situation, understood comprehensively by the concept 'performance text'. (…)

Consequently, the significance of all individual elements ultimately depends on the way the whole is viewed, rather than constituting this overall effect as a sum of the individual parts. Hence, for postdramatic theatre it holds true that the written and/or verbal text transferred onto theatre, as well as the 'text' of the staging understood in the widest sense (including the performers, their 'paralinguistic' additions, reductions or deformations of the linguistic material; costumes, lighting, space, peculiar temporality, etc.) are all cast into a new light through a changed conception of the performance text. (…) it becomes more presence than representation, more shared than communicated experience, more process than product, more manifestation than signification, more energetic impulse than information. (Lehmann, 2006: 85)

Before "the linguistic material" of Bral's *Island* is presented, it is necessary to provide some insight into Song of the Goat Theatre's specificity.

Song of the Goat Theatre and their Method

Established in 1996 by Grzegorz Bral and Anna Zubrzycka, Teatr Pieśń Kozła [Song of the Goat Theatre] is nowadays recognized as one of Europe's most significant training-based theatre ensembles. Its name – alluding to the etymology of the Greek *tragōidia*, and commemorating the group's first production based on Euripides' *The Bacchantes – Pieśń Kozła. Dytyramb* of 1997 – indicates their fascination with ancient theatre. A distinctive feature of their practice and training is the integration of movement, voice, song, live music and text, which results in performances based on rhythmicality and musicality. Bral's artistic manifesto flows from his conviction that tragedy has its roots in the spirit of music. It is also in line with the postdramatic concept of the auditory semiotics, i.e. the view that "the intrinsic musicality of the text is as important as its dramatic content, and in many cases even more important" (Bouko, 2009: 28). Bral's theatre aims at affecting the viewers' senses holistically which is fostered by the performances' multi-mediality, in *Island* exemplified by exploration of various forms of stage expression, including dance, opera, pantomime, ethno-performance and elements of shadow theatre (Kowalski, 2017). While Bral repeatedly underlines

his striving for connection and openness as the root of authentic theatrical experience, the effect of the synesthetic appeal is well illustrated by the following response to the group's 2012 *Songs of Lear*:

> This is essence of *Lear*, desiccated and condensed; sensed rather than watched and absorbed until it hasn't just got under your skin, but right into your bone marrow. For the half hour that followed, I was static electricity, too knock-kneed to stand. It is a full-body detox; catharsis pure and simple and transcendent. (Trueman, 2012)

Song of the Goat Theatre's daily training goes beyond traditional acting techniques to include physical and musical exercises. They function as a laboratory theatre in the tradition of Grotowski, in which the training and the performances are treated integrally as an ongoing creative process, open to discoveries and ready to employ new techniques and means of stage expression. An important part of the actors' work includes anthropological and ethnomusicological research conducted through various multicultural projects, which include travelling and seeking contact with local practitioners and preservers of ancient indigenous traditions, as was the case with the hugely successful Scottish project "Return to the Voice" of 2014. Bral explains that his techniques are rooted in an understanding that true acting is born from a particular way of being, with every culture having its own way of performing. His Theatre does not limit itself to including traditional Georgian, Albanian, Russian and Greek texts and tunes. The cultural openness is also visible in its cast, half of which consists of actors from various places of the world, as well as in its cooperation with international, often multicultural, groups and ensembles. In *Island* the director enriched his stage movement method by including the modern dance ensemble led by Ivan Perez, a Spanish choreographer working in the Netherlands.

Linked to the Theatre's methods and interests is their role, since 2005, as organisers of the Brave Festival, an international event which offers an overview of cultures, traditions and rites which are on the verge of extinction. Recognised by its meaningful subtitle, "Against Cultural Exile", this festival brings together people from all over the world who, through their art, try to save forgotten, abandoned or otherwise neglected cultures. Bral's idea, as initiator and artistic director, was to create a space to show authentic art, cultivated and maintained by participants of communities living in unfavourable social, religious and political conditions, or which are endangered with a loss of their own culture for the benefit

of civilizational assimilation. By 2010, the festival developed a branch which focuses on children, Brave Kids, the special mission of which is to teach children respect for other cultures and inspire them by means of artistic experiences to strive for a better future for themselves and the communities they represent. The festival's most recent extension is Brave Together, an undertaking which fosters integration of people with and without disabilities, using different artistic tools to help the participants find a common language. The Brave Festival supports underprivileged children and orphans from the poorest regions of the worlds donating the proceeds from tickets to the ROKPA charity organization.

Yet another integral part of Song of the Goat Theatre is the pedagogical work, in which they propagate their technique called Acting Coordination Method. In the years 2004-2012 they created, together with Manchester Metropolitan University, an MA acting programme, which from 2013 has been offered in cooperation with Bral School of Acting in London. Acting Coordination Method is an original practice based on the integration of all the acting tools, including text, voice, energy, movement into one common and organic unity, which enables the actors to explore the flow between song and word, rhythm and gesture, sound and character.[1]

For almost a decade now the group's repertoire has included productions in various ways related to Shakespeare's plays. These performances belong to some of their most successful projects, acclaimed and rewarded worldwide. The first was *Macbeth*, featuring a multinational cast and prepared in cooperation with the Royal Shakespeare Company in 2010. Two years later *Songs of Lear* followed, which was awarded the Scotsman Fringe First, the Herald Archangel, as well as the Musical Theatre Matters Award during the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in 2012. *Crazy God* inspired by *Hamlet* was first performed in July 2016, followed by *Hamlet. A Commentary*, which premiered in July 2017. In the meantime, *Island* was first performed in December 2016. In all these productions the Theatre typically interweaves text with choral singing, meticulously choreographed movement and live music. The effect is stunning and appreciated by audiences and reviewers alike.

Everyone is an Island: Analysis of the Libretto

Island offers a multi-layered theatrical meditation on the human condition created from songs, music, and tightly orchestrated stage movement. The whole performance consists of fifteen pieces, both with and without lyrics. Most of the

texts were written by Alicja Bral, while four texts quote lines from Sophocles' *Antigone* and Aristophanes' *Birds*. Such "palimpsestuous intertextuality", frequent in postdramatic theatre (Jürs-Munby, 2006: 8), is a characteristic feature of Bral's other projects as well, but *The Tempest* – with its fragmentariness and sketchiness[2] – lends itself to such a treatment perhaps more readily than other plays by Shakespeare. The other feature of the play which may have inspired the creators of *Island* to rewrite it into a series of songs is the importance of music and, more generally, sound. This aspect is highlighted in the music of Ariel's songs – the "sweet air" (1.2.396),[3] the "ditty" that Ferdinand rightly assumes must be "no mortal business, nor no sound / That the earth owes" (1.2.408-410) – and the "heavenly music" (5.1.52) of Prospero's magic. As Prospero's "isle is full of noises, / Sounds and sweet airs, that give delight (3.2.133-4), so is Bral's *Island*. The performance's music, mostly written by Jean-Claude Acquaviva and Maciej Rychły, contains inspirations from traditional Georgian and Greek tunes. As for the language of the songs, *Island* has been performed in English, with the opening poem, recited as the prologue, in some performances spoken in Polish. The printed version of the libretto, from which I am quoting, is bi-lingual.

The songs' titles mention several characters from *The Tempest*: Prospero, Ariel, Miranda, the Monster. In the "Introduction" printed in the programme the titular Island is described as the mind of Prospero, a lonely aging man, imprisoned by his own unfulfilled desires, obsessions and longings. He creates all the characters that surround him, and he is all of them at the same time. While the tempest exists only in Prospero's head, his imagination is poetic and magnetic, his narrative illogical, yet suggestive, and his story not easy to follow and describe ("Island…", 10).[4] The "Introduction" suggests that the production focuses on Prospero, but an analysis of the songs reveals that Prospero is not the only, not even the main, persona in the libretto. In the prologue "the identity of the speaking voice is never revealed, so we ponder whether it can be that of Caliban (…), or of Ferdinand (…) or of any one of us, human wrecks who need an encounter with life-preserving magic" (Bottez, 2017).

In most of the other texts the speakers are of equally blurred identity. The speaker of the prologue poem, entitled *Prospero*, seems to be outside the island-prison. I read it as Miranda's relation of her, apparently coincidental, meeting with the magician: "I met him in late autumn" (16). Formally, the text alternates between Miranda's report and Prospero's words as she remembers them, printed in bold type. Neither Prospero nor Miranda are identified until line thirteen, where Prospero introduces himself in direct speech: "I am Prospero, the King. I have Ariel and Caliban at my service. / I know man with his madness and love. Everything is in

the Books /and it serves me, Miranda" (16). The opening lines highlight Miranda's wretched state at the moment of the meeting: "I was despaired. / Pain would stick to my soul, like leaves to the wet ground. / I had no idea who I'd become. The world had no reason" (16). While we have much access to Miranda's inner suffering, Prospero presented to us, as she sees him, is an old body without the spirit: "his soul was absent. / An aged man with a body like a cracked pine. / Only eyes – an island amid deep loneliness. / His heart pulsated. / He survived. (...) He would put a magic coat on and sob" (16). The focus is on the physical: the body, the intense look of the eyes, his pulsating heart, the sobbing. Prospero, an old survivor, meets Miranda, a person of yet unshaped, or lost, identity, a shipwreck from her own life, who initially does not see any hope for survival.

Yet the second part of the song brings a change in Miranda's perception of Prospero. She remembers his tantalising eyes gazing at her as he was providing his explanation, "Nothing bad happened. Nothing bad. I did it for you, for you. / You don't know who you are yet", uttering his promise, "You shall not die", and formulating his powerful command: "Go beyond. Go to the other side of things, Miranda. (...) You will wake up there" (17). Once Prospero has revealed his identity and his plan towards Miranda, she describes him as a guardian of hope, "an old druid. /Wizard of the wind tied to his cell" (17), the one who has shown her how to endure. His words sound like a mission when he is commanding her to tear the pine and free Ariel as "[e]veryone must survive" (17). This part of the poem, as I see it, is the core of the prologue because it poses the production's most important question – Is there a hope for survival in the world of global violence and wars? It also explains the islands in *Island*. "Each time he met me he revealed a piece of this reality", relates Miranda, "He called them islands" (17). Each of us may be a lonely island on the sea of desperation, but the main instinct is to survive, and the survival may only be spiritual, effectuated by tearing apart the "cracked pine" of the body and letting out Ariel. Such hopeful interpretation of the exposition seems to be strengthened by the ending of the prologue. We learn that Miranda's retrospective report is delivered after Prospero's "good death", that he "died in his cell – happy" (17). Is this to be taken as a foreshadowing of a happy, or at least cathartic, ending of *Island*?

In the songs that follow we get some insight into the reasons for, and nature of, Miranda's initial unhappiness and desperation, although in them Miranda is not the speaker anymore. The songs entitled "Last Breath", "My hands", "Night" and "Silence" differ from the opening poem in their much looser connections with *The Tempest*. In the prologue the links are explicit: names of the characters, references to the play's plot and to several famous lines. Alicja Bral clearly

alludes in it to Shakespeare's text, but never uses it *verbatim*. Her method is to paraphrase, but echoes of phrases like "There's no harm done" (1.2.15), "a cloven pine" (1.2.277) or "master of a full poor cell" (1.2.20) are easily recognisable. Thanks to the dialogic form of the first poem and its narrative character we are transported to a quasi-fantastical world governed by the magician-ruler: the "old druid", the "wizard". The other songs' common denominator is that they all bring us back to a reality easily identifiable as today's world and that their speakers seem to be modern alter egos of Prospero, Miranda, Ariel, and Caliban.

In the "Last Breath" there is a first-person description of a body infected with violence and killing that are brought daily by the news: "The shell of my heart crushed / By the breaking news / drowned in the aggression / Which I drink every morning" (21). The "venom of unclear games" poisons the speaker's heart, while he breathes "the air polluted by cruelty" and chokes with the images brought by the media. Such permanent contact with atrocities, from which there is no escape, erases compassion, "My hands don't shake / When I watch killing" (21), and has a degrading effect on the senses: "I see nothing / Deaf is my ear" (21). The song closes with an image of the persona standing numb under the sky covered with clouds of the victims' dried eyes, while his last thought is a fearful question about the circumstances of his own death. The horrors of the surrounding reality contaminate life, cause emotional emptiness and make death the more frightening. In "My hands" the diagnosis of the bleak situation is completed by further elements. The speaker finds himself in a vicious circle of commercialised existence, in which the main force is the demand to live faster and faster in pursuit of prosperity. As conscience is constantly "invigilated by commercials", greed is "the most cruel prison / In which the prisoner and the guard are one" (26). In a world thus controlled by the rules of market, in which one is ready to sell "body, speech and heart", the speaker realises that his hands are, paradoxically, empty. This part of the song concludes with the speaker's bitter observation that estimating the price of his life is "the very essence of this blind solitude" (26). Yet the rest of the song brings an unexpectedly hopeful turn. As the miserable state of "humanity deprived of tenderness" (26) resembles a bad dream, there is a chance of waking up and opening oneself to a change. The last two stanzas suggest that a way out of the hopeless emptiness might be possible through noticing the other: "I see you there", "We are the same /We breathe together (…) with the same love" (26). So perhaps compassion and tenderness can be recovered and the slavery of the profit-pursuing life can be contested?

This feeble hope is crushed in the song entitled "Silence", which continues the plural form introduced by the final lines of "My hands". The progression from

the single persona of "Last Breath" and "My hands" to the collective speaker in "Silence" reflects the fact that the process of degradation and dehumanisation is not limited to individuals, but corrodes whole societies. Of all the songs commented on so far, "Silence" reveals the most frustrated and desperate speaker, while the text contains some of the most graphic images. This is well illustrated by the opening lines, "Gagged with collective madness / False needs / We vomit with anger /And we eat it again" (36), and in the closing sections of the song: "Covered in furs of annihilation / We stuff our empty stomachs with slaughter (…) We are drowning in the swamp of artificial needs" (37). Some of the themes mentioned in the previous texts, like the pursuit of materialistic needs, dependence on advertisement, or readiness to destroy others for the sake of profit, return with a double force. The main social concern, the most disconcerting result of the "collective madness" introduced here, is the corruption of law reflected in the image of criminals "changing paragraphs in order to hide their hands", so that "in the light of the well- constructed law / Profits [could be] weighted with the life of the victims" (36). The final, most damaging, result is spiritual. The song finishes with a grim conclusion: "Our hearts embedded with pride / Crushed the Spirit into silence" (37).

Apart from the opening poem, there are two more texts whose titles allude directly to *The Tempest*. "Monster" and "Ariel's Song" can be interpreted in the immediate context of the songs analysed above, as they extend and complement the themes of imprisonment, dependence, rejection, loneliness, longing and hopelessness which result from violence and/or spiritual estrangement. "They called me a monster / And my heart went silent (…) My rage is turned to whisper / My hopes are ruined" (50), complains the speaker. The addressee of the song "Monster" is a beloved from whom the speaker has been separated, or whom the speaker has lost, and longing for whom worsens the suffering caused by his captivity: "Your absence / Envelops me with the shadow of this prison" (51). The link between the branding inflicted on him by the unidentified enemies, "I can't bear this change they made" (50), and the state of imprisonment is not clear, but the song can be described as a pleading for reunification (with its repetitive requests and imperatives "Would you come back?", "Please take me there", "Hear me love"), which seems to be conditioned on the addressee seeing beyond the speaker's alleged monstrous identity, forced on him and, thus, false. The conflict suggested in this song has as its roots prejudice and/or hatred and as its effect – rejection, separation and loss of freedom. There are certain key words in the libretto that recur in the songs: ruins, corroded reality,

411

solitude, prison, Monster. This song presents a figure of someone silenced by humiliation and suffering, whose "rage is turned to whisper" (50).

"Ariel's song" is a complaint which begins with the song's refrain – "I cannot choose to die. / I was given birth and I remain" (41). Ariel seems to be suffering from a different kind of imprisonment, one that consists in being suspended between life and death, perhaps forever. The endlessness of this state is highlighted with the repetition of the opening phrase in the closing line, as well as once in the middle of the text. Ariel's attitude to his/her creator is ambiguous, as is his/her condition of a creature unfinished, and therefore utterly dependent, with an unripe identity, unable to decide about its fate: "I have not had enough time to create myself outside your / body — I tremble with bliss and fear", "I am a hostage of my unfulfilled dreams of grandeur", "I am falling", "I will not fall" (41). The creature is at the same time frightened, awe-stricken and grateful, while the full dependence on the creator seems to be the only imaginable way to go on living: "There is so much light within you— / It flows from your skin. / I want to cling to it and survive" (41). There is no way out of the state of being alive: "I remain / To live and breathe, to smell and remember" (41). This Ariel is not longing to hear the releasing command "to the elements / Be free (5.1.317-318) because it would mean annihilation.

The song "Night" stands out as perhaps the most topical and, at the same time, the most explicit, of all the texts written by Alicja Bral. It is also, in many ways, the most central to the director's idea of speaking about the problems of today's world with references to *The Tempest*. The opening stanza brings an image of a war survivor who has been deprived of everything he cherished and is left clenching a bullet in his fist. War has "shattered all [his] life's bonds" and "chained [his] will to revenge" as he "lost love in a sudden gust of hate" (31). He sees himself as a figure "collapsed into ashes, unable to rise" (31), left with nothing, but the readiness to kill and/or die. The second stanza extends this catalogue of the war's grim consequences to include exile, loneliness and loss of memory: "The winds of exile scatter my beliefs around this / cage of loneliness. / I try to reach memory, which is dispersed in tears" (31). As a result of the forced displacement, the speaker's integrity has been shattered, with the values and rules that governed his life before having lost their meaning and significance. Being separated from the formative core of his previous existence, i.e. from his past, has a destructive impact. In the subsequent stanza the negative effects of this violent separation and forceful transfer to a place which is a "cage of loneliness" manifest themselves in the speaker's impaired physicality: his heart, "raped, beats without rhythm", and his eyes cannot see as he is crawling

"blindly, in search for light" (31). But, most importantly, the disintegrating effect of war and exile is visible in the speaker's mind and psyche. He is disoriented, perceives the surrounding reality as chaotic and irrational, and feels deceived and abandoned by whatever guarding powers he used to believe in: "I beg for logic in this chaos. / You have deceived me, exiled god. / We have drowned on the way to the promised land – / My island does not exist" (31). Thus the song "Night" presents the darkest existential night of a person uprooted and displaced as a result of a military conflict, left at a loss and helpless, desperate and revengeful. The topicality of this song is highlighted in the penultimate line with the shift from the first person singular to the plural form "we", which changes the speaker into a representative of a group that has not been lucky enough to reach the refuge land. This is a Prospero without his island.

Theatre of the Capacious Metaphor

Apart from Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, Grzegorz Bral mentions another important source that had an inspiring influence on his *Island*. It is the drama of the shipwrecks presented on Theodore Gericault's 1819 *The Raft of the Medusa*, the gruesome story of the worst imaginable human behaviour in the situation of desperate fight for survival. The extreme emotions of the survivors maddened by mortal fear and the dead bodies scattered around the raft as depicted by the painter are easily associated both with the uproar on the board of Alonso's sinking vessel and with the desperate situation of today's refugees transported in overloaded boats and dying in coastal waters of the unwelcoming "promised lands". Bral wants his Prospero to be one of such survivors.

And yet the strength of his performance lies in the fact that it is much more than a comment on topical events. This can be related to *The Tempest*'s own capacity for the universal. As Kermode argues, "there is nothing in *The Tempest* fundamental to its structure of ideas which could not have existed had America remained undiscovered, and the Bermuda voyage never taken place. The New World stimulated interest in the great and perennial problem of the nature of Nature; but the fact that Shakespeare is at pains to establish his island in the Old World may be taken to indicate his rejection of the merely topical" (Shakespeare, 1992: xxvi). Although it is inspired by the migration crisis – the acutest political and social problem of the modern world – the appeal of *Island* is more universal. This is achieved in two ways. One is that Bral's reading of

The Tempest is existential rather than political. *Island* is not about the desire for power and about revenge, but about loneliness and death and, as such, it has been viewed by reviewers as "a contemporary treatise on man" (Szatkowska, 2017). As it "entangles the viewers in a dream about loneliness so desperate that no cleansing storm can be of any help" (Matuszewska, 2016), its message is rather grim: "as humanity we are still alive, breathing, and until it is so, there is some hope for the world plunged into loneliness, violence, maddening race and consumerism (…) but *Island* is, more than anything else, a lament" (Chojnowski, 2016). Maciej Rychły, the co-author of the music, commenting on the use of the old Greek and Georgian tunes, emphasizes the communal aspect of traditional music, its ability to interconnect people in mourning and loss, which is especially valuable in today's culture, when there is a tendency to eliminate sadness and lament from the public space (Szatkowska, 2017).

The other aspect that enhances the production's universality is Bral's method to reach the spectators' emotional sphere directly through metaphor. *Island* is contemporary in the very literal sense of the world, "not because of modern setting or costumes, but thanks to the directness of theatrical experience" (Pułka, 2016), the viewers being physically drawn into the swirl of movement and sound. One of the characteristic features of Bral's aesthetically refined theatre is simplicity of the means of expression. The actors, who wear "unflattering black jeans and turtlenecks, as if in a world of despair no body can be beautiful" (Bottez, 2017), are located in an empty space. Aurally, all is created by their voices. Visually, there are the actors' bodies on the dark floor, their shadows against the white walls, actors animating chairs and mirrors[5] which, activated with the use of lights, create overwhelmingly suggestive images – all of this is based on sparsity of tools. This minimalistic approach is also visible in Bral's libretto, "being not a foundation, but rather a distant background for the dozen or so loosely linked music-kinaesthetic impressions" (Karow, 2017), in which the characters are but sketched and their situations hardly signalled by a few phrases. The characters are not engaged in a linear plotline but become frozen in a series of metaphors. "'Island' operates on the abstract plane and impacts directly on the emotional sphere. It is a total experience" (Werpachowska, 2017).

Conclusions

"I see Shakespeare as creator of the basic European myths. We have nothing stronger than this, his plays are the foundation of the most important European universals", says Grzegorz Bral (Olasz, 2016). Asked whether he wants his theatre to comment on current events, Bral observes that this happens automatically because each theatre operates within a specific context which generates references and associations. But he never forgets that the specific power of theatrical comment is metaphor. Alicja Bral's songs depict a drama of a person trapped in chaos, violence and loss of identity which cause loneliness in the world of wars, migration and consumerism, but the key feature of her libretto is flexibility and openness to a variety of readings. Inspiration is a broad notion, but I consider the vagueness in the title "inspired by *The Tempest*" to be a very conscious decision that signals the production's decidedly inclusive character. Bral sees his Prospero as an Everyman, while at the same time each of the characters is a Prospero – a refugee on an island of loneliness.

Notes

1. See Song of the Goat Theatre, http://piesnkozla.pl/en; www.octopustheatricals.com/songofthegoat; Davari (2014); the documentary film *Return to the Voice*, https://vimeo.com/102506709 (accessed 9 April 2024).

2. W. H. Auden's lecture on *The Tempest*, focusing on Shakespeare's successful mythopoetic writing, highlights the relative frugality of poetic passages. Were it not for Prospero's monologues, the wedding mask, and Ariel's songs, he argues, "you could put *The Tempest* in a comic strip". He also observes that, similarly to "other mythopoeic works, *The Tempest* inspired people to go on for themselves" and gives examples of Browning's "Caliban upon Setebos", Renan's *Caliban*, and his own "The Sea and the Mirror" (Auden, 2002: 297). Bral's *Island* is another instance of such going on for ourselves, albeit on a different scale and in a different mode.

3. Quotations are from Shakespeare, 1992.

4. The numbers in brackets refer to the pages of the *Island* theatre programme, http://piesnkozla.pl/en/spektakle#178-island, accessed 9 April 2024.

5. Nothing in Bral's performance seems to suggest any link to Auden's "The Sea and the Mirror". The poem is not mentioned by the creators of *Island* as a source of inspiration or plane of reference. Although the mirrors are central to the stage design, they are never mentioned in the libretto. In thematic terms, both works respond in a certain extent to contemporary crises, that of the 1940s and the 2010s, respectively. In Auden, Prospero admitting his responsibility for Antonio's treason might be seen as "a suggestion of the failure of liberal humanism to avert Hitler" (Fuller, 1970: 159). There is also a formal similarity between Alicja Bral's series of songs and Auden's poem which is divided into "voices" of particular characters.

Works cited

Auden, W. H. (1946), *The Tempest*, in Arthur Kirsch (ed.) (2002), *Lectures on Shakespeare*, Princeton and Oxford, Princeton UP, pp. 296-307.

Bouko, Catherine (2009), "The musicality of postdramatic theatre: Hans-Thies Lehmann's theory of independent auditory semiotics", *Gramma* 17, pp. 25-35.

Bottez, Alina (2017), "Island (Wyspa)", https://playstosee.com/island-wyspa/, accessed 9 April 2024.

Chojnowski, Grzegorz (2016), "Wyspa", http://chojnowski.blogspot.com/2016/12/wyspa-teatr-piesn-koza.html, accessed 9 April 2024.

Davari, Maryam (ed.) (2014), "BBC Interview with Grzegorz Bral director of Song of the Goat Theatre and London School of Performing Arts Practices – Full version", 11 August, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=25O7ZAgUrq4, accessed 9 April 2024.

Fuller, John (1970), *A Reader's Guide to W. H. Auden*, London, Thames and Hudson.

Island. Inspired by The Tempest by W. Shakespeare (2016), http://piesnkozla.pl/en/spektakle#178-island, accessed 9 April 2024.

Jürs-Munby, Karen (2006), *Introduction*, in H.-T. Lehmann, *Postmodern Theatre*, London and New York, Routledge, pp. 1-15.

Karow, Jan (2017), "Pod kreską 1", http://www.e-teatr.pl/pl/artykuly/246334.html, accessed 9 April 2024.

Kowalski, Wiesław (2017), "*Wyspa* w Gdańskim Teatrze Szekspirowskim", http://www.e-teatr.pl/pl/artykuly/245836.html, accessed 9 April 2024.

Lehmann, Hans-Thies (2006), *Postdramatic Theatre*, trans. Karen Jürs-Munby, London and New York, Routledge.

Matuszewska, Małgorzata (2016), "Teatr Pieśń Kozła: piękna 'Wyspa'", https://wroclaw.naszemiasto.pl/teatr-piesn-kozla-piekna-wyspa-recenzja/ar/c13-3941227, accessed 9 April 2024.

Olasz, Martyna (2016), "Grzegorz Bral: Istotą teatru jest prosty zachwyt dziecka w widzu", interview, https://kultura.gazetaprawna.pl/artykuly/997043,grzegorz-bral-teatr-wywiad.html, accessed 9 April 2024.

Pułka, Leszek (2016), "Wyspa skarbów", http://teatralny.pl/recenzje/wyspa-skarbow,1804.html, accessed 9 April 2024.

Sakowska, Aleksandra (2014), "The Many Languages of the Avant-Garde: In conversation with Grzegorz Bral of Teatr Pieśń Kozła (Song of the Goat Theatre)", *Multicultural Shakespeare: Translation, Appropriation and Performance*, vol. 11, nr. 26, pp. 45-63.

Shakespeare, William (1992), *The Tempest*, ed. Frank Kermode, London and New York, Routledge.

Szatkowska, Lena (2017), "Kto zabił Hamleta?", *Tygodnik Płocki* No. 34, 22-08-2017, http://www.e-teatr.pl/pl/artykuly/246509.html, accessed 9 April 2024.

Trueman, Matt (2012), "Review: Songs of Lear, Summerhall, Edinburgh Fringe", http://www.theatreolympics2016.pl/en/calendar/songs-lear, accessed 9 April 2024.

Werpachowska, Edyta (2017), "Bolesna synestezja", http://www.e-teatr.pl/pl/artykuly/239710.html, accessed 9 April 2024.

Theatre hosts crisis. Shakespeare's theatre certainly does. *Facing Europe in Crisis. Shakespeare's World and Present Challenges* originates from a European Strategic Partnership dedicated to exploring crises, whether they be cultural, linguistic, political, social, religious, or economic. Arguing that "crisis" registers instability, provokes judgement towards its end, and signals a new beginning, the book highlights how early modern crises can help decipher contemporary ones and how these, in turn, deepen our understandings of the past.

Facing Europe in Crisis was conceived before the pandemic and the war in Ukraine, two crises that have had an impact on performances of Shakespeare since 2020. The authors share the belief that, though crises may persist, their complexities should be faced. Inherent in humanity, crises presuppose that the solutions to one also incubate the next. Showing that crisis is inscribed in seriality, Shakespeare's plays encourage audiences to face crises of all times.

Coleção Transversal