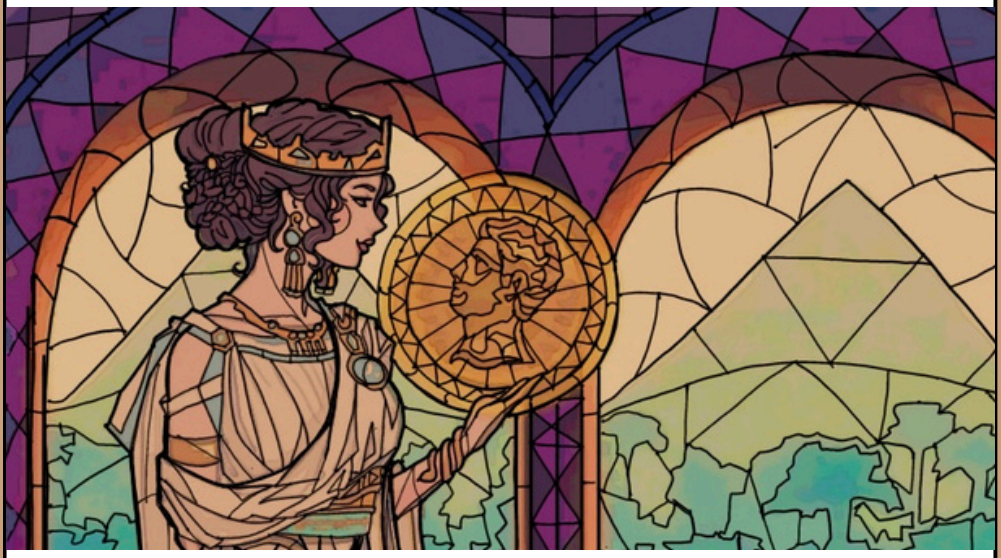
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Special Edition: 2025 UBC Undergraduate Shakespeare Conference Proceedings

Issue 1, Winter 2025

WINTER 2025

ft. Haley Cheng, Grey Fairclough, Jessica Findlay, Maggie Hou, Jess Lee, Adri Marcano, Lauren Michaud, Jeff Oro, Frasier Panton, Olivia Richards, Audrey Vickers, Erin White, Eugene Woo, Liliana Yao

Between Time & Text

a peer-reviewed journal of early modern studies

and contemporary art

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2025 UBC Undergraduate Shakespeare Conference Proceedings

Issue 1

Winter 2025

Between Time and Text is a peer-reviewed journal of early modern studies and contemporary poetry. The journal welcomes submissions of previously unpublished poetry, early modern scholarship, digital illustrations, and multimedia content from artists and academics around the world.

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We would also like to thank all of the performers, musicians, presenters and volunteers who participated in *The Casual Shakespeare Cabaret Series*, a stepping stone that inspired the formation of the *UBC Undergraduate Shakespeare Conference*. Many thanks to Kenyon Alexander, Diana Andrews, Santana Berryman, Amelia Brooker, Theresa Cotton, Sean Fabisch, Carole Fitzgerald, Marlies Green, Meris Goodfellow, Sara McGillivray, Ben Pilger, Daniel Rousell, Dermot Shirley, Ellie Siden, Beni Spieler and Linden Wood.

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Editorial

by CJ McGillivray

UBC Department of English Language and Literatures

In her research on the prominent role that William Shakespeare plays in Canadian public school curricula, scholar Dana Colarusso argues that engaging with the works of Shakespeare "not solely as literary or historical texts but as drama [can augment] his resonance for students" (234). She reasons that "[in] an educational age that values critical literacy, a questioning stance can help revitalize modes of Shakespeare learning" (234). That sense of artistic curiosity and questioning is exactly what inspired and shaped the inaugural *UBC Undergraduate Shakespeare Conference*, which took place on April 1st, 2025 at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, Canada. The purpose of this hybrid conference was to build community, celebrate excellence in undergraduate research, embrace interdisciplinary perspectives, and explore the curious tensions between literary analysis and live performance.

Our call for papers welcomed literary criticism and research proposals from students writing on the following subjects: Shakespearean comedies, dramas and sonnets,

modern adaptations of Shakespearean texts, the life of William Shakespeare, and the work of his contemporaries, including but not limited to Christopher Marlowe, Thomas Heywood, Thomas Middleton, John Webster, Ben Jonson and Thomas Dekker. Students from both UBC Vancouver and UBC Okanagan were encouraged to engage in interdisciplinary research and share their unconventional or unexpected scholarly and artistic perspectives. The overarching goal of our committee was for the conference to function as an inclusive and accessible space where academics, artists, family and friends could engage in rich dialogue, compare perspectives, and connect over our shared passion for early modern literature and drama.

The conference began with an invitation for dialogue and formal acknowledgement that the University of British Columbia Point Grey Campus is located on the traditional, ancestral and unceded territories of the Musqueam people. These lands were never surrendered or abandoned, and their cultural significance to the Musqueam people has never diminished. The conference committee made this land acknowledgement alongside a critical awareness that William Shakespeare occupies a privileged and problematic place in the history of colonialism and academia. One of the goals of the conference was to celebrate William Shakespeare while also engaging in radical

critiques of the elevated role he plays in academia and on stage: "to bring these plays into dialogue with local and contemporary issues, values, and modes of expression" (Colarusso 234). Our aim was to create space for diverse perspectives and to uplift historically underrepresented voices in an ongoing conversation about reconciliation, accessibility and inclusion in academic spaces. Everyone in attendance, both online and in person, was encouraged to reflect on the land where we gathered and to consider our responsibilities not only to the land but also to the caretakers of the land.

The conference program included five research presentations alongside monologue performances by emerging actors from the *Department of Theatre and Film* at the University of British Columbia. Raven Mutford portrayed the cunning and precarious Cressida, confessing her love (Shakespeare, *Troilus and Cressida* 3.2.117-133) and Paula Goldie embodied the delicious ruthlessness of Lady Macbeth, calling upon spirits to fuel her murderous urges (Shakespeare, *Macbeth* 1.5.45-61). The program also featured guest performer Cassie Unger, who gave a presentation on her editing and adaptation process before performing a short excerpt from her contemporary rewrite of *Hamlet*, produced in June 2025 by *Stone's Throw Productions* in Vancouver, British Columbia.

The following pages contain our conference proceedings, including the five research essays produced by senior undergraduate students at the University of British Columbia. Our committee was delighted to receive an exceptionally high number of submissions that were individually read and assessed as part of our double-anonymized peer review process. These five essays stood out because of their unique approach to literary criticism as a living medium with contemporary relevance and palpable excitement. As scholar Sujata Iyengar argues, analyzing and engaging with Shakespeare involves a natural process of transformation because we do not "have access to positivist historical truths" and must therefore reinterpret and adapt with each experience (11). We are constantly remapping and redefining both "him and ourselves with every iteration, appropriating it in the sense that we make it part of our own mental furniture and even our embodiment" (11). The following essays look at Shakespeare from multiple angles, each engaging in a process of transformation and redefinition. Many thanks to Jess Lee, Lauren Michaud, Frasier Panton, Olivia Richards and Liliano Yao for generously sharing their energy and intellectual curiosity.

Community building and collaboration between artists and academics was a core value for our conference committee,

so the essays in this issue are published alongside a small collection of original poems and illustrations by emerging and established artists from across Canada. We hope you find these critical and creative works to be engaging and challenging, but also expansive and generative in delightfully unexpected ways.

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Cleopatra

digital illustration by Adri Marcano

University of British Columbia

A Flower for Ophelia

by Jeff Oro

UBC Department of English Language and Literatures

cascaded upon by colours vivid, on a bed of grass and
sweat and sweet summer heat. face aflame with freckles
smattered across your sunkissed skin. lips rose
tinted and gloss glistened. tongue that tastes like
tomorrow never began. you are how I remember
you, and in my failings, I forget the rest. in another
life: I am a sunflower and I am content facing
you.

untitled

by Audrey Vickers

Ts'msyen Nation

UBC Department of English Language and Literatures

when you approached the river you greeted it gently

a hand, a foot, a leg, an arm

you let it wash over your body

and took a deep breath of icy cold air

you coated your lungs with frost

you spoke to the currents with grace

inhaling deeply, submerging your head

feeling the soft scrape of pebbles against your bare elbows as you dove down

it spoke back

a small school of fish whisking quickly by

a plant tendril grazing your stomach

you'd never felt so full

of life

what does it mean to know something

you were born by the water, you'll die by it too

there's something comforting about having your life

mapped out by the waves in the ocean,

the grains of sand on the shore
the grooves in the trunks of the trees,
the whisper of the wind through the tall grass
what does it mean to be known
being lost on the land
is never something that has occurred to you
how can you be lost when these hills raised you
up, growing until your face was known by the branches
when you emerge from the river, you'll shake with cold
but you'll be
fine as your hair, tangled up in a tight embrace with river debris
and the towel with cartoon characters on it
you'll never part with
this land, it knows you more than anyone else
when you grow up and move away and half forget this
you will have a daughter
she will run through dense grassy fields
barefoot screaming
with laughter
when you hold her tiny hand as she stares in awe
up at the dark trees around you
you'll wonder how you can fear something she holds
in her heart with such reverence

in her hands are the giant maple leaves

you once traced as a child onto wrinkled sheets of paper

for a while, you'll forget where you are

you'll be held by the soil while you hold her

the noise of the wind in the trees and the cawing of the birds

will fade to a lullaby

as you're cradled once again

The Unleashing of Cosmic Cannibalism: Desire as a Cosmic Virus in Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and *Hamlet*

by Jess Lee

UBC Department of English Language and Literatures

William Shakespeare's tragedies *Macbeth* and *Hamlet* are complex examinations of the human psyche, exploring the profound and often destructive effects of unchecked desire. Shakespeare's portrayal of desire in these plays extends beyond personal ambition or yearning; it becomes a metaphysical virus that spreads beyond the individual, contaminating not only the characters' lives but the very social, moral, and cosmic fabric surrounding them. In both plays, desire is not merely a psychological or moral failing; it is a cosmic contagion – an infection that distorts reality, warps moral order, and compels individuals to act in ways that ultimately lead to their undoing. I argue that Shakespeare, in *Macbeth* and *Hamlet*, uses desire as a cautionary tool to illustrate its insidious power, demonstrating how what begins as an innocent or subconscious impulse, when left unchecked, spirals into a devouring force that consumes everything in its path. Through the two works, desire becomes an all-consuming plague, devastating both the protagonists and

the world around them, ultimately exposing the catastrophic consequences of surrendering to it without restraint.

Shakespeare portrays desire as a viral pathogen in *Macbeth*, demonstrating how an innocuous seed of ambition can rapidly mutate into a destructive force consuming both individual and societal moral landscapes. The witches' prophecy introduces the initial vector of desire into Macbeth's psyche, with his passive initial response revealing a latent susceptibility to this psychological infection:

> If chance will have me king, why, chance may
> crown me,
> Without my stir (1.4.157–159).

Lady Macbeth's provocative influence serves as the critical catalyst that transforms his dormant longing into active pursuit, effectively compromising Macbeth's moral immune system and accelerating the viral spread of ambition. The murder of King Duncan marks the pivotal moment of metamorphosis, where Macbeth's desire mutates from a contained infection to a full-blown epidemic that extends beyond individual corruption into a broader systemic breakdown. By illustrating how unchecked ambition can infect an entire social organism, Shakespeare creates a metaphorical exploration of desire's capacity to destabilize not just personal integrity, but entire

political and ethical frameworks, rendering desire a contagion more dangerous than any physical plague.

The initial act of violence in *Macbeth* is crucial, as it establishes a pattern of escalating bloodshed driven by unchecked ambition and fear. Macbeth's desire for power, once a private aspiration, mutates into a self-perpetuating cycle of violence, where each murder necessitates another to maintain his fragile authority. His decision to kill Duncan does not satisfy his ambition but instead deepens his paranoia, compelling him to eliminate Banquo and Fleance in an attempt to secure his reign. This shift is evident in his reflection, "To be thus is nothing, / But to be safely thus" (3.1.52–53), where kingship alone is rendered meaningless without absolute security. Here, Macbeth's ambition evolves into a pathological need for control, one that demands continuous violence to sustain its illusion of stability.

Macbeth's ambition functions as a corrosive force that extends beyond himself, entangling those closest to him – most notably, Lady Macbeth. While she initially wields ambition as a tool for power, urging Macbeth to seize the throne, her complicity in his rise ultimately renders her vulnerable to the very consequences of their unchecked desire. Her psychological unravelling in the sleepwalking scene in Act 5, Scene 1 illustrates

how ambition, once unleashed, cannot be controlled or reversed. Her desperate attempt to purge imagined bloodstains – “Out, damned spot! out, I say!” (5.1.37) – reveals the futility of absolution, as the marks of their crimes exist beyond the physical. The hallucinated stains serve as a metaphor for the irreversible moral decay inflicted by their ambition, demonstrating that power pursued through transgression does not merely corrupt – it consumes. Lady Macbeth’s descent into madness underscores the self- destructive nature of desire; ambition, rather than being a means to control fate, erodes the very agency of those who seek to wield it.

As Macbeth and Lady Macbeth succumb to the contagion of unchecked desire, their ambition metastasizes beyond their own psyches, destabilizing the very fabric of Scotland. The natural world becomes a symbolic register of this moral disintegration, manifesting in strange and ominous disturbances – unnatural weather, the deaths of animals, and the disruption of cosmic order. In Act 2, Scene 4, Ross describes the night of Duncan’s murder: “By th’ clock ’tis day, / And yet dark night strangles the traveling lamp” (2.4.8-9). This inversion of natural rhythms functions as a reflection of the disorder Macbeth has unleashed; his transgression against the legitimate succession is not merely a political act but a rupture

in the moral and cosmic order. The transformation of Scotland from a strong kingdom under Duncan to a diseased and chaotic realm underscores the far-reaching consequences of ambition unmoored from ethical restraint, illustrating how Macbeth's desire functions as a corrupting force that extends beyond the individual to infect the world around him.

In *Hamlet*, desire manifests not as a pursuit of power or physical dominance but as an intellectual fixation that becomes corrosive. Hamlet's relentless quest for knowledge and moral certainty functions as a form of contagion, infecting his thoughts and actions with a paralyzing need for absolute clarity. Rather than empowering him, this desire renders him incapable of decisive action, transforming his intellectual rigor into a self-destructive force. His obsession with uncovering the truth about his father's death becomes less a path to justice and more an endless cycle of doubt and hesitation, demonstrating the destabilizing effects of unchecked introspection.

Hamlet's soliloquy in Act 3, Scene 1, encapsulates this destructive intellectualism. When he asks, "to be, or not to be: that is the question" (3.1.64), he articulates a fundamental existential crisis – whether life, with all its suffering, is worth enduring. His pursuit of certainty, however, does not bring resolution; instead, it consumes him, distorting his judgment and

undermining his ability to act. By fixating on the perfect alignment of justice and morality, Hamlet ensures his inertia. His refusal to avenge his father's murder when the opportunity arises is not merely a delay but a consequence of his internalized need for intellectual and ethical coherence. This paralysis, fueled by his compulsive desire for knowledge, ultimately leads to his downfall, revealing the tragic consequences of an intellect that seeks certainty in a world resistant to it.

Hamlet's desire, much like Macbeth's, operates as a contagion that extends beyond his psyche, shaping and destabilizing the emotional landscapes of those around him. Nowhere is this more evident than in Ophelia, whose tragedy is not merely a consequence of external manipulation but also a product of Hamlet's intellectual obsession. His relentless pursuit of moral and philosophical certainty renders him emotionally inaccessible, and his rejection of Ophelia – both in words and actions – becomes a site where his internal conflicts manifest with devastating consequences. Ophelia's descent into madness underscores the relational toll of Hamlet's inertia; his fixation on abstract ideals isolates him from human connection, with destructive repercussions for those ensnared in his emotional orbit. The play thus presents desire not as an isolated

force within the protagonist but as a volatile presence that permeates and disrupts the lives of others, exposing the inextricable relation between individual obsession and collective suffering.

Denmark's disintegration functions as an externalization of Hamlet's internal crisis, illustrating the inescapable link between personal turmoil and political decay. Hamlet's obsessive introspection and reluctance to act do not remain confined to his psyche; rather, they generate a ripple effect that destabilizes the kingdom. His intellectual paralysis, driven by an unresolved tension between moral idealism and pragmatic action, mirrors the broader collapse of ethical and political order in Denmark. The state's descent into chaos culminating in the violent eradication of its ruling class – reveals how Hamlet's inability to reconcile his desires translates into tangible destruction. Like the corrupting ambition in Macbeth, Hamlet's existential uncertainty functions as a contagion, eroding the structures that uphold both individual agency and state power, ultimately exposing the fragility of governance in the face of unresolved human conflict.

In both *Macbeth* and *Hamlet*, desire operates as a self-perpetuating force, consuming those who indulge in it and expanding beyond their control. In *Macbeth*, ambition does not

simply drive action – it becomes a parasitic force that devours its host. Macbeth's initial crime, the murder of Duncan, is not an end in itself but rather a catalyst for further bloodshed. As he reflects,

> I am in blood
> Stepp'd in so far that, should I wade no more,
> Returning were as tedious as go o'er (3.4.168-170).

Here, Shakespeare reveals that Macbeth's desire is insatiable; having once transgressed moral boundaries, he finds himself unable to stop. Each act of violence reinforces his compulsion for dominance, transforming him into a figure who is both predator and prey – devoured by the very ambition that once empowered him. His unchecked desire ultimately unravels his psyche, his marriage, and his kingdom, underscoring the self-destructive nature of unrestrained ambition. Similarly, in *Hamlet*, desire manifests not as ruthless action but as intellectual paralysis. Hamlet's obsession with certainty and moral justification becomes a recursive trap, preventing him from fulfilling his supposed purpose. He fixates on the need for the "perfect" moment to act, lamenting that "the time is out of joint: O cursed spite, / That ever I was born to set it right!" (1.5.209-210). His awareness of the disorder around him fuels his desire for a grand, calculated resolution, but this very impulse

immobilizes him. Unlike Macbeth, whose unchecked desire leads to overaction, Hamlet's intellectual self-consumption leads to perpetual hesitation. His inability to resolve the tension between thought and action spreads outward, ensnaring those around him – Ophelia, Polonius, Laertes – until it culminates in the play's catastrophic finale. In both tragedies, Shakespeare presents desire as a self-perpetuating force that does not merely drive the protagonist forward but instead consumes them, leaving destruction in its wake.

Both plays paint desire as a corrosive force that unravels not only the protagonists' personal lives but also the moral and cosmic order of their respective worlds. In Macbeth,
ambition operates as a destabilizing contagion, beginning with his initial temptation:

> I have no spur
> To prick the sides of my intent, but only
> Vaulting ambition" (1.7.25-27).

This ultimately escalates into a self-perpetuating cycle of violence. His unchecked pursuit of power dismantles Scotland's natural order, reflected in the imagery of the "dunnest smoke of hell" (1.5.58) that shrouds his ambition, signaling its unnatural and destructive nature. Likewise, in Hamlet, the prince's obsession with intellectual certainty and moral justification

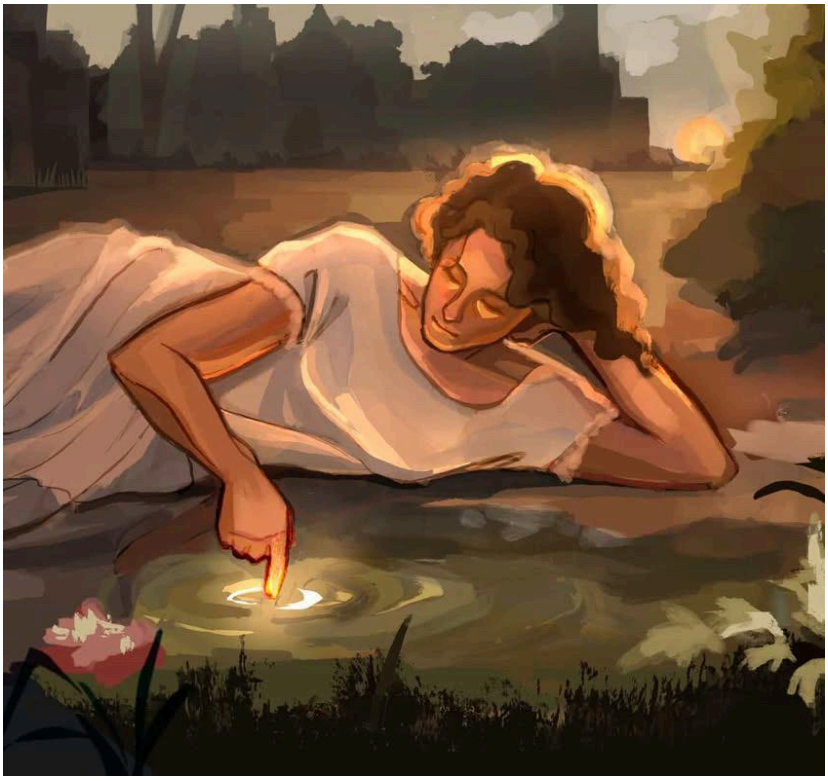
immobilizes him, transforming his desire for truth into a force that consumes both himself and the Danish state. His hesitance – "the native hue of resolution / Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought" (3.1.92-93) – underscores the self-destructive nature of his internal conflict, which ultimately results in Denmark's collapse. Both plays depict inclination as an insatiable force that, once set in motion, resists containment, spreading like a contagion that dismantles individual agency and the stability of the world itself.

Furthermore, through *Macbeth* and *Hamlet,* Shakespeare conceptualizes desire as a cosmic defiling – an insidious force that infiltrates the individual, destabilizes the social order, and wears away the natural world. As Macbeth and Hamlet succumb to their respective desires – Macbeth's for power and Hamlet's for vengeance – they become vectors of destruction, spreading an existential plague that unravels the fabric of reality. These tragedies serve as profound meditations on the metastasizing nature of unchecked longing, revealing how even the most intimate aspirations can spiral into a force that distorts the self, poisons the collective, and fractures the universe. Shakespeare compels readers to reckon with the perilous volatility of desire, illuminating its power to consume not just the dreamer but the dream itself, leaving behind a world infected by its ruin.

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untitled

digital illustration by Maggie Hou

Toronto Metropolitan University

For Ophelia

by Jessica Findlay

North Vancouver, British Columbia

The sun continues to rise
the wind continues to blow
life goes on, as if it doesn't know
that you left me.
You have gone where I cannot follow
into the eye of the storm, that rages on
inside you.

The moon continues to glow
lighting the way forward, from the darkest of times
I left behind.
The stars continue to shine
my heart continues to beat, strong and steady
out of time
with yours.

Dancing through Shakespeare: a Comparative Approach into Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*

by Lauren Michaud

UBC Department of Political Science

Adapting William Shakespeare's plays into dance offers an innovative form of storytelling, transforming Shakespeare's enduring works into dynamic, nonverbal performances. For instance, *Romeo and Juliet*, one of Shakespeare's most widely adapted plays, has been reimagined in countless ways through choreography—each version emphasizing different emotional and thematic elements of the tragic love story. While film and theatrical adaptations of Shakespeare are well-researched, the use of dance as a medium for reinterpreting his works remains an unexplored field. This raises the question: How do choreographic choices in dance adaptations uniquely reinterpret and communicate Shakespeare's original narratives to audiences? Despite the creative potential of dance adaptations, much of the existing research focuses on individual works rather than comparative studies of multiple adaptations. Elizabeth Klett's *Choreographing Shakespeare: Dance Adaptations of the Plays and Poems* provides an essential foundation for this field, examining diverse choreographic styles

and their impact on various plays. However, there is room to extend her work by directly contrasting different choreographic interpretations of the same play, such as *Romeo and Juliet*. My comparative approach allows for a deeper exploration of how specific stylistic and choreographic choices emphasize or reshape Shakespeare's themes, characters, and narrative arcs. This literature review addresses the knowledge gap by analyzing multiple dance adaptations of *Romeo and Juliet*. I focus on how choreographic decisions—from movement vocabulary to thematic emphasis—affect audience interpretation of the play. Given Shakespeare's long-standing establishment in high and popular cultures, educational systems, and public life (particularly in Britain, America, and Europe) it is predictable that his works have supplied lasting material for dance pieces (Klett 8). Klett communicates in her monograph that it is surprising to see the lack of academic analysis of these works, especially given the recent explosion of interest in performance and adaptation studies (8). By comparing adaptations across genres, such as classical ballet and Broadway dance theater, my research demonstrates the diverse ways choreographers use physical expression to highlight different dimensions of the narrative. Ultimately, the approach contributes to a broader understanding of how Shakespeare's work is enriched and

transformed through dance, offering fresh insights into the interplay between literature and movement.

Existing research on Shakespearean dance adaptations lays the groundwork for understanding how movement can reimagine text. Elizabeth Klett's *Choreographing Shakespeare: Dance Adaptations of the Plays and Poems* provides an analysis of diverse dance styles and their interpretive impact on a range of Shakespeare's works, including lesser-known plays (1). Klett argues that dance enables a unique mode of storytelling, one that transcends linguistic barriers to engage audiences through physical expression. Similarly, *The Oxford Handbook of Shakespeare and Dance* offers valuable insights into the historical and cultural contexts of these adaptations, with contributions from scholars such as Ray Miller, Adeline Chevrier-Bosseau, and Mattia Mantellato.

In "Dance in the Broadway Musicals of Shakespeare: Balanchine, Holm, and Robbins" by Ray Miller, there is a focus specifically on the use of dance in Broadway adaptations, differing from the other sources spoken who are taking more of a contemporary and ballet approach. Miller emphasizes how Broadway adaptations merge classical and popular art forms, discussing the cultural and historical implications of fusing Shakespeare's stories with dance in commercial theater (304).

Klett takes a broader approach by examining dance adaptations of Shakespeare across various genres, including ballet, contemporary dance and other performance styles (1). She provides both a broad overview and in-depth analysis of how Shakespeare's poetic language is transformed into the traditionally wordless medium of dance, demonstrating how these dance adaptations go beyond the Shakespearean texts to engage with musical and choreographic influences (1). She does this by bringing attention to choreographers who are further inspired by other modes of Shakespearean performance, like stage plays and films (6). In chapter 2, she shows that it is difficult to detach the musical blockbuster *West Side Story* from a dance version of *Romeo and Juliet* that envisions the central conflict as a form of gang violence and creates a politicized commentary on the oppressive social forces that lead to the lovers' demise (Klett 6). This is interesting because it fits similarly with Mattia Mantellato's analysis of Youri Vamos's *Romeo and Juliet,* which also plays with themes of gang violence (58).

Despite these important contributions, much of the existing literature on Shakespeare and dance focuses on individual case studies or generalized discussions of dance as an interpretive medium. For instance, Ray Miller's work on Broadway musicals highlights the dramatic reinterpretation of

Shakespeare's plays through theatrical dance but does not compare these adaptations to other styles, such as classical ballet or contemporary dance . Chevrier-Bosseau and Mantellato's studies on choreographic storytelling in *Romeo and Juliet* provide detailed analyses of specific productions, but they stop short of exploring the broader implications of contrasting choreographic approaches. This reveals another knowledge deficit: while individual adaptations are well-documented, the comparative analysis of multiple adaptations remains largely unexplored. The lack of analysis in the field limits our understanding of how choreographic choices shape audience interpretations of Shakespeare's plays. For example, while Klett's work highlights the creative potential of dance to reinterpret Shakespeare, it does not directly address how different choreographic styles might emphasize or reshape specific themes, characters, or narrative arcs. I intend to fill that knowledge gap by focusing on *Romeo and Juliet*, a play that has been adapted across diverse dance genres, each offering unique insights into the story's emotional and thematic dimensions. I argue that dance adaptations of *Romeo and Juliet* create a collision of genres, bringing together tragedy, comedy and romance (Klett 52).

To comprehend the impact of choreographic decisions, it is necessary to evaluate the features of various dance forms. Classical ballet, for example, is distinguished by its structural movement and vocabulary, as well as an emphasis on storytelling via precise, defined gestures. In contrast, contemporary dance frequently uses abstract and flowing movements to explore ideas and emotions in novel ways. Broadway choreography incorporates theatricality and dynamic staging, with dance serving as a medium for emotional and narrative expression. These distinct styles serve as a foundation for exploring how much medium interprets *Romeo and Juliet*.

Mattia Mantellato analyzes Youri Vamos's *Romeo and Juliet* in "(Re)Playing Shakespeare through modern dance: Youri Vamos's *Romeo and Juliet*". He describes how this adaptation employs an interesting mix of dance styles from Broadway inspired movements to tango (Mantellato 58). Vamos replaces the traditional feud between the Monague and the Capulets with rival gangster groups, transforming the narrative into a contemporary take of societal conflict (58). Mantellato highlights how Vamos juxtaposes the lovers' poetic, fluid movement vocabulary with the rigid, repetitive motions of the gangsters, emphasizing the transformative power of love against the sterile rigidity of societal constraints (59). Vamos

has produced musicals, was inspired by this genre when he designed his Romeo and Juliet, which had stark influences combined with classical Hollywood cinema (Bosseau 11). Montellato also adds that Vamos took it upon himself to introduce some new characters: Juliet's female companions, who briefly emerge in a short sketch in the first act and then become important in demonstrating the patriarchal dominance that limits them (Montellato 59). This approach not only modernizes the story but also deepens its emotional resonance by contrasting the lyrical intimacy of the lovers with the mechanical hostility of their environment.

Jonas Kellermann's analysis of Sasha Waltz's *Romeo et Juliette* underscores its innovative use of movement and sound (39). Waltz incorporates elements of contact dance and silence, as demonstrated by Romeo's solo performed without music (40). In this scene, the audience hears only the sounds of Romeo's breath and the friction of his movements as he struggles up a platform, a visceral portrayal of grief and longing (Kellermann 41). By stripping away external sound, Waltz compels the audience to engage with the physicality of emotion, creating an intimate and immersive experience that reinterprets Shakespeare's exploration of love and loss. The comparison of Vamos and Waltz's adaptations reveals stark differences in their

choreographic approaches and thematic emphases. Vamos's use of varied dance styles creates a narrative that is both accessible and emotionally evocative, while Waltz's abstract, contemporary choreography challenges traditional interpretations, offering a deeply introspective exploration of the play's emotional core. These differences highlight the versatility of dance as a medium for Shakespearean adaptation, demonstrating how choreographers can reinterpret the same story in ways that resonate with diverse audiences. Incorporating these analyses into a broader discussion of Shakespearean dance adaptation contributes to a more nuanced understanding of how movement reimagines text. The comparative framework not only illuminates the creative potential of dance but also underscores its ability to engage audiences in unique and transformative ways.

All the dances analyzed above follow the same framework Elizabeth Klett lays down in *Choreographing Shakespeare: Dance Adaptations of the Plays and Poems*. Klett communicates that the dances she analyses eventually extend beyond Shakespeare's plays and poetry, and the entire concept of textuality itself (5). Choreographers accomplish this by highlighting the beauty of pure movement (Klett 4). Dance, when detached from textual concerns, is about bodies moving

through space, and is capable of producing kinesthetic responses from the audience (Klett 8). Despite being seated during a dance performance, audience members feel the movement kinaesthetically, through a knowledge of their own bodies (Klett 8).

Dance adaptations of Shakespeare's works, particularly *Romeo and Juliet*, transcend linguistic bounds and textual accuracy, allowing listeners a visceral and highly emotional involvement with his timeless stories. By transforming Shakespeare's characters and plots into physical expression, choreographers reimagine his stories in ways that are uniquely attuned to the sensory and kinesthetic experiences of their audiences. Choreographic choices – ranging from precise structure of classical ballet to the fluid abstraction of contemporary dance and the dynamic theatricality of Broadway – reshape Shakespeare's plays into powerful, nonverbal forms of storytelling that emphasize different dimensions of the original texts. By comparing adaptations such as Youri Vamos's fusion of classical and modern styles and Sasha Waltz's abstract, introspective choreography, it becomes evidence that dance has the capacity not only to reinterpret but also expand on Shakespeare's narratives, reflecting the sociocultural contexts and artistic intentions of each production. These adaptations

demonstrate the movement's creative potential for highlighting themes of love, loss, and societal struggle in ways that resonate with a wide range of viewers. This comparative approach demonstrates the transforming ability of dance as a medium for Shakespeare adaptation, focussing on the beauty and expressiveness of pure movement rather than textuality. It shows how choreographers may use physicality to engage audiences in a kinaesthetic dialogue, letting them to experience Shakespeare's work through the universal language of movement. Dance adaptations not only preserve but also revitalise Shakespeare's legacy, demonstrating the work's ongoing relevance and versatility.

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Contemplating Joy

by Grey Fairclough

Selkirk First Nation

Her presence serene

A cozy autumn garden

The sun, her smile

The Future In The Instant: The Dialectics Of Finitude and Infinity in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*

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"Something becomes an other; this other is itself somewhat; therefore it likewise becomes an other, and so on ad infinitum."

— Hegel, *Encyclopedia*

Time is arguably the defining theme of *Macbeth*. Although most tragedies are concerned with time, particularly linear time and its relationship to death, *Macbeth* is singularly obsessed with time and is saturated by this obsession at all levels. There is a "verbal obsession" (Foster 325) with time in *Macbeth*, with constant references and allusions to time through the use of short, sharp words to make speech fast, and even the length of the play and the pacing of the acts, giving the play its uniquely frenzied and feverish pace. Fitting to its theme, *Macbeth* can be seen as a play which in part is grappling with, and responding to, the clash between old and emerging ideas of time in the early modern period. Written when "entropy governed the understanding of time" in the sciences, but before

thinkers such as Hegel "gave decisive form to the notion of time as progress," *Macbeth* "predicts modernity's reduced emphasis on the eternal and increased attention to modern life lived in time" (Macdonald 76). If *Macbeth*, through its general themes, deals with new conceptions and questions about finitude, then by dialectical necessity it deals with infinity in the same manner. Through this dialectic, *Macbeth* explores the tragedy of human ambition in a universe where infinity is seen to be composed of an endless series of finite moments.

In exploring the contradiction between new and old modes of time, *Macbeth* acts as a microcosmic exploration of corresponding new modes of being. An understanding of time in Shakespeare is therefore crucial. Summarizing key findings from modern Shakespeare scholars, Macdonald explains the three dimensions of temporality which give structure to Shakespeare's plays: "linear existential time,[…]cyclical time,[and]providential time" (78-79). According to Macdonald, tragedy is created when the "providential sense of time is backgrounded" by linear time (81-82). If time can be seen as "a field of possibility in which human beings both act and are simultaneously acted upon" (87) in Shakespeare, then the near-absolute foregrounding of linear time in *Macbeth* is "the manifestation of what it means to exist in a world radically accelerated toward a mode of

being[…]in which temporality collapses into functional instantaneity" (Marchitello 433). Macbeth acts upon time through a sort of will to power in what Marchitello conceptualizes as a drive to "real time," defined as a "willed collapse of duration" (444), where Macbeth's ambitions attempt to do away with the past and bring the future into the present. Time then acts on Macbeth by trapping him in a paradoxical infinity of a ceaseless sequence of finite moments striving after an unattainable present.

The framing of time as a whole is done through the witches, who through their facilitation of the natural and supernatural represent a kind of dialectic between temporal finitude and atemporal eternity. The very first line of the play, "When shall we three meet again?" (Shakespeare 1.1.1), sets a cyclical frame around the linear time the witches both stand above and set into motion. The use of "when" solidifies the ambiguous nature of the witches and their relationship to time in the play, as it can refer to both past and future. Inhabiting "an anarchic, richly ambiguous zone both in and out of official society" (Eagleton 3), they also inhabit an ambiguous zone in nature: Banquo asks "what are these,[…]That look not like th'inhabitants o'th'earth/And yet are on't?" (1.3.34-6) when the witches appear, and Macbeth says that "what seemed corporal

melted/As breath into the wind" when they vanish" (1.3.76-7). Their unnatural timelessness is paradoxically expressed in these lines through the language of finitude, and the contradiction they embody is symbolically important for setting *Macbeth* into motion. Their ability to transcend the moment and collapse duration becomes "the model for Macbeth's own attempts to create himself anew" (Marchitello 444), but this model "undermines Macbeth from within" and reveals "a lack which hollows his being into desire" making him "a floating signifier in ceaseless, doomed pursuit of an anchoring signified" (Eagleton 2-3). The reason this model begets tragedy for Macbeth is because "[t]he witches subversiveness moves within cyclical time" and is "inimical to linear history," while the Macbeth's live in linear history, and thus their impulse to transgress time "is an endless expansion of the self in a single trajectory … for some ultimate mastery which will never come" (4).

In their dialectical unification of supernatural and natural and consequently the different modes and tenses of time, the witches embody what Hegel would term a "being-for-self" which dialectically "contains distinction absorbed and annulled in itself", while the Macbeth's inhabit a "bad infinity," which is defined as an "infinite progression" of instances "continually going forwards and backwards beyond this limit". This bad

infinity “creates an impassable gulf” between the finite and the infinite and reduces “the infinite to finitude” and makes “a finite infinite”. Hegel’s concept of bad infinity is not just a critique of a false concept of time, but the ontological consequences of this concept, saying “thought fails in the face of this conception of the immeasurable, just as a dream, in which one goes on and on down a corridor which stretches away endlessly out of sight, finishes with falling or fainting”. Failure of thought is intimately connected to the relationship between Macbeth’s tragedy and the collapse of time, as for example when Macbeth says “the very firstlings of my heart shall be/the firstlings of my hand” (4.4.163-4). Bad infinity, representing the conception of time in mechanical sciences, can be seen as a mode of existence which, making finitude and infinity an irresolvable paradox rather than parts of a dialectical whole, traps human volition in a “futile and empty” (Hegel) existence of an endless pursuit of what cannot be attained. Macbeth is “an infinite will in a finite, transient body” (Foster 325), and represents the “bourgeois individualist appetite”, which in its “ruthless drive to be all” only “sunders every constraint and collapses into nothing” (Eagleton 4-5).

The collapse of time defines much of the figurative language in the soliloquies of the first act, where this dialectic is

set into motion. After Macbeth returns, Lady Macbeth greets him by saying "Great Glamis, worthy Cawdor, Greater than both by the all-hail hereafter!": once Macbeth returns and both are aware of the prophecy, "the ignorant present" becomes "the future in the instant" (1.5.51-55). From here on, present and future, the instant and the eternal, temporality and atemporality, conflict with and juxtapose each other, driving the sickening and ceaseless motion towards ultimate collapse. Macbeth's first soliloquy uses language which connotes the dialectic between the finite and the infinite: the famous line that "this blow/Might be the be-all and the end-all" (1.7.4) shows Macbeth's desire to collapse time, to have the instant achieve its opposite in the "be-all". After these lines, Macbeth says "here,/But here, upon this bank and shoal of time,/we'd jump the life to come" (1.7.4-6). His hope that he could avoid all consequence for his action is a desire to end the cause and effect of the universe that presents itself as a limit on his ambition: he is lamenting the existence and passage of time by portraying it as a river, something which itself is in an endless, aimless motion, but also something that creates separation, such as between what Macbeth wants and does not have. At the end of the soliloquy, Macbeth confesses that he has no justification for the murder but "Vaulting ambition,/which o'erleaps itself,/And falls on th'other (1.7.26-8).

Macbeth's volition is aimed at a goal he cannot attain: His attempts to overcome the contradiction between his volition and his desire for an impossible lived permanence becomes the basis for his undoing.

The second and third act represent the dissolution of temporality into the atemporality of bad infinity, a timelessness within time. Language of sleep, death, and their relation to time dominate in these acts. By murdering Duncan in his sleep, Macbeth believes he hears a voice say "Glamis hath murdered sleep, and therefore Cawdor/Shall sleep no more, Macbeth shall sleep no more" (2.2.39-40). For Macbeth to have murdered sleep is in some ways to have murdered time, for sleep is "the death of each day's life" and "great nature's second course" (2.2.35-6), the dialectical opposite of waking life which is necessary for the progress of time. Macbeth's eternal waking from here on out resembles a waking death, an eternal present moment with no intervals to differentiate time. Macbeth admits this after the body is discovered when he says "Had I but died an hour before this chance/I had lived a blessed time; for from this instant/There's nothing serious in Mortality … Renown and grace is dead" (2.3.87-9). This is the "timelessness of hell" (Macdonald 86), where the achievement of the present he wanted infinitely compels him beyond. Macbeth's first soliloquy, opening with "To

be thus is nothing/But to be safely thus" (3.1.47-8), expresses his desire to exist outside of time, but the timelessness he achieves is not the security of a timeless, eternal moment, but rather the eternity of endless motion propelling him from each moment to the next. This paradoxical timelessness occurs because the progress of bad infinity, as Hegel explains, is "not a real advance but a repetition of one and the same thing, a positing, a sublating, and then again a positing and again a sublating, an impotence of the negative, for what it sublates is continuous with it, and in the very act of being sublated returns to it". Time for Macbeth is no longer a becoming, but a permanent undoing and entrapment in finitude which can only be stopped by death.

The very structure of the fifth act shows the undoing of time. Few scenes are longer than a page. The beginning of the end comes with the soliloquy in the fifth scene. After this soliloquy, seven scenes pass in six pages. His reaction to the death of his wife is "She should have died hereafter./There would have been time for such a word" (5.5.16-7). The literal meaning seems to be that she should have died after the battle, but could arguably be an equivocation, as "hereafter" can mean "from here on out", ie. she would have died at some point regardless. This interpretation adds to the nihilistic embrace of death in the rest of the act. Macbeth's image of "tomorrow, and tomorrow,

and tomorrow/Creeps in this petty pace from day to day" (5.5.18-9) is the perfect metaphor for the bad infinity of linear time: an endless, aimless progression "to the last syllable of recorded time", where "our yesterdays have lighted fools/The way to dusty death" (5.5.20-2). For Macbeth, "a billion tomorrows cannot finally be distinguished from the plural yesterday" (Foster 334), and with a nihilistic consciousness of the futility of his condition, Macbeth can only embrace the destruction at the basis of his existence by wishing "th' estate o' th' world were now undone" (5.5.49).

With Macbeth's death at the end of the play, many critics argue that Macduff and Malcolm restore a "rich, meaningful sense of time": Malcolm, who merely one act ago informed the audience that "black Macbeth/Will seem as pure as snow" (4.3.52-3) if his vices were exposed, has now, with "the grace of grace", set the time free (5.11.38). This interpretation reduces time to a purely subjective realm and to a kind of symbolism. The play, opening with rebellion and the murder of the King by one of his greatest fighters, already implies that all was not well before Macbeth became tyrant. The line of bad infinity stretches into a circle: Malcolm's rule "is not a redemption but another belated repetition" (Foster 336) of the warfare, rebellion, murder, and betrayal inherent in that form of being where ambition inevitably

clashes with the bad infinity of linear time. The end of the play opens time up again, not in a free manner, but deterministically, the beginning and end making the audience reflect on the patterns of linear time. *Macbeth* should not be seen as a reactionary moral tale about the danger of ambition or the immorality of a world without a "higher power", but rather about how "[t]he will must be delivered from its aversion to time and transience if ever it is to be delivered from the impulse to degrade what is transient" (Foster 337).

Foster suggests one answer to this in the play is the "figurative triumph over time" (336) achieved by art and poetry, as the play exposes the "impotence of kings before time" which is "contrasted with the dramatist's power to recover the past, and to impose upon it his own order, by means of poetic figuration" (337). This would give an ironic double meaning to Macbeth's comparisons of humans to actors and life as a tale, since it is the artist, Shakespeare, who achieves what Macbeth fails, and forces Kings in the real world "to learn the art of playing to get their living" (340). *Macbeth's* ambiguous ending may not provide clear answers, but in the manner which it explores time in general and the relation of the finite to the infinite in particular, intervenes in ongoing debates about meaning, agency, and the impotency of social order and ambition when faced with the

paradox of entropic time, infinite forward and backward but composed of decaying finite units, and leaves the building of conclusions up to the audience, a call to participate in the art itself and, through that, participate in the building of the solution to the tragic condition presented in the play.

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CURRENT EVENTS

by Erin White

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The dog might howl forever, if unleashed

As any loving thing is bound to do

The body of the storm is blind belief

The hound is sound and knowing in the centre.

We kneel before the Operation Orders

With weapons wrought in iron's imitant

We spill our holy wine along the borders

We feed unsinging pitches to the fever

With artless vices gripping Bethlehem

Some holy beast is waiting in the wings

It gathers ammunition to condemn

It slouches to the servers to be infinite.

We scour the open ocean, filling wounds with information,

seeking some dark replication of the truth.

Nested Hellish Tales: An Explorative Analysis of Stories, Narrative, Allusion, and Authorship in Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*

by Olivia Richards

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Down to its most fundamental components, *Titus Andronicus* engages and complicates ideas of storytelling. For instance, even in contemporary scholarship, the play's authorship is undetermined. Was William Shakespeare the sole author? Was it George Peele, whose distinct syntax and diction are seemingly present in certain sections of *Titus Andronicus* (Merriam 97)? Or was it a collaboration between the two? How about all of the editors that have attempted to sterilize, manipulate or otherwise alter the play, such as Edward Ravenscroft, whose 1687 version of the play attempted to remove any suspected traces of Peele from the play and, in doing so, fundamentally changed its story, characters, and themes? Are they authors in their own right (Packard 281)? Even the most qualified of Shakespeare scholars have yet to resolve these questions, but the debate regarding the authorship of *Titus Andronicus* very appropriately illustrates how storytelling, narrative and authorship are complicated by the play. Ideas of

storytelling and authorship surround *Titus Andronicus* in both its historical and scholarly contexts, but this essay illustrates how complicated notions of storytelling exist not only surrounding the text but also within its pages.

Storytelling operates on a number of intriguing levels throughout *Titus Andronicus*, and this essay produces an analytic and investigative inventory of the ways storytelling functions in conjunction with Tamora, one of the play's most prolific tale-tellers. First, I explore the ways Tamora functions as an author, creating a revenge narrative for herself by weaving fictitious tales which then incite action, thereby manifesting the falsities she authors into her reality. Through her tale-based pursuit of revenge, Tamora harms the Andronici family greatly; in this respect, the revenge narrative she authors is a success. However, as the play progresses and her growing web of falsities inflates her power, she becomes overconfident in her narrative weaving abilities, eventually leading to the demise of her and her sons. Through an analytical reading of Tamora's connections to stories, lies, and plots, I illustrate the workings of stories and storytelling within the play, particularly how authorship, allusion, and meta-tales manifest in the creation, expression, and dissolving of feminine power and agency.

When Tamora pleads with Saturninus, asking that he spare Titus' life, he questions his new wife's motives, asking why she would suggest a course of action that would dishonor him (Shakespeare 1.1.433-438). Tamora responds with a speech, stating, "The gods of Rome forfend / I should be author to dishonour you" (1.1.439-440). To employ an aspect of Shakespeare's storytelling in *Titus Andronicus* and use the language of the body, this moment from Tamora reads as tongue-in-cheek. She states that the gods of Rome will not permit her to dishonour her husband, the Emperor Saturninus, yet she actively engages in adultery with Aaron, and her plan for revenge against the Andronici involves the murder of his brother Bassianus. Furthermore, she specifically states that it is the "gods of Rome" that prevent her from authoring dishonour towards the Emperor, but Tamora is a Goth—she does not worship the "gods of Rome." Tamora describes her feelings toward Titus, the Roman public, and even the "gods of Rome," screaming out to the Roman public, "O cruel, irreligious piety" (1.1.133). Here, Tamora points towards the paradoxical nature of Rome, its leaders, and its gods; they claim to be pious and noble, yet they are simultaneously cruel and irreligious. Tamora proclaims that she neither worships nor respects the figureheads of Rome—Titus in particular, but also the governing

leaders, the general public, and presumably the gods of Rome, all of which were present for this, the play's opening scene, which is set in a public forum of Rome. This context further illuminates the tongue-in-cheek nature of Tamora's claim that "the gods of Rome forfend / I should be author to dishonor you," because if the gods of Rome have no power over her, they are unable to prevent the authoring of the Emperor's dishonor (1.1.439-440). Though the Emperor is ignorant to this context, Tamora promises a threat here, rather than earnestly soothing his worries. Furthermore, the use of the word "author" here is especially intriguing, because it reads as a meta-comment from Shakespeare (or whichever author was responsible for this particular line) in which he points towards Tamora as an author in her own right. She tells stories, creates plots, alters the lives of many characters, and even gets in costumes and plays a character (as Shakespeare himself did in many of his plays) within her revenge narrative in Act 5, Scene 2. The word "author" also links the act of storytelling to the realization of material consequences and action. The gods of Rome may attempt to "forfend," but Tamora acknowledges that she has the authorial capacity to dishonor the almighty Emperor of Rome—and, as the gods of Rome have no power over the Queen of Goths, she does.

Alongside Shakespeare and Tamora herself, Aaron also uses the language of storytelling to position Tamora as a manipulative force capable of creating convincing falsities. Aaron describes Tamora, stating, "This goddess, this Semiramis, this nymph, / this siren that will charm Rome's Saturnine" (1.1.507). Aaron is arguably the character in the play who best knows the authentic Tamora (rather than the character of the Empress she writes for herself in her revenge tale), and he states that Tamora is akin to beautiful, powerful, and manipulative feminine figures from mythology, from fables, tales and stories. The term goddess presents her as oppositional to the "gods of Rome" discussed above: Semiramis is an alluring femme fatale, nymphs often depicted as tricksters with malleable forms, and sirens are alluring aquatic figures who manipulate the minds of sailors with their siren songs and beauty, eventually leading them to their demise. Aaron invoking the siren is significant because it connects storytelling and song in a way that mirrors and distorts the story of Philomela in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (and thus the story of Lavinia, whose position in the play is deeply entrenched in Ovid's story). Philomela, who was sexually violated and silenced much like Lavinia, is able to tell her story and her truth, and can therefore pursue justice. In doing so, she is transformed into the nightingale, a bird renowned for its pure

and beautiful birdsong. The song of the nightingale, then, is symbolic of truth and justice. This is entirely oppositional to the function of the siren song, music rooted in falseness and manipulation for the purpose of inciting violence. Through the invocation of the siren, and later the workings of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* in relation to Lavinia and her pursuit of truth, the dichotomy of storytelling and the expression of feminine agency is revealed. Tamora invokes storytelling (or song, to use the metaphor of the nightingale and the siren) in a way that is inherently false and violent; she tells lies and weaves plots based on falseness to pursue revenge and destroy her enemies. In contrast, Lavinia tells her story and sings her song to purvey the truth and incite justice.

Tamora is seen weaving plots in efforts to achieve violent revenge against the Andronici throughout the play, although some of this revenge is co-authored, much like *Titus Andronicus* itself. Tamora also uses language which conjures ideas of storytelling, another facet of meta-storytelling. After Saturninus discovers his murdered brother Bassianus, Tamora states: "Then all too late I bring this fatal writ, / The complot of this timeless tragedy" (2.2.280). Here, Tamora delivers a note written by Aaron that falsely points towards the Andronici as the orchestrators of Bassianus' death. The false story told by Tamora, namely that

the Andronici are responsible for Bassianus' death, is augmented by a note written by Aaron. This is an instance of collaborative authorship within a potentially collaborative play: Tamora and Aaron collaboratively weave a narrative that facilitates Tamora's revenge against the Andronici. Notably, Aaron's contribution is quite literally a piece of writing, which Tamora then contextualizes, builds upon and presents. This mirrors the way scholars presume Peele and Shakespeare may have collaborated, with Peele writing a few scenes and Shakespeare expanding, contextualizing, and presenting the remainder (Merriam 97). Tamora's language also creates meta-connections to Shakespeare and his world of storytelling. Specifically, Tamora refers to Bassianus' death and the surrounding circumstances (which she, her sons, and her co-author Aaron are responsible for orchestrating) as a "timeless tragedy," which speaks to the genre-based storytelling of by Shakespeare and his contemporaries, and to the very play in which these words are contained: the "timeless tragedy" of *Titus Andronicus*.

Though Tamora's storytelling is successful in inciting violence and facilitating revenge throughout much of the play—her co-authored revenge plot to frame the Andronici for killing Bassianus results in the death of two of Titus'

sons—Tamora's ever-growing confidence regarding her ability to shape reality through storytelling eventually becomes deluding to herself, rather than those around her. Tamora describes this brash confidence: "I will enchant old Andronicus / With words more sweet and yet more dangerous / than baits to fish or honey-stalks to sheep" (4.4.88-90). Tamora's language here conjures the imagery Aaron used to describe her earlier in the play—she figures herself as an enchantress with words both sweet and dangerous, much like how Aaron presents Tamora as a siren, a manipulative creature of great beauty, but also great danger. Tamora continues by stating:

> For I can smooth his aged ears
> With golden promises that, were his heart
> Almost impregnable, his old ears deaf,
> Yet should both ear and heart obey my tongue. (4.4.95-98)

Tamora's overconfidence is on full display here. Although the tales she weaves are dissonant with reality, she seems to think that her power, agency, and ability to inflict her will through storytelling is unstoppable—that even if Titus' heart were "impregnable" or his "ears deaf," her ability to impose her will through storytelling would still be inescapable. Titus, however, illustrates that Tamora's thinking is flawed, stating:

I knew them all, though they supposed me mad,
And will o'erreach them in their own devices -
a pair of cursed hellhounds and their dam (5.2.142-144).

Titus references "hellhounds and their dam," yet again pulling in the language of mythology, highlighting the centrality of tales and storytelling to the play and its final conflict. Furthermore, it is Tamora's invariable confidence in her storytelling abilities that directly leads to her demise—she "supposed [Titus] mad" and felt sure that "both ear and heart obey [her] tongue." It turns out that Titus was not the one deluded by her storytelling; rather, she became so tangled in her web of lies and plot threads, that she wrongly assumed her storytelling capacity for shaping the world around her was infallible. Additionally, when Titus was, in fact, not mad and did not obey, her sons were left vulnerable to his acts of revenge: killing them both and cooking them into a pie for Tamora.

Titus' culinary revenge plot, interestingly, is one of the many manifestations of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* in *Titus Andronicus*. Another instance of this allusion manifesting in the plot of the play is when Aaron, Chiron and Demetrius draw inspiration from the story for their violent attack against Lavinia. They quite literally reference the tale as they hatch their plan, and remove her tongue as Tereus does to Philomela. Marcus

also draws on Ovid in an "eloquent rhetorical escape from the insufferable immediacy of finding his savaged niece," (Weber 698). Marcus states, "Fair Philomela, why she but lost her tongue, / And in a tedious sampler sewed her mind; / But, lovely niece, that mean is cut from thee" (2.3.38-40). Here, Marcus describes how Lavinia's capacities for liberation have been stolen from her, particularly her ability to tell her story, to speak, sing, or weave. Marcus describes how Lavinia is unable to follow in the footsteps of Ovid's Philomela, who "sewed her mind" in a way that Lavinia cannot recreate after the violent removal of her hands. Her attackers, Chiron and Demetrius, directly follow in the footsteps of Tereus, and are even inspired by him. But as Marcus points out, Lavinia cannot follow in Philomela's footsteps. She must diverge from the story, losing almost all agency and power (with her father making decisions for her) until she is reunited with Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and regains her power by using the text to convey her truth—she uses the story of Philomela to tell her own. Storytelling and having the access to stories, in this instance, is directly linked to the creation, expression, and dissolution of feminine agency and power.

Scholar William Weber explores the many manifestations of Ovid's text in *Titus Andronicus*, concluding that "For the characters of the play, allusion propels action - but this action is

invariably violent; allusion creates both meaning and death, both communication and devastation" (701). He continues, stating, "Allusion creates; allusion destroys." This dichotomy of allusions that Weber describes is undoubtedly evident through the manifestations of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* in *Titus Andronicus*. The text inspires gruesome acts of rape, mutilation, murder, and cannibalism, while also lending itself to the pursuit of truth and liberation for young Lavinia. I argue that it is not only allusion, however, that can create "both meaning and death, both communication and devastation," that can "create" and "destroy." Storytelling also functions this way throughout the play, particularly as it pertains to Tamora. As argued above, Tamora uses authorship and co-authorship to successfully gain power and work towards avenging (or revenging) her son by creating chaos, suffering, and violence within the Andronicus family. Her storytelling not only deludes others, but disconnects her from reality as well, manifesting in a false confidence that eventually leads to her gruesome demise. As Aaron says, Tamora is a siren, a mythic figure that is both alluring and deadly. To echo her own phrasing, Tamora uses "words more sweet and yet more dangerous / than baits to fish or honey-stalks to sheep" (4.4.89-90). Throughout *Titus Andronicus*, Tamora and her storytelling function to create

meaning, communication, death, and devastation, much like allusions. She and her stories have the power to both create and destroy.

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Romeo and Juliet

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Honest performance

Awkward unrefined passion

Exciting efforts

The Parallels Between Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and the Model Minority Myth Through the Lens of Asian American and Asian Diaspora Studies

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The rifts in the fields of literary and cultural studies over the pedestalization of William Shakespeare as the most monumental playwright to grace the planet are the very same rifts readers have begun to teeter on polarizing sides of as they contest the universality of his texts, which have immunized him against criticism about his place in the Western canon. The gnawing skepticism of this universality is predominantly rooted in misgivings about Shakespeare, and the Western canon, as the epitome of Eurocentrism, which should not be misconstrued as a disavowal of his cross-cultural impact on other forms of art. For example, the 1957 film *Throne of Blood*, directed by Japanese filmmaker Akira Kurosawa, drew *Macbeth* from numerous plays of the Shakespearean corpus that have been cited as a generative source of inspiration for artists to reimagine and transpose the text. These artists engage in a balancing act of maintaining their own artistic integrity, as well as the original's thematic essence, which appears in favour of the universality of Shakespeare. Nonetheless, a caveat to upholding *Throne of*

Blood as sufficient evidence of the universality of Shakespeare is its intentional and blatant association to *Macbeth* as a derivative work. While *Throne of Blood* situates the plot of *Macbeth* in feudal Japan amidst other minor discursions from the original play, the film hinges on *Macbeth*'s iconography for its themes to be accentuated as distinctly Macbethian. In other words, *Macbeth*'s themes need not to be pierced by swords, protected by armour, nor splattered with blood in a derivative work to cast the wide net of universal appeal that it ought to suggest for its readership.

The universal appeal of *Macbeth*'s themes cannot be explored without initially considering the ways in which the formulation of those themes are tethered to both the representation of characters and the role of readers. This emphasis on character/reader as the crux of the issue stems from interdisciplinary approaches of fields such as post/anti/decolonial studies, which seek to deconstruct the everlasting repercussions of the concept of universality, as historically synonymous with Western centrality, on marginalized communities. The field seeks to treat those communities not as objects of research but legible peoples entitled to individual and collective personhood. On that note, one may anticipate that such methodologies would foreclose the universality of

Shakespeare because his most renowned works depict a life too far removed from other cultural realities to be deemed universal. While this is a valid argument against the universality of Shakespeare, a more nuanced uptake reckons that much of *Macbeth*'s themes have the potential to resonate with other cultural realities, as they too struggle with hierarchies, ambition, identity, and language. But their stories, fictional or not, are nowhere near as circulated, let alone hailed as is *Macbeth*.

A prime example of this idea is the model minority myth associated with Asian Americans. The term *myth* encapsulates an attempt to acknowledge the circulation of the falsity of the model minority, and yet, distances itself from an effort to disclose its obverse. Kristy Shih and fellow scholars describe this term as one which refers to the stereotype by which white Americans have alienated Asian Americans as a monolithic, "hardworking, successful, and law-abiding ethnic minority that has overcome hardship, oppression, and discrimination," flattening the diversity of Asian Americans. (Shih et al. 414). Ellen Wu expands on the origins of this sociocultural phenomenon in the West as having been developed by values of self-reliance, valorization of family, and reverence for education in Asian culture, values that have then been co-opted to undermine and justify struggles with ambition, language, meritocracy, sacrifice,

and a sense of identity among Asian Americans (Wu 243). Thus, discussions of the model minority myth can involve a close reading of *Macbeth*, whereby comparisons between its characters and Asian Americans reveal their shared experiences with enduring hardship in the name of the ascension of socioeconomic status. This close reading is not to promote the idea that the themes of either align perfectly with the other, nor is it to minimize or reduce the experiences unique to Asian Americans. Furthermore, a reading of *Macbeth* through the lens of Asian diaspora studies does not intend to provide a definitive answer to Shakespeare's universality but rather to demonstrate that its popularity and familiarity can uplift these stories by placing them in conversation together. Not to mention, the close reading demonstrates why readers, especially students who may have little say in the mandatory readings of Shakespeare in academia, should be encouraged to discover unique means through which to identify with and grasp his works.

A parallel between *Macbeth* and the reality of the model minority myth is the familial pressure to achieve greatness for one's family. In *Macbeth*, Lady Macbeth demands her husband murder Duncan for kingship. Asian parents may also expect their children to excel in academics and extracurriculars for greater job prospects. The similarity between their situations is twofold.

Lady Macbeth's way of speaking while coercing Macbeth into the murder of Duncan resembles a parenting style commonly associated with Asian parents called "tiger parenting." In her journal article, "Does 'Tiger Parenting' Exist? Parenting Profiles of Chinese Americans and Adolescent Developmental Outcomes," Su Yeong Kim et al. define it as "the ferocity with which [parents] discipline their children and for their emphasis on the importance of family obligation and academic achievement" (1). Although Lady Macbeth is not Macbeth's mother, she speaks to him in a ferocious, patronizing tone when he doubts their plan to murder Duncan:

> From this time
> Such I account thy love. Art thou afeard
> To be the same in thine own act and valor
> As thou art in desire? Wouldst thou have that
> Which thou esteem'st the ornament of life,
> And live a coward in thine own esteem,
> Letting "I dare not" wait upon "I would"
> Like the poor cat i' th' adage? (1.7.38-44)

Lady Macbeth uses condescending words such as "coward" and "cat" to shame her husband into murdering Duncan. Despite the successful murder, Macbeth is then subject to emotional turmoil throughout his reign (3.1.67-76). Likewise, tiger parenting has

ripple effects on children. Kim et al. note that while tiger parents attempt to discipline their children, they inadvertently instill in them a "strong sense of academic pressure and family obligation" (5). Moreover, they criticize tiger parenting for "decreas[ing] parent-child bonding [and] leading adolescents to develop an increased sense of alienation from their parents" (5).

Another similarity between their situations arises from Rahman and Tajuddin's examination of Lady Macbeth's cruelty. They argue that her "ambition for her husband and herself … proved fatal to him, far more so than the prophecies of the witches; but even when she pushed him into murder she believed she was helping him to do what he merely lacked the nerve to attempt" (138). In other words, Rahman and Tajuddin contend that Lady Macbeth is not cruel as she assists her husband with what she has perceived to be a common goal between them. Her behaviour resembles that of some Asian parents whose way of parenting does not stem from cruelty but hope for their children. In Lisa Sun-Hee Park's article, "Continuing Significance of the Model Minority Myth: The Second Generation," she states that Asian parents project their own ambitions and meritocratic views onto their children in efforts to steer them onto a path of success (138). Park notes that the "model minority

myth wholly endorses the American Dream of meritocracy and democracy with the notion that anyone regardless of race, class, or gender has an equal opportunity to work hard and consequently is justly rewarded for their labo[u]r th[r]ough economic upward mobility" (138). She insinuates that the model minority myth depicts meritocracy, but not the specific sacrifices often required of Asian North Americans in their pursuit of success. Although *Macbeth*'s characters and Asian North Americans pursue different goals, they both may find themselves contemplating whether or not their goals are worthwhile.

Another area of common interest between *Macbeth* and the model minority myth is hardships with language. Throughout the play, Macbeth struggles with the witches' equivocation as he seeks answers about his fate. A prominent example of his struggle is his misinterpretation of their prophecy that "none of woman born / Shall harm Macbeth" (4.1.79-80). This example emphasizes the repercussions of language barriers as Macbeth's misinterpretation of the prophecy leads him to his death (5.7.39-52). If the witches serve as maternal figures like Chamberlain suggests in her argument about gender ambiguity, Macbeth's struggles mirror those of Asian North Americans who lose their abilities to communicate in their

parents' mother tongues (Park 137). The model minority myth suggests that Asian North Americans achieve success when they work or study at reputable North American institutions, which usually require proficient English communication. The model minority myth's definition of success, however, is limited to socioeconomic status, as it disregards how language barriers can strain the relationship between parents and their children (Park 137). Although neither Macbeth nor the witches care about the quality of their relationship, Macbeth desires and depends on a relationship with them for insights about his life. Thus, *Macbeth* demonstrates how language barriers complicate one's personal relationships, which the model minority myth excludes from its narrative of Asian North American success.

Furthermore*, Macbeth* reflects the reality behind the model minority myth because Macbeth and Asian North Americans both suffer from an erasure of identity. At the beginning of the play, Macbeth feels out of character due to his temptation to commit murder:

> My thought, whose murder yet is but fantastical,
> Shakes so my single state of man
> That function is smothered in surmise,
> And nothing is but what is not. (1.3.141-144)

The play then progresses and depicts a ruthless Macbeth who does not think twice about the harm of murder:

> From this moment
> The very firstlings of my heart shall be
> The firstlings of my hand. And even now,
> To crown my thoughts with acts, be it thought and done:
> The castle of Macduff I will surprise,
> Seize upon Fife, give to th' edge o' th' sword
> His wife, his babes, and all unfortunate souls
> That trace him in his line. No boasting like a fool.
> This deed I'll do before this purpose cool. (4.1.145-153)

This shift in Macbeth's character invites Cunningham's idea regarding the tragedy of *Macbeth*. She suggests that the tragedy of *Macbeth* lies in Macbeth's little attunement to his true self. Park argues a similar case for Asian North Americans, in which "the model minority myth, and its accompanying disciplinary silence, is a central barrier for Asian Americans seeking to establish their social belonging" (143). Park draws upon the traditional Asian values of obedience and humility to insinuate that some Asian North Americans internalize the model minority myth as they assimilate into Western society (142). She asserts that "these young adults have absorbed or adapted to American culture quite readily," since they know little

about their own family's migration (142). Park indicates that over time, Asian North Americans overlook the adversities faced by the previous generation and disconnect from their ethnic identity. Granted, much of Macbeth's lost identity stems from his own poor decisions, while Asian North Americans are influenced by larger, external forces beyond their control. Macbeth and Asian North Americans nevertheless relate due to their issues with abandoning one's identity for success.

Toward the end of the play, Macbeth reflects on his exchange of ordinary, mundane happiness for kingship:

> My way of life
> Is fall'n into the sere, the yellow leaf,
> And that which should accompany old age,
> As honor, love, obedience, troops of friends,
> I must not look to have, but, in their stead,
> Curses, not loud but deep, mouth-honor, breath
> Which the poor heart would fain deny and dare not.
> (5.3.23-28)

This excerpt demonstrates Macbeth's concerns over sacrificing love and friendship for royalty. Regarding Asian North Americans, they may sacrifice familial relationships and their connection to their ethnic identity for their goals. In this way, both grapple with the glorification of success. The parallels between the two raise

an interesting debate about how to define Asian North American lives; if society deems *Macbeth* a tragedy and Macbeth a pitied character, it ought to do the same for Asian North Americans. However, to define the lives of Asian North Americans as tragedies misrepresents them. Their strength amidst struggle should be celebrated and not pitied. Moreover, attempts to deconstruct the model minority myth should not generalize Asian North American experiences under the false impression that all Asian parents are tiger parents and every Asian North American loses touch with their culture. Attempts should instead emphasize the existence of other stories apart from that which the myth depicts. More often than not, Asian North American stories do not exist within the binary terms of success and failure, but rather they reflect resilience. Therefore, *Macbeth* is a tragedy and the model minority myth certainly has caused detrimental effects on the racialization of Asian North Americans. Asian North Americans are much more than what this myth makes them out to be, namely resilient.

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Ophelia, Nothing to Hide

by Eugene Woo, ink on college textbook

Toronto, Ontario

First Touch

by Jess Lee

UBC Department of English Language and Literatures

It wasn't love, or if it was, not quite –

not as we name it now, with clearer eyes.

You touched my sleeve. The air forgot the night.

A silence bloomed, and I mistook the signs.

We never kissed. I carry that unkiss

like ash beneath the tongue – bitter, intact.

Your absence shaped more than your presence did.

A trace remains where nothing made its mark.

What was it then? A prelude? Or a test?

The heart rehearsing what it cannot learn?

A pulse half-missed, a name the dusk suppressed,

but which, unsummoned, still begins to burn.

I've loved since then. I will again. And yet

you rise, unasked, where memory forgets.

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