

14 Intersectional Shakespeare

The State of the Field, 2020–2021

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Global Shakespeare in text, performance, scholarship, and pedagogy has been indelibly reshaped by the physical, social, and racial tumult of 2020. Amid rising cases and deaths caused by COVID-19, which reached pandemic status in March 2020, lockdown ensued. Hospitals and health care facilities at full capacity, lost loved ones, and fears of newly discovered and ever-emerging viral variants punctuated the first year and beyond of pandemic conditions. Conspiracy theories, misinformation campaigns, and anti-Asian sentiment grew along with resistance to public health mandates. While many lamented or bristled at unfamiliar practices—cloistering at home, maintaining social distance, and wearing face masks—others found recognition, drawing upon similarities to historical bouts of virulent illness. From Stephen Greenblatt writing for *The New Yorker* to Rebecca Totaro being interviewed on the Folger Shakespeare Library’s *Shakespeare Unlimited* podcast to the Royal Shakespeare Company’s Gregory Doran recording *A Plague on All Our Houses* for BBC 4 radio, scholars and creative directors met the moment by reflecting on the profound and enduring impact of contagion on the life and writing of Shakespeare and his contemporaries, particularly focusing on the closure of theaters and the contingencies of facing an unpredictable and seemingly invisible adversary. Books remained unlaunched, plays and films premiered direct to streaming and web-hosting services, retirements went unheralded, and graduates entered the world without, in the words of Othello, “pride, pomp, and circumstance” (3.3.406). Many Shakespeareans took to the Internet to reflect on the uncanny relevance of the pivotal tragic moment when Friar John fails to deliver the letter to Romeo about Juliet’s feigned death because the authorities, “Suspecting that we both were in a house/ Where the infectious pestilence did reign/ Sealed up the doors and would not let us forth” (5.2.9–11). In December 2020, a man with the illustrious namesake of William Shakespeare, who at the age of 81 became the first man in the UK to receive a coronavirus vaccination, offered a glimmer of hope for the future even if official declarations ending pandemic provisions wouldn’t emerge until 2023.

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For many within global Shakespeare studies during 2020 and 2021, the watchword was *pivot*. Stage productions, academic classes, and publishers alike worked to “pivot to virtual.” Shakespeare’s Globe shutdown live performances, tours, and educational events for one year, but they introduced *Globe Player* on YouTube to broadcast productions. The Royal Shakespeare Company, while furloughing much of its staff, launched the Royal Shakespeare Community, encouraging professional actors and members of the public to #ShareYourShakespeare. Meanwhile, the expansion of existing digital humanities projects, the rapid resource-sharing for teaching and performing Shakespeare on Zoom screens and course management systems, the unprecedented free public access to digital collections, and the temporary freeze of many database paywalls offered by several major research libraries during the shutdown allowed teaching and research to be infused with new methodologies and ideas.

What started as an abrupt and sudden transition in learning and performing formats developed into intentional and innovative planning to offer accessible alternatives to in-person events. In 2021, the World Shakespeare Congress, hosted by the University of Singapore, was fully virtual from its keynotes, plenary roundtables, and panels to the Digital Asian Shakespeare Festival featuring full-length performances, watch parties, and discussions with directors. Also in 2021, the Shakespeare Association of America ran a fully virtual conference that included panels from the previously cancelled 2020 conference as well as newly organized seminars, workshops, and digital exhibits. Performances of Shakespeare’s plays were prominent in the reopening of theaters across the globe. Moreover, Shakespeare’s life and artistic growth inspired the original play *Will*, directed by Tian Xiaowei and produced by Wang Pengfei, which was performed in summer 2021 in Beijing and Shenzhen, China.

This chapter examines both research and resources published or launched from 2020 to 2021. Part I focuses on intersectional identities within Shakespeare studies, with a particular emphasis on 1) race and multilingualism and 2) queer theory and disability studies. Part II explores Shakespeare and the non-human, especially animal studies and the representation of “things.” Part III concerns theater and teaching resources. In the case of edited collections, I highlight representative essays to offer a sample of the overall work. The texts and pedagogical aids examined here provide new and invigorating directions for Shakespeare studies.

Part I—Shakespeare and Intersectional Identities

Race and Multilingualism

As debates over critical race theory erupted in school districts across the United States—amid police violence, #BlackLivesMatter protests, and

growing Anti-Asian discrimination—the Folger Shakespeare Library launched an online series in 2020, *Critical Race Conversations* (archived on YouTube). The aim of the conversation series, which features scholars, actors, and creative directors tackling issues of race, slavery, indigeneity, and unconscious bias, is to showcase how “critical race scholars are offering new insights into the prehistory of modern racialized thinking and racism.” The volumes in this section grapple with a broad range of topics in Global Shakespeare surrounding the social contexts imbedded in discourses of race, ethnicity, nationality, language, and accent within text and performance.

Ayanna Thompson’s edited collection *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare and Race* (2021) offers a student-friendly, intersectional approach to Shakespeare studies that builds upon the work of post-colonial theory and critical race studies to interrogate the “racialized epistemologies” of early modern literature and subsequent performance history (2). The resulting volume demonstrates that race cannot be extracted from or operate independently of class, sexuality, and gender. The result, as these chapters demonstrate, are social systems that have developed over the past four centuries as “unbalanced, mercurial, and seemingly capricious” (8). Thompson challenges readers to build on their existing analytical tools with an intentional eye toward injustice: “If one accepts the premise that race-making and racecraft are ways of thinking and structuring the world to create inequalities, then the archives have to be read in new ways—ones that address the erasures and inherent inequalities of the archives themselves” (10).

The chapters while unified in the table of contents are described in the introduction as being organized around four themes: (1) a historical overview of racecraft, (2) close readings of comedies, tragedies, and histories, (3) accounts of actors and actresses of color, and (4) reflections on future possibilities for the study of Shakespeare. Within the first category, Farah Karim-Cooper’s “The Materials of Race: Staging the Black and White Binary in the Early Modern Theatre,” begins with a survey of the scholarship and early modern source texts that demonstrate the dichotomous representation of white/fair imagery as virtuous and black/dark symbolism as expressing a “diverse range of negative associations for audiences” (17). Karim-Cooper expands on this linguistic and poetic representation to discuss the stage practices surrounding the use of white and black cosmetics and textile props used to signify racialized performance by white actors.

Shifting from broader context to more direct engagement with Shakespeare’s text, Patricia Ahkhimie’s “Racist Humor and Shakespearean Comedy” provides a framework for identifying, evaluating, and critiquing the use of racist humor through the “library of

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stereotypes” in Shakespeare’s comedies (52). To do so, she first examines the seemingly tenuous nature of generic boundaries during Shakespeare’s time to reflect on the extensive use of racialized humor both in comedies and tragedies that have since been played for comic effect, like the depiction of Othello/Otello in Ken Ludwig’s *Lend Me a Tenor* (1989). Ahkhimie observes, “racist humor produces social difference by teaching audiences how to hold themselves as a group apart and position themselves above another group” (50). Citing critical humor studies, Ahkhimie deftly reads passages from *The Merchant of Venice*, *Twelfth Night*, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, and *The Merry Wives of Windsor* to argue that the analysis of racist humor enables “us to see how they normalize a socially constructed and violently enforced process of social differentiation through racialization and stereotyping” (56).

Whereas Scott Newstok’s “How to Think Like Ira Aldridge” revisits the well studied nineteenth-century Black Shakespearean actor through his methods for achieving widespread acclaim, Joyce Green MacDonald’s “Actresses of Color and Shakespearean Performance: The Question of Reception,” uncovers the work of actresses of color performing scenes and productions of Shakespeare. More specifically, MacDonald highlights the ways in which the work of Henrietta Vinton Davis (1860–1941), a Black performer and orator with close ties to Frederick Douglass and the pan-African Universal Negro Improvement Association, engaged in subversive “black elocutionary practice” and Adrienne McNeil Herndon (1869–1910) directed Shakespeare plays to bring “her Shakespeare inside the southern urban black community that nurtured both her and her husband” (211, 216). This chapter and the collection more generally resist the notion of a terminus point to readings of race in Shakespeare, as Thompson asks, “how will you purposefully turn the tide, reorient the work, and alter Shakespeare studies?” (14).

Alexa Alice Joubin’s *Shakespeare and East Asia*, part of the Oxford Shakespeare Topics series, challenges a prevailing critical tendency to interpret contemporary Asian films and theatrical performances inspired by Shakespeare primarily as geopolitical allegories. Instead, Joubin’s rhizomatic approach seeks to localize and analyze the aesthetic choices made within productions, and in the process to “unsettle assumptions about the stability of Shakespeare as a textual and verbal presence and about Asia as a privileged, unified visual sign” (20). The monograph surveys twentieth and twenty-first century films and theatre performances produced in and/or influenced by the traditions of Japan, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Tibet, China, Korea, and Singapore. Joubin’s work covers much new ground and provides stable links to full-length productions and curated scene selections on the *MIT Global Shakespeares Video and Performance Archive*. The book offers overlooked insights into canonical films, such as Akira

Kurosawa's *Throne of Blood* (1957), examining the ways in which the English subtitles to the film obscure intentional choices about characters' use of informal language. For instance, Joubin's analysis of Washizu and Miki's address of one another while lost in the forest signals a "move to undermine formality [which] has profound implications" for the rigid hierarchy of Japanese *samurai* culture depicted in the film (40).

Eschewing a format that highlights a single Shakespearean play in its variations, Joubin's chapters are organized conceptually so that most concern a number of Shakespearean plays, genres and theatrical traditions, and contemporary directors. What this breakdown of chapters opens up is a greater attentiveness to the larger generic and cultural contexts at play within the productions. Moreover, Joubin's methodology frames comparative literature as a "transgenre network" that offers "multiple, nonhierarchical entry points for ideas to flow through disparate cultural spaces" (192, 193). As an example, chapter 4 on "Multilingualism and Diaspora" concerns Singaporean film and theatre and British East Asian tradition as they relate to *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, *Othello*, and *Romeo and Juliet*, which all feature prominently in the works of directors Ong Keng Sen, Chee Kong Cheah (CheeK), David Tse, and Baz Luhrmann. A reading of CheeK's parodic comedy *Chicken Rice War* (2000)—which stages a high school performance of *Romeo and Juliet* in Singapore—contextualizes the multilayered use of Singlish, English, Malay, Mandarin, and Cantonese by the characters in the film simultaneously as a celebration of genre experimentation and as a critique of "state-endorsed multi-lingualism" that ultimately fails to enact the "harmonious multiracialism" the program intends (162, 167).

Throughout the chapters, the representation of gender across performances is a particular strength. For instance, discussion of Ophelia-inspired characters in Feng Xiaogang's Mandarin-language *The Banquet* (2006), Sherwood Hu's Tibetan-cast *Prince of the Himalayas* (2006), Kim Kwangbo's production of Jo Kwang-hwa's *Ophelia: Sister, Come to my Bed* (Cheong-u Ensemble, 1995), and Lee Joon-ik's Korean blockbuster *The King and the Clown* (2005) demonstrates the range of, by turns, powerful, sympathetic, and transgender portrayals of Ophelia in East Asian adaptations. Joubin hones in on the specific aesthetic and cultural contexts that invigorate unique representations of Ophelia. For instance, her reading of *Prince of the Himalayas*, with its visual resonance with John Everett Millais' painting of Ophelia's drowning, offers insight into connections with female water deities and indicates that the film's depiction of a pregnant Ophelia birthing a child saved by the Wolf Woman prophetess "transform[s] Ophelia from a 'document of madness' (4.5.178) to an embodiment of resistance of the patriarchy" (83). By contrast, *The King and the Clown*, which is more loosely connected to Shakespeare's work,

frames Gong-gil as a trans-feminine street performer locked in an “erotic entanglement” with the King and the macho Jang-saeng (113). Joubin places the representation of the Ophelia-like Gong-gil in conversation with pop culture depictions of “flower boys” while also exploring the consistently feminine but nuanced depiction of the character which makes the film “stan[d] out in LGBTQ cinema for its non-judgmental narrative arc” (119).

Shakespeare and Accentism, edited by Adele Lee, shifts the emphasis in studies of contemporary performance of Shakespeare’s work toward the social resonance of the verbal accent, making the case that Global Shakespeare “must reflect the full, current spectrum of accents that color and enliven our cultural landscape” (19). The book is especially useful for considering performance history and the choices of directors and actors in representing characters’ voices through various prominent Western sound systems. The range of accents includes Original Pronunciation (OP; a sonic reconstruction of Early Modern English EME), Received Pronunciation (RP; described by contributor Ronan Paterson as sounding like “BBC English”), American RP (a Mid-Atlantic accent), and various regional dialects (8). Moreover, the volume explores several forms of language privilege and marginalization in the Global South and East Asia, from Conservative South African English (SAE) to Black South African English (BSAE) to the use of pretentious or villainous British English or American accents within Bollywood films to exploration of Western audience members’ responses to Chinese and Japanese actors’ accents. The introduction to the volume may seem to set up a false dichotomy in Shakespearean performance when it suggests, “accentism might actually constitute a more serious problem than racism” (16). That said, many of the essays adeptly grapple with the points of intersection and disjuncture between issues of race and accentism. While the volume addresses geographically and socially specific accents, it also challenges the “whitewashing” of foreign characters through an elided accent, though some might take issue with the unnecessarily ableist language of the term *colordeaf* (7).

Many of the chapters in this volume address both the pitfalls and the transformational potential of examining and strategically deploying diverse accents within Global Shakespeare performance. In Chapter 5, “Accentism, Anglocentrism, and Multilingualism in South African Shakespeares,” for instance, Chris Thurman argues that translating EME into South African languages or “translanguaging”—in popular parlance, code-switching—can “facilitate an equal interlingual exchange” so that Shakespearean performances can potentially challenge “accent-based bigotry” (100). Thurman traces the trajectory of Black South African Shakespeare performance from Sol Plaatje in the nineteenth century through apartheid and to twenty-first-century translations, on the one

hand, acknowledging practices that reinforce racial and sociolinguistic hierarchies, and on the other, highlighting the inventive performances that have sought a reparative Shakespeare. In particular, Thurman examines *ErrorS A Comedy* (2018) and *Umsebenzi ka Bra Shakes* (Working on/with Bro Shakes) by the Kwasha! Theatre Company as productions that experiment with translation and accentism, thereby offering “a sign of a South African Shakespeare-to-come” (108).

Taarini Mookherjee’s Chapter 7, “‘What country, friends, is this?’: The Indian Accent versus Received Pronunciation in Productions of *Twelfth Night*,” explores expectations surrounding RP and “the Indian Accent” in Trevor Nunn’s 1996 film, Tim Supple’s 2003 made-for-television film, and Atul Kumar’s 2012 Hindi theater adaptation *Piya Behrupiya* staged by The Company Theatre in Mumbai. The chapter makes a convincing case that casting choices based upon race, ethnicity, and regionalism are not just visual but also aural. In doing so, it attends to the linguistic soundscape of productions and offers greater insight into the aesthetic and cultural choices of the director and cast. For instance, in discussing Tim Supple’s film, Mookherjee argues that the film “attempts to displace the articulation of difference from the visual to the aural, with ethnicity marked by language, and social class by accent” (147). She also breaks down the harmful stereotypes in Western media that place Western-born men in visual and/or linguistic Indian brownface. By contrast, the inventive adaptation *Piya Behrupiya* was composed through collaboration, improvisation, and translation of Shakespeare’s work that included “the languages, songs, and jokes” of actors’ own home regions; to Mookherjee, “this mixing of languages demonstrates not only the reality of India’s hybrid linguistic landscape but also the hierarchical divisions among languages in the country” (150).

Like Mookherjee’s argument, Adele Lee’s Chapter 8, “‘Rackers of Orthography’? Speaking Shakespeare in English,” tackles a long-established archive of Western critique of Asian actors playing Shakespeare. According to Lee, those actors wishing to overcome this bias have often sought extensive speech therapy and vocal training despite the fact that many East Asian theatrical traditions, such as Japanese *hyojungo* offer to Shakespeare’s Roman plays, for instance, a “stately” vocal pattern that “heighten[s] these plays’ key themes of duty, obedience, and self-sacrifice” (168). Still, Lee notes that directors should not simply add Asian vocal performance as a style or theme lest they replicate and enact cultural imperialism within the theatrical space. Instead, she advocates for “deliberate, meaningful, and collective action and, more specifically, commitment to inclusive and diverse practices” that includes “a decolonization of our listening ears” so that “indigenous accents ... enrich Shakespeare’s words and the meanings of his plays” (169).

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Coen Heijes's *Shakespeare, Blackface and Race: Different Perspectives* is part of the Cambridge Elements in Shakespeare Performance Series, and it comes in at a brief but highly informative 73 pages. The argument offers a nuanced account of how blackface theatrical performance registers differently in non-Anglophone countries by offering a case study in the tradition's continued development in the Netherlands. Heijes starts with accounts of polarizing reactions toward, in 2019, the Dutch archetypal character Black Pete (involving white men playing in blackface in celebration of Saint Nicholas each December) and, in 2018, the first mainstage performance of *Othello* in the Netherlands where the titular character was played by a Black man. This latter production was directed by Daria Bukvić and starred Werner Kolf as Othello, and Heijes includes enlightening interviews with both figures (52–63). In discussing this unprecedented performance, Heijes emphasizes the disconnect between the Netherlands' reputation for racial and social tolerance and the production's efforts to "address one of the often neglected open wounds on the body of Dutch society, institutional racism" (6). Heijes speaks to "moral righteousness" as a defining value within Dutch society (16). Nevertheless, he also outlines a long-established history of obscuring or minimizing the nature of racial inequality, as evident in a school curriculum that glosses over issues of race in colonization and the slave trade. Because the tradition of white actors employing blackface has continued well into the twenty-first century in the Netherlands, there is much material for Heijes' study, which engages with reception history and theatrical reviews. For example, a translation of *Othello* by Jibbe Willems in 2015 staged a white actor using, at times, a black mask, eating a banana, and playing a "jazzy bass"; although the translation heightened racialized insults it "was generally hailed as an entertaining production" (35, 37). Heijes' study complements British and American work on race and theater by offering a well-researched critical perspective on the use of blackface in contemporary Dutch culture.

Queer Theory and Disability Studies

In October 2021, the Queer Disability Studies Network launched a month-long online event with programming that included traditional essays offered in plain-English translation for greater accessibility, zines with visual descriptions, captioned videos, and other creative works by members of the queer disability communities. Shakespeare studies has not yet fully engaged with queer disability studies as a field, but it does have a well-established history with queer theory and disability studies that is moving in new directions of inquiry.

Melissa E. Sanchez's *Shakespeare and Queer Theory*, from Arden's Shakespeare and Theory series, is based on the premise that "when we

read Shakespeare through a queer lens, we refine our understanding of identification and desire in the present as well as the past” (1–2). Sanchez begins by laying out the definitions and disciplinary offshoots between queer theory, gay and lesbian studies, and feminist theory via the work of Lauren Berlant, David Halperin, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, and Jack Halberstam, to name a few. She also establishes the contributions of early modern scholars to the development of queer theory, particularly in the critiques forged by Bruce Smith, Valerie Traub, and Jonathan Goldberg while noting that queer Shakespeare studies “have both engaged in careful historical and archival research *and* challenged new historicist prohibitions against anachronism” (103). Portions of the book read like a secular queer catechism with pithy questions and thoughtful answers to the types of inquiries students often raise in Shakespeare classes, particularly when it comes to the early modern understandings and representations of homoeroticism, sodomy, tribadism, and pederasty.

Chapters 4 and 5 of Sanchez’s book engage in close readings of Shakespeare’s texts and contemporary Shakespearean films. The former offers theoretical tools “to queer normative conceptions of race, gender, friendship, love, marriage, desire, and even what counts as sex itself” in Shakespeare’s poetry, comedy, tragedy, and history (111). For instance, of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* Sanchez contends that the “homo- and heteroerotic attachment, incest, cross-species contact and anal eroticism” of the play render the concluding marriages as one component “among many fantasies that give desire an object and shape” (115). In her reading of Derek Jarman’s loose adaptation of *The Tempest* (1979), Sanchez similarly attends to the range of performances of genders and sexualities in the film. In Jarman’s telling, for example, Ariel is depicted as an intersex character who is forced into an abject posture, an “easy target of sexual slavery” (148). To Sanchez, Jarman’s experiments with “subcultural forms of punk, horror, and camp” open up innovative considerations of how to queer Shakespeare (150).

Nearly a decade after Allison P. Hobgood and David Houston Wood’s edited collection, *Recovering Disability in Early Modern England* (2013), Sonya Freeman Loftis’s *Shakespeare and Disability Studies*, part of the Oxford Shakespeare Topics series, seeks to shift the conversation from early modern literary representation to contemporary audiences. The monograph distills concepts in disability studies—disability rights, the models of disability, and accessibility via sensory-friendly or relaxed theater performances—into an insightful reexamination of Shakespeare and disability in the twenty-first century. The content adheres to accessible design by being written in plain English. Moreover, unlike many examples of disability readings of Shakespeare that focus primarily on the representation of literary characters, such as Richard III, Caesar, and

Gloucester, Loftis examines “how Shakespeare (as industry, as high art, as cultural symbol) affects the lived reality of those with disabled bodies and/or minds” (2).

Chapter 1 “Crippling (and Re-Crippling) Richard: Was Richard III Disabled?” grapples with persistent scholarly claims that reading Richard III through the lens of disability is anachronistic. Loftis thus brings disability studies perspectives to bear on a contemporary documentary and a television series, *Richard III: The New Evidence* (2014, directed by Gary Johnstone) and *The Hollow Crown: The War of the Roses* (2016, directed by Dominic Cooke). In the former, Loftis discusses the role of Dominic Smees, a man with a form of scoliosis that almost exactly mirrors the 80-degree curvature of the spine discovered in Richard III’s remains, to reenact scenes and historical accounts of the king’s life. In particular, Loftis uses disability studies’ contribution of the “heroic overcomer” and Ellen Samuels’ discussion of biocertification to offer insights into how Shakespeare’s depiction of Richard III continues to shape popular discourses and representations of disability in contemporary culture. In the case of *The Hollow Crown*, where Richard III is played by Benedict Cumberbatch, Loftis reveals an ambivalent depiction of Richard’s disability. On the one hand, the series “manipulates common stereotypes about disability ... juxtaposing scenes in which Richard’s body is hidden with scenes in which it is deliberately laid bare to the gaze of the able-bodied audience,” and on the other, *The Hollow Crown* relishes in “the vilification of impairment” (40, 44).

Subsequent chapters explore twenty-first-century approaches to making Shakespeare accessible to disability communities. Theater staff and educational theater programs will find Chapter 2 with its extensive discussion of designated disability-friendly performances and welcoming of adult patrons with disabilities to typical theater performances to be an invaluable resource. In it, Loftis surveys the range of experiences available to disabled theatergoers at the Globe, the Royal Shakespeare Company, the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, and the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. What emerges is a set of best practices for making Shakespeare accessible for all, including “ability to request an aisle seat, touch tours, audio-described performances, hearing loops, captioned performance, sign-language-interpreted performance, wheelchair-accessible seating,” low-sensory rooms, sparse seating, and discount tickets for assisting companions, among other accommodations (71). Chapter 3 begins with an ideal example of disability inclusion in a performance art space. Kinetic Light’s *Descent* (2019) casts Alice Sheppard and Laurel Lawson “plung[ing] in their wheelchairs across a giant and sinuously curving ramp, moving with majesty and beauty that showcased disability as a powerful aesthetic” (78). The focus on disability inclusion for the audience that Loftis describes calls to

mind the work of the San Francisco-based disability justice arts collective Sins Invalid. It also provides a basis for discussing two Shakespeare therapy programs for people living with disabilities. Stephan Wolfert's DE-CRUIT, a program for disabled veterans coping with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), encourages participants to "appropriate and rewrite Shakespeare's works" in productive ways (79). By contrast, the Hunter Heartbeat Method, as Loftis argues, aims "to change the disabled subject in order to meet the needs of a rigidly neurotypical conception of Shakespeare" (90). Here Loftis' reading is informed by her own experience with autism; she writes in the conclusion, "I have often found that some neurotypical people are not willing to acknowledge an autistic passion that might be outside of neurotypical experience, to believe that autism has its own pleasures" (119). In writing this book, Loftis encourages new and invigorating approaches to Shakespeare and disability.

Like Loftis, Grace McCarthy's *Shakespearean Drama, Disability, and the Filmic Stare* swerves from traditional character readings of Shakespeare's plays and from the medical model of disability in her study of contemporary global Shakespearean film adaptations. For McCarthy, the dividing line between positive and negative representations of disability within these films, then, is not based upon their adherence to medical accuracy, but rather by their impulse to humanize disabled characters with agency or to dehumanize them as objects of pity or marginalization. In Chapter 1, McCarthy theorizes the touchpoint for each of the subsequent chapters, "the filmic stare," a concept that combines Laura Mulvey's notion of the male gaze and disability studies scholar Rosemarie Garland-Thomson's theorization of "the stare" as it shapes disability experience and social interaction (8). Specifically, McCarthy places film representations within a larger context of the "kill or cure" approach to disability in the eighteenth century that emerges from and coincides with a longer history of framing those with disabilities as "monsters" (20–21).

The book draws examples from a broad range of Shakespearean films and made-for-television series, from Laurence Olivier's *Richard III* to Cooke's *The Hollow Crown*. In discussing these "star vehicles" that bear the weight of Shakespearean cred, the portrayal of disability differs widely, but what remains consistent is the stare upon the distinguished white male abled-bodied actor's disabled frame and existence, so whereas Olivier's Richard "was more discriminated against than discriminating," Cumberbatch's Richard depicts a world in which "it is unacceptable for Richard to have a sex life" (52, 56, 55). As a result, the trajectory of the films from 1955 to 2016 only "perpetuat[e] the illusion of progress" (56).

Chapters 3 through 5 offer poignant character studies of representations of Caliban, Hamlet, and Ophelia across a range of film while

engaging with foundational concepts from disability studies. As McCarthy acknowledges, terminology surrounding mental health and disability of the early modern period can be slippery. In chapters on *Hamlet*, she elects to use the term “madness” as a means of engaging the language of the play and the early modern period while avoiding the application of anachronistic diagnoses on Shakespeare’s characters. Her choice in this term could be more thoroughly embedded in the field of mad studies, which both overlaps and lies adjacent to disability studies. In addition, disability studies scholar Sami Schalk’s designation of apparent, non-apparent, and intermittently apparent disabilities might work more effectively here than visible/invisible disabilities both for its more expansive and less ableist origins (see Sami Schalk, *Bodyminds Reimagined: (Dis)ability, Race, and Gender in Black Women’s Speculative Fiction* [Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018]). Nevertheless, in exploring how central the question of real or feigned madness is in many revenge tragedies, such that “mental disability is so often at the heart of [the] genre,” McCarthy makes an important contribution to the question of Hamlet’s self-designation as “mad north-north-west” (92; Cambridge Shakespeare, *Hamlet* 2.2.347). Moreover, from a film studies perspective, McCarthy provides a critical apparatus for reading the camera angles and directorial choices that display or conceal disabilities on screen.

Alanna Skuse’s *Surgery and Selfhood in Early Modern England: Altered Bodies and Contexts of Identity* revisits the well-trod ground of embodiment in early modern literary studies from new paths in medical history, disability studies (particularly regarding acquired physical disabilities), and phenomenology. Organized around the range of representations of bodies altered by surgery during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the chapters address castrati, women who undergo mastectomy, those with amputations and prosthesis, and men with Tagliacotian rhinoplasty designed to repair the facial effects of advanced syphilis. The study is attentive to issues of sexuality, gender representation, and race with particular focus on commodification of bodies deemed aberrant in early modern society. In Chapter 1, for instance, Skuse demonstrates that the practice of castrating male children to craft a particular aural aesthetic was largely an economic choice undertaken by caregivers regardless of the child’s consent. In adulthood, so-called castrati were both fetishized and spurned as sexually deviant. Skuse’s accounts of the contested marriages of two such figures Bartolomeo Sorlisi (1632–72) and Giusto Ferdinando Tenducci (1736–90) illustrate that “sexual liminality provided the best platform for castrati to forge their own identities” (32).

From a disability studies standpoint, the historical case studies Skuse uses offer productive ways of considering physical disabilities, but there are also some opportunities for more fleshed out engagement with

contemporary theory. Skuse's account of the shift from the monist to the Cartesian dualist viewpoint of the connection between the soul and body could potentially contribute to disability studies' discourses. For instance, the bodymind is a term coined by Margaret Price and popularized by Eli Clare that shows that the "the imbrication (not just the combination of the entities called 'body' and 'mind' [i]s a feminist materialist [disability studies] concept" (Margaret Price, "The Bodymind Problem and the Possibilities of Pain," *Hypatia* vol. 30, no. 1 [2015]: 270). Moreover, in discussing Lavinia's amputation/dismemberment and use of the prosthetic staff to reveal the perpetrators of her trauma, Skuse productively reads this scene in relation to the scholarship of Farah Karim-Cooper and Katherine Rowe. That being said, her portrayal of *Titus Andronicus*'s Lavinia through the role of the "freakish supercrip" would greatly benefit from explicit engagement with contemporary disability studies' understandings of the freak show and the figure of the supercrip as discussed by Garland-Thomson and Ronald J. Berger, respectively (81). Still, Skuse's sustained focus on the lived experience of altered bodies offers a vital perspective to global Shakespeare studies.

Caroline Bicks' *Cognition and Girlhood in Shakespeare's World* examines the embodied cognition of girls through the onset and duration of puberty until marriage, a period which she contends is depicted across fictional and historical records as a "stage of relative cognitive liberty" (5). Bicks does not reference contemporary disabilities studies, but she does engage with early modern phenomenological readings of the body-mind, which highlight the "porous psychophysionomies that animated early modern beliefs about how humans moved through and experienced their worlds" (3). The hyphenated *body-mind* emerges from early modern studies independently from the unhyphenated *bodymind* of disability studies, but it performs much of the same work in breaking down the artificiality of a hierarchical disconnect between the supposedly superior mind and lowly body. Bicks frames the argument through the concept of "brainwork" as a means of "analyzing depictions of girls' mental processes that signal specific cognitive effort, focus, and intention" (3). Her analysis of brainwork is attentive to the role of the imagination and its interpretative capabilities in navigating the ethical, religious, and social issues of the day. Bicks explores this understanding through Shakespeare's Juliet Capulet and Viola in *Twelfth Night* as well as through historical girls like Mary Glover who was reportedly bewitched by a neighbor.

After the introductory chapter, in which Bicks sets up the cusp of fourteen-year olds as a "lightening rod [period] for some of early modern England's most vital ideological controversies," the next three chapters are organized around various cognitive functions: imagination, understanding, and memory (28). For Bicks, early modern girlhood ends at

marriage when a woman becomes subject to her husband's will, procreative efforts, and household affairs. As such, English Catholic girls who entered foreign convents occupy a privileged yet liminal space in their cognitive possibilities. One of the few cases that Bicks considers of an "endangered girl" whose narrative includes her post-nuptial life (and death) is *Othello's* Desdemona (70). Given the singularity of the example, much pressure is placed on the argument that *Othello* "demonstrates how marriage changes the relationship between men's and women's body-minds" (80). Still, Bicks' reading also recovers the merits of Desdemona's "imaginative perception," which has received far less critical coverage than Iago or *Othello's* (85). Two remaining chapters approach the mind's holistic work in challenging the "Protestant girl-to-woman script" (32) and uncovering the efforts of Mary Ward to foster the apostolic brainwork and deeds of English recusant girls denying marital vows and living their faith (192).

Part II—Shakespeare and the Non-Human

Recent scholarship in animal studies, ecocriticism, and the study of "things" has challenged the boundaries of typical periodicity, and studies of Shakespeare and the non-human have made this productive turn. In the introduction to *The Routledge Handbook of Shakespeare and Animals*, Karen Raber and Holly Dugan ask, "how might Shakespeare's plays, as they depict an early modern world in which both wild and domesticated animals were prolific and intimately familiar to most, ... have created the intellectual, political, economic conditions for the way we think about and treat animals now?" (1). Questions such as these are suggestive of the multi-front approach to Shakespeare and the non-human: one in which readings of early modern animals and objects are interpreted as thoroughly embedded in and produced by the cultural conditions of their period but also are viewed as offering invaluable insights into contemporary living and working conditions for the range of creaturely lives on our planet. While initially emerging out of some of the same foundational basis of the critical race theory, postcolonial studies, and queer and feminist studies that informed the readings in Part I of this essay, the books discussed in this section broaden out to encompass a posthumanist and biocentric approach to the natural world and to objects produced and traded within it.

One of the effects of animal studies and ecocriticism within the humanities is that, as Raber and Dugan note, reading can extend beyond, say, the avian metaphor in Shakespeare's plays or the representation of different plant species in his poetry to explore the material realities of these life forms with "their own possible capacities, perspectives, and agencies" (6).

How humanity treats animals, moreover, “reveals forms of unrecognized proximate violence rooted in our intimacies” (3). This collection of 23 essays is divided into 5 sections on methodologies, materialities, habitats, skills, and identities. In the interest of disclosure, I contributed an essay on bees in *The Tempest*. Chapters include contributions from many scholars who have written foundational books on early modern animals, including a chapter on shrews, shrewishness, and shrewd actions by Bruce Boeherer, a reading by Laurie Shannon of Missouri Williams’s play *King Lear with Sheep* (2014–2015), an examination of the place of humanity within nature via Richard II’s relationship with his horse by Erica Fudge, and a queer and animal-centered reappraisal by Raber of the Dauphin’s view of his horse in *Henry V*.

Many of the chapters also take on contemporary ecocritical philosophy and theory or deploy tools from the digital humanities in their readings of Shakespeare. For instance, Crystal Bartolovich’s chapter, “Learning from Crab: Primitive Accumulation, Migration, Species Being,” critiques Donna Haraway’s reading of Marx’s “Primitive Accumulation” and “Species Being” in her approach to the representation of the dog Crab’s “affective failure” in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* (46, 56, 51). Ian F. MacInnes’ “Cow-Cross Lane and Curriers Row: Animal Networks in Early Modern England” conducts a “multispecies ethnography” of animal movements and migrations by drawing upon the *Map of Early Modern London* directed by Jenelle Jenstad at the University of Victoria. In tracing the traffic in cattle, sheep, dogs, and bears evident in the 1561 Agas map, MacInnes argues that early modern animal networks present “a coherent persuasive system” that scripts the logic to the “animal-centered textual discourse” of Shakespeare and his contemporaries (77–78). In a very timely essay “Zoonotic Shakespeare: Animals, Plagues, and the Medical Posthumanities,” Lucinda Cole examines the creaturely toll of plagues and epidemics that started with or spread initially among animals. Cole acknowledges that combining animal studies with the medical humanities (a field partially adjacent with disability studies) in readings of Shakespeare’s plays means “taking seriously species-jumping viruses and epidemics whose effects ... were exacerbated by the trade in animals and animal products in an increasingly global ecology and economy” (105). Indeed, recent work on early modern animal studies demonstrates a range of economic, physical, and symbolic significations with animals’ human-mediated movements and migrations.

My own book, *Bees in Early Modern Transatlantic Literature: Sovereign Colony*, part of Raber’s Perspectives on the Non-Human in Literature and Culture series, explores the far-reaching implications of colonists stowing a beehive as wintertime cargo on a ship from England to Virginia in 1621. Although the English had not yet discovered the

mechanism for pollination and bees' role within it, they did recognize that so-called New World colonies with European honeybees seemed to thrive, such that the beehive became a potent symbol of the English colonial project in the seventeenth century. Still, the hive also connected the labor of those marginalized by race, class, gender, and species to questions of what it meant to seek sovereignty. This concept is particularly relevant when exploring the varied responses of Hopi, Wyandotte, and Pocasset cultures to the violence of English colonization. In addition to chapters on Indigenous and colonial perspectives on the bee, the book also examines the works of Shakespeare, Milton, Hester Pultur, and Bernard Mandeville. In doing so, it places the bee—in its physical labor and symbolic power—at the nexus of hierarchies among humans, animals, and environments of the early transatlantic world.

Another facet of the non-human is the study of “things,” which can include commodities, stage props, relics, and natural objects. *Shakespeare's Things: Shakespearean Theatre and the Non-Human World in History, Theory, and Performance* is a collection of essays from the same Routledge series as the previous book, which is edited by Brett Gamboa and Lawrence Switzky. In the introduction to the volume, Gamboa and Switzky distinguish between new materialism (lower-case)—which imbues *things* with the power to “reveal everyday cultural practices and relationships”—from New Materialism (upper-case)—that “insists on the potency and agency (or quasi-agency) of non-human matter within human affairs,” as in the work of Bruno Latour and Jane Bennett (6). The essays in this volume seek to unite these theories on Shakespeare's stage, which witnesses the playwright as “intrigued by the distribution of intention, expression, and action among a network of human and non-human agents” (11).

One such stage prop is the mirror, which features prominently in essays by John S. Garrison and Hanh Bui. Garrison's “Mirrors and *Macbeth's* Queer Materialism,” focuses on staging of the prophecy in *Macbeth* that uses mirrored glass to help represent the ancestral line from Banquo to King James and the failure of *Macbeth's* own procreative abilities. Garrison calls the mirror a “flashpoint” that destabilizes “normative progress of reproductive history” to mediate “the queerness of time inherent in theatrical production” (53). Whereas most of the essays in the collection focus on the things of Shakespeare's tragedies, histories, or romances, Bui's “The Mirror and Age in Shakespeare's *Sonnets*” explores his poetry. In particular, she contends that “the mirror functions as a non-biological ‘actant’ in the formation of aged subjectivity” (67). In other words, the technology of the crystalline glass prompts the poet narrator to grapple with the “multi-temporal and multi-relational” that mediates his shifting perceptions of his own aging process.

If the mirror inspires characters to reflect on their stage in the life cycle and their unrealized procreative potential, then the baby, and more specifically the stage-prop baby, can inspire the audience to “endow it with a singular, animated fragility that exceeds its non-human materials” (80). This is the argument of Megan Snell in “Shakespeare’s Babies: ‘Things to Come at Large,’” a chapter in which the baby prop acts as an object of affective power when, for instance, it is separated from its mother Perdita in *The Winter’s Tale* or Thaisa in *Pericles*. Julia Reinhard Lupton’s “Shakespeare’s Virtuous Properties,” investigates the ways in which stage props like Caliban’s gaberline in *The Tempest* “allow characters to test their own capacities as moral actors in a networked scene of openings and closings, invitations and inhibitions” (111). Lupton observes that Caliban uses his sack-cloth as a place to shelter from the storm, encounter new and foreign people, and test his entrance into the “black natural law tradition” in a trajectory from enslavement to potential grace.

Part III—Theater and Teaching Resources

In summer 2020, Shakespeare’s Globe launched a multimedia site *Macbeth: A Production Created Especially for Young People* to stream a 90-minute *Macbeth* performance created for school-aged children. The performance directed by Cressida Brown had been planned for February and March of 2020 and would have offered 18,000 free tickets to students in state secondary schools in England had the run not been interrupted by the COVID lockdown. In addition to the play, the website provided a host of multi-media educational resources for teachers on contexts, themes, terminology, characters, and more. The 2022 iteration of this resource page, *Macbeth: Playing Shakespeare with Deutsche Bank*, includes scene-by-scene highlights and quotations, clips of *Macbeth* in British Sign Language shot as part of the 2018 Shakespeare Synopsis Project, and a “Staging It” tool that has a captivating goal of allowing students to “direct” scenes by making selections from sample footage but that is a bit technologically buggy. The site very helpfully provides sample assignments for students to write reviews or design posters, costumes, or sets with the goal of posting the results to Twitter for students to share their work with a broader audience under the banner of #PlayingShakespeare.

While the Globe offered the newly-filmed *Macbeth* performance as well as a schedule of archived past performances during lockdown, other venues, such as the Creation Theatre in Oxford and Big Telly Theatre Company in Northern Ireland seized the opportunity to experiment and take fresh approaches to digital theater productions on platforms that encouraged community building. Pascale Aebischer’s *Viral Shakespeare: Performance in the Time of Pandemic*, part of the Cambridge Elements in

Shakespeare Performance series, explores how these latter two companies staged *The Tempest* and *Macbeth* over the Zoom teleconferencing platform as a “digital stage” to encourage interaction and connection between their audience members (10). She notes the paradox that in media during the pandemic Shakespeare was at once held up as a “creative genius” who honed his craft alone in lockdown and as a figure whose work could simultaneously “connect artists with their audiences and audiences with one another” (4). Aebischer also outlines what she calls a “phenomenological history” of the various European, UK, American, and Canadian celebrations of Shakespeare’s birthday 23 April 2020 and beyond, describing the familiar fatigue of Zoom/screen time overload amid the desire to connect with others during watchalongs, particularly as technological quirks like variant spellings of hashtags on Twitter impeded audience members’ visibility to one another (8, 14). In a discussion of *The Tempest*, Aebischer notes the use of camera work, background screens, and pre-recorded sequences and includes illustrative screenshots. For instance, one scene shows Miranda reaching out through her screen to touch Ferdinand’s hand within his frame. This stages a moment of “emotional yearning” not just for the characters in the performance, but also for the audience in quarantine (64). Moreover, according to Aebischer, Itxaso Moreno’s performance as Ariel in an under-the-cupboard space in her home engaged the audience in “haptic, physical acts of co-creation,” especially given the centrality of on-screen spectator reactions and participation (68).

In January 2020, the Cambridge Core, an online resource of Cambridge University Press offerings, launched a library subscription service, *Cambridge Shakespeare*. The timing was fortuitous for those educators seeking digital access to Shakespeare editions with line numbers, explanatory notes, and performance commentary that could also allow for the ease of highlighting, note-taking, or activation of text to voice through e-readers. The database offers access to a large archive, including all *New Cambridge Shakespeare* editions of Shakespeare’s plays and poetry, the *New Cambridge Shakespeare Early Quartos* series, the *Shakespeare in Production* series, and chapters in *The Cambridge Guide to the Worlds of Shakespeare*. For each play, there is an option to read in two different digital formats. The HTML version is easy to read but is more challenging for access to explanatory and performance notes through blurring hyperlinks or scrolling. The PDF version looks exactly like the original paperbound text in its page format, and it thus offers the opportunity to highlight text, take notes, and turn pages on an e-Reader; that being said, this function divides the scenes of each act into individual files for download. As a result, users must download a zip file of approximately 25–30 PDFs in order to access the entire play. In Spring 2020, I started

using the *Cambridge Shakespeare* as the exclusive courseware in my Shakespeare classes at my university. There have been a few occasions on which technical glitches have made the texts temporarily inaccessible, but many students have appreciated the fact that the library's subscription means that the accessible texts come at no cost to them. In 2023, Cambridge is also introducing Naxos audiobooks that will be embedded in the digital texts of Shakespeare's plays and performed by renowned actors, such as Ian McKellen, Benedict Cumberbatch, and Fiona Shaw.

In 2015, the Oregon Shakespeare Festival commissioned 36 playwrights and 38 dramaturgs to "translate" Shakespeare into modern English. According to Lue Douthit, creative director of the Play on Shakespeare Series, the initial inspiration for the project derived from linguist John McWhorter's observation that non-Anglophone readers have far greater access to Shakespeare because his plays have been translated into their modern languages. The task for the Play on Shakespeare translators was to be non-interventionist, to prevent cutting or editing scenes, to maintain setting and time period, and to honor rhyme, meter, metaphor, character, and theme (viii–ix). In 2021 Shakespeare's plays started coming to press through the Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies via University of Chicago Press. Bedeviled by supply chain issues, many texts in the series have been delayed into 2023, but the early prints suggest that these volumes priced at \$10 each would be worth the wait.

What is exciting about the series is the potential for new audiences to be welcomed to read and reimagine Shakespeare's work. As Migdalia Cruz, the playwright who translates *Macbeth*, remarks in her preface, "how delicious, as a Puerto Rican woman from the Bronx, to become part of the Western Canon in this subversive way" (xvii). Other translations include *Romeo and Juliet* by Korean playwright and director Hansol Jung, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* by Australian screenwriter Amelia Roper, and *Othello* by New Dramatists' Mfoniso Udofia. In addition, the Play on Shakespeare translations offer greater accessibility to readers who are neurodiverse, disabled, or broader in age range. To quote Loftis's *Shakespeare and Disability Studies*, accessible Shakespeare need not abandon "intellectual rigor"; rather, it can "encourag[e] specific disability communities to appropriate Shakespeare's texts in ways that are unique and authentic representations of those communities" (15).

For seasoned Shakespeareans the practice of reading a modern translation can feel at times off-putting or uncanny: so many of the words and images remain though in reconfigured language. That being said, this is not a "no fear" version of Shakespeare; much of the syntax and artistry is intact. For reference, I have included quotations from the first several lines of the Cambridge Shakespeare and Cruz's translation of Lady Macbeth's "unsex me here" speech for comparison:

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Come, you spirits,
 That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here
 And fill me from the crown to the toe topfull
 Of direst cruelty; make thick my blood,
 Stop up th'access and passage to remorse
 That no compunctious visitings of nature
 Shake my fell purpose nor keep peace between
 Th'effect and it. Come to my woman's breasts
 And take my milk for gall, you murd'ring ministers,
 Wherever in your sightless substances
 You wait on nature's mischief.

(Cambridge Shakespeare, 1.5.38–48)

Come, you Spirits,
 That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here,
 And fill me from the head to toe to top –full
 Of direst cruelty! Make thick my blood,
 Stop its flow and close the passage to regret,
 So no remorseful visits of Nature
 Shake my savage purpose, nor keeps me from
 What I must do! Come to my woman's breasts,
 And drink my milk for bitter courage,
 You murdering ministers! Come, from that place
 You formless fiends await Nature's mischief.

(Cruz's translation, 1.5.43–52)

On the one hand, Cruz's translation is carefully unobtrusive in conveying the meaning and impact of the speech, but on the other, punctuation and shifts in diction may sharpen the points for a modern audience unfamiliar with the use of "fell" as an adjective.

Tom Bishop, Gina Bloom, and Erika T. Lin's edited collection *Game and Theatre in Shakespeare's England* demonstrates the ways in which theatre engages in mimetic play, improvisation, and game making while also challenging the "rule-bound systems" that underpin game theory and the perception that Shakespearean theater is not inherently playful (11). The book seeks to rewrite this narrative of early modern theatre by framing the work of Shakespeare and his contemporaries as "recreative entertainments" (20). The 11 essays in the volume are divided into 3 parts on (1) the language and practice of game play, (2) staged game playing and theatrical mimesis, and (3) contemporary video games that adapt and play with Shakespeare's works. Katherine Steele Brokaw's "The Role of the Dice and the Whims of Fate in Sixteenth-Century Morality Drama" and

Heather Hirschfeld’s “‘The games afoote’: Playing, Preying and Projecting in Richard Brome’s *The Court Beggar*” both examine the notions of risk and economic speculation in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, respectively. Paul Menzer’s “Bowling Alone, or the Whole Point of No Return,” shows how the anonymous play *Look About You* (1600) depicts bowling as a metaphor not only for social contact in early modern England, but also for the narrative arc and performative risks of theater itself. In describing a scene where a prisoner uses a game of bowling as a pretext for borrowing another’s clothes to escape confinement, Menzer notes that the play stages a “fundamentally uncontainable game and then contains its meaning” within its dramaturgy because, after all, despite the scripted intention, anything could happen once the actor releases the ball (162).

Many of the essays ponder the larger question of what it means to make a game—whether in a Shakespeare play or among contemporary video game developers. Ellen MacKay’s “The Moods of Gamification in *The Tempest*” reads Prospero’s shaping of settings, actions, and behaviors in *The Tempest* as preparing the island’s long-term and shipwrecked inhabitants for the instrumentality of early capitalism’s and colonialism’s demands on their time and labor. Rebecca Bushnell’s chapter examines the video game narrative in *The Wolf Among Us* in order to reflect on the issue of free will in *Hamlet*, thus highlighting the ways that contemporary game making can open up new understandings of Shakespeare’s work.

The books and digital resources reviewed here display remarkable range in interpretations and critical tools for engaging with Shakespeare at the start of the 2020s. Nevertheless, many of these works share the goal of exploring the sensory, cognitive, and socio-cultural realities of living, working, and dying in a period of uncertainty, contagion, and ecological shift.

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