

Shakespeare Seminar

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Shakespearean Translations
Translating Shakespeare

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INTRODUCTION

LUKAS LAMMERS AND KIRSTEN SANDROCK

Translating Shakespeare – Shakespearean Translations

It is a critical commonplace that Shakespeare relied on translations. It is another critical commonplace that his works are themselves in many ways translations and that they have in turn inspired various forms of translations. In the twenty-first century, Shakespeare's works have become some of the most widely translated texts in world literature. As of today, they exist in more than 100 languages. Moreover, his plays and poems have travelled across time and space, and they have been re-translated in order to adapt them for audiences of different cultural backgrounds or age groups. More often than not, such translations raise questions about the original works and their socio-cultural as well as literary contexts. Ton Hoenselaars notes in his introduction to *Shakespeare and the Language of Translation* that "translation marks an area of interest which overlaps with nearly every imaginable Shakespearean subdiscipline, thus deserving the status of an equal partner in the academic debate" (2). A similar point can be made about the status of translators. Their work deserves to be considered as a creation in its own right – a translation is an original, albeit one that implicitly or explicitly challenges readers to draw parallels and note differences to the text which it translates.

In *Translation Studies: An Integrated Approach*, Mary Snell-Hornby argues that translation is so much more than a simple process of linguistic transfer. Language in itself is an expression of culture, which is why recent approaches to translation studies frequently speak about cross-cultural translation or processes of cross-cultural transfer (Snell-Hornby 39-63). Instead of thinking about a translation as a mere linguistic conversion from one semiotic system into another, Snell-Hornby suggests to conceive of a translation as "a cross-cultural event" (47). In many ways, translation then becomes a form of rewriting. Such a view indeed seems to be congenial to the papers presented in this issue of *Shakespeare Seminar Online*, which focus on transmedia and transgeneric translations (or adaptations) of Shakespeare's works. Where does the original end and a new artwork begin? This is one of the key questions approached in the articles that follow.

Anja Hartl in her article "Appropriating the Myth of Macbeth in David Greig's *Dunsinane*" opts for the terms mythologization and appropriation, rather than translation or adaptation, to theorize the relationship between Shakespeare's and Greig's play. Myths are, by definition, narratives that move between past, present, and future. Thus, Hartl, argues that "Both *Macbeth* and *Dunsinane* can be understood as participating in a mythologisation of the historical figure," and that "[i]n this sense, *Dunsinane* is aimed not so much at Shakespeare's drama itself as at the wider mythological network which has emerged over the centuries around the figure of Macbeth" (4). The article shows how Greig, like other contemporary authors, uses

meta-theatrical devices to reflect upon the play's own role in the processes of myth-making. Drawing on Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's concept of the rhizome, Hartl argues that, ultimately, "Greig's play lays bare the complexity of historical and mythological narratives and refuses to trace its origin back to a single root" (12).

Marie Menzel's contribution "Who Killed the King? – Shakespearean Pathos Formulas and the Translation of Tragic Affect," too, is interested in transmedial and transhistorical processes at work in contemporary productions. Her article focuses on recent television and stage performances of *Richard II*. Looking at three high-profile productions of the play, Menzel notes a rather peculiar similarity. All three seem intent on swerving as little as possible from the Shakespearean text, and yet, all three introduce the same small but significant change: they assign the final murder of King Richard to a central character, Lord Aumerle, instead of the marginal character Exton. Menzel draws on Elisabeth Bronfen's concept of "crossmapping" and Aby Warburg's notion of "pathos formulas" to analyse "the cultural afterlife of 'aesthetic formalizations' of 'emotional intensities'" (16). In this view, the minor change to the script has major consequences for the play's reception. The alternate ending, Menzel suggests, "can be read as the recurrence of highly resilient pathos formulas" (16). In other word, the reassigning of the role of the murderer emerges as a way of translating the tragic quality of the early modern text for twenty-first century audiences. A focus on affect might thus lead one to reconsider the idea of faithfulness of translations, to ask again what exactly is being *trans-lated*.

Works Cited

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APPROPRIATING THE MYTH OF MACBETH IN DAVID GREIG'S

DUN SINANE

BY

ANJA HARTL

Scottish playwright David Greig's *Dunsinane* (2010) emerged in a moment of radical transition. The play's premiere in 2010 coincided with profound shifts not only globally, especially with regard to Britain's increasing military involvement in conflict zones around the world, but also within the United Kingdom itself, as Anglo-Scottish relations had become increasingly contested since devolution in 1997 and in the run-up to the referendum on Scottish independence in 2014. Preoccupied with these internal conflicts between England and Scotland as well as with broader questions of international warfare, invasion and occupation, *Dunsinane* has remained a prescient and acutely relevant play, in particular in the wake of Britain's decision to leave the European Union in 2016. Reimagining the reign of Macbeth and his wife Gruoch in Scotland in the 11th century, Greig envisions the violent struggle for the Scottish throne in the aftermath of the murder of the king and stages the English army's attempts to re-establish order by restoring the supposedly legitimate heir Malcolm to the throne. The play thus refracts contemporary developments through this historical lens by bringing the deep transformations of the past into conversation with the present. Crucially, *Dunsinane* responds to these events by drawing on William Shakespeare's dramatisation of the story in *Macbeth* (1606). Through this appropriation, *Dunsinane* establishes a complex dialogue between different texts and contexts, bridging the gap from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance to the new millennium. What these disparate historical moments share is that they all mark instances of substantial political and social change in the formation of the English, Scottish and British nations. Critically engaging with Shakespeare's legacy, *Dunsinane* offers urgent reflections not only on pressing national and global concerns, but also on the crucial role of the literary and cultural imaginary for constructing and renegotiating concepts of history, identity and nationhood in times of transformation.

Designed as a sequel to *Macbeth*, *Dunsinane* begins where the early modern tragedy ends – with the battle of Birnam Wood. Adopting the perspective of the English rather than the Scottish characters, the play envisions a different outcome of the story than depicted by Shakespeare. Taking *Macbeth* as its point of departure and, crucially, of contestation, Greig's version defies the audience's expectations by presenting the English soldiers' mission as unsuccessful: after murdering the usurping tyrant, the army discovers that two potential successors lay claim to the throne – Duncan's son Malcolm and, to the Englishmen's, and certainly also the audience's, surprise, Macbeth's wife Gruach, for whom Greig uses a variant of the historical figure's original name. Challenging the ostensibly straightforward ending of the Jacobean drama and emphasising the complexity of the political situation in Scotland, *Dunsinane* does not

only engage in a “speculative continuation” (Saunders 119) of *Macbeth*, but also comments on its source text, implicitly re-evaluating the story and characters familiar from Shakespeare.

It is for these reasons that Greig’s play has been widely understood as historically more ‘accurate,’ indeed as an effective counter-narrative which aims to set the historical record – supposedly misrepresented in Shakespeare’s piece – ‘straight’ and to offer an arguably more ‘authentic’ version of the past closer to the ‘facts’ (cf. Price 22-5; Brown 196; Reid 66). In line with the Scottish dramatist’s own statements about wanting “to reclaim a bit of our [Scotland’s; AH] history” (qtd. in McGlone), Clare Wallace, for example, describes *Dunsinane* as a project of “writing back to and beyond Shakespeare” (“Unfinished” 202) and as a subversive “act of repossession” (*The Theatre* 92). What is implicit in such evaluations is the assumption of a certain bias on the part of the English playwright: *Macbeth* has frequently been considered “a highly sophisticated piece of political propaganda [...] for James VI of Scotland’s claim for accession to the English throne” (Saunders 120). On this basis, Shakespeare’s version, in which Macbeth is – in contrast with its main historical sources – depicted as a ruthless tyrant whose rule was infamously short-lived, is often understood as a considerable distortion which has become deeply embedded in the cultural imagination, implying that Shakespeare’s tragedy deliberately manipulates historical events to exploit them for specific ideological purposes (cf. Watson 2). Yet, while *Dunsinane* may indeed to some extent “question the ‘truth’ of Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*” (Wallace, *The Theatre* 93) by offering a more nuanced account, the bifurcating way in which these interpretations tend to present Greig’s piece *as opposed to Macbeth* obscures the complexity of the intertextual relations that can be established between both plays.

As I will argue, the intricacy of *Dunsinane*’s rewriting of *Macbeth* results from the fundamental mythological dimension which can be identified in these plays: Both *Macbeth* and *Dunsinane* can be understood as participating in a mythologisation of the historical figure. In this sense, *Dunsinane* is aimed not so much at Shakespeare’s drama itself as at the wider mythological network which has emerged over the centuries around the figure of Macbeth. This myth has acquired a powerful status, as it has shaped and solidified common perceptions of the Scottish king as a violent and savage warrior – attributes which have, by implication, also become attached to popular notions of Scottish national and cultural identity more broadly. This negative image of Macbeth has been particularly spurred by Shakespeare’s text, which has come to represent a central point of reference for perceptions of Scottishness in- and outside of Great Britain. Reconsidering *Dunsinane*’s critical engagement with *Macbeth* from a wider mythological perspective, I contend that *Dunsinane* pursues a subtle and ambivalent strategy of appropriation, understood in Julie Sanders’s definition of the term as a cultural practice with distinct political and ethical implications (cf. Sanders 2; Saunders 42). While certainly problematising the influential role of Shakespeare’s conceptualisation of Macbeth by revising central elements of his version of the story, the play creates a fundamental ambiguity by juxtaposing diverse texts and perspectives and by drawing attention to its own participation in the very process of myth-making it sets out to critique. In this sense, *Dunsinane*’s intertextual relation to *Macbeth* and to the mythological web built around the figure of the Scottish king emerges as “dialogical”

(Desmet 42) and collaborative rather than one-sidedly exploitative. As a result, *Dunsinane* offers a nuanced comment on the politics of literary appropriation and on the potential of myth-making for constructing, reinforcing and revising concepts of nationhood, history and culture in times of transition – both then and now.

The Myth of Macbeth

Dunsinane is only one example among an impressive number of adaptations of William Shakespeare's *Macbeth* produced in the 20th and 21st centuries, attesting to the ongoing popularity of the play and the creative potential of the story it tells. As Nick Aitchison contends, "Macbeth is a figure of enduring fascination. No Scottish king has captured the artistic and popular imagination as vividly as Macbeth" (viii). While staging universal, timeless conflicts around questions of power, evil and ambition, *Macbeth*'s appeal also depends to a great extent on the way it responds to the specific historical conditions at the time of its creation. As a direct "product of the social and political climate of late Elizabethan and early Stuart England" (Aitchison 127), Shakespeare's play reflects crucial events at the turn of the 17th century, ranging not only from the Union of the Crowns in 1603 to the Gunpowder Plot two years later to questions of succession, legitimacy and kingship pertinent at the time, but also including more general issues of warfare, violence and leadership which have remained topical until today. Shakespeare refracts these episodes through a historical lens, choosing the story of the 11th-century Scottish King Macbeth as a foil for the profound socio-political transformations England was experiencing in the early 1600s. In this sense, critics have begun to challenge conventional categorisations of the play as tragedy, suggesting that it might more helpfully be understood as an example of historical drama (cf. Lammers 134; Foakes 214). Yet, while offering important new insights into Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, these interpretations represent an exception, which attests to the play's "awkward position in terms of genre" (Lammers 137).

Building on these compelling arguments, I would suggest that this 'awkward position' hinges to a great extent on *Macbeth*'s fundamental mythological dimension, which does not only blur generic boundaries, but also problematises distinctions between dramatic and historical disciplines. From this perspective, the play can be understood as actively participating in a wider myth and it is this mythological legacy which Shakespeare himself fruitfully adapts for his own purposes. Drawing, amongst others, on Northrop Frye's literary and Roland Barthes's semiological approach, Aneta Mancewicz and Alexa Alice Joubin offer a comprehensive definition of myth as "a story which presents itself as true by careful construction of its constitutive elements, which plays a powerful ideological role, which tends to generate further myths, and which might change, disappear, and then perhaps return in a new cultural and political context" (9-10). Hence, myth-making serves ideological purposes to the extent that it shapes perspectives and creates consensus – a quality which may be perceived in both positive and negative terms. In this sense, myths play a major part within the cultural imaginary, contributing for example to fostering a sense of identity and belonging. Paradoxically, while they may, in this respect, have a stabilising effect, myths must be understood as temporary and provisional, always in the process of making and therefore open to readjustment and

interpretation. In this context, literature performs vital functions for shaping, (re)writing, contesting and spreading myths, which are “a certain type of story” (Frye 597), and may therefore play a central role in constructing notions of nationhood, history and culture on the basis of this mythological heritage. The inherent adaptability and flexibility of myths, which make it possible to reimagine the past for present purposes, also explain their specific significance during periods of social and political transformation, whether in Shakespeare’s time or the 21st century. It is in this sense that myth-making can be understood as a specific form of historiography. Rather than opposed to history, mythology has come to be recognised as a “legitimate [form] of discourse” (Cruz and Frijhoff 1) on the past in its own right. Neither true nor false, including both fictional and supposedly factual ingredients and fulfilling decisive ideological functions, myths like the one of Macbeth are thus situated in a liminal space, as they complicate conventional understandings of historical knowledge and of writing the past.

The myth of Macbeth provides a particularly powerful example of these mechanisms. As Aitchison recapitulates in his important study *Macbeth: Man and Myth*, the story that has been handed down to us represents the result of a diversity of sources and of centuries of (re)telling it in a wide range of different contexts and for multiple purposes. In this process of mythologisation, which began during the Scottish king’s reign itself, Shakespeare’s drama marks a point of “culmination” (Aitchison 99). It represents “the most familiar form of the Macbeth myth” (Aitchison 123) to the extent that it has played a major role in constructing the well-known image of Macbeth as a ruthless Scottish warrior and tyrant and of his wife as a madly ambitious woman. As such, Shakespeare’s play has fundamentally shaped popular understandings not only of the Macbeths, but also, and even more pervasively, of the history of Anglo-Scottish relations, past and present, illustrating the significant functions of myths in the construction of shared concepts of national identity and culture. As a result, “the historical Macbeth has been almost completely eclipsed by his dramatic counterpart” (Aitchison 125) and “[m]odern perceptions of Macbeth” must therefore be understood as “based on a complex mix of historical, mythological and dramatic sources” (Aitchison v). Fiona Watson is particularly critical of the considerable impact Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* has had on the story of the 11th-century Scottish king and the central impact it continues to have on the cultural imaginary. In her fictional biography of Macbeth (which is itself problematically positioned in a grey area, as its title, *Macbeth: A True Story*, suggests), she writes that “the Macbeth portrayed by Shakespeare bears almost no resemblance to the king who ruled Scotland between 1040 and 1057/8” and that it is therefore “difficult to exaggerate how great an injustice history has inflicted on him [the historical figure]” (2). Yet, assessments such as these overlook the fact that Shakespeare himself built on a rich mythological legacy which had already been in circulation for centuries. At the same time, it is important to acknowledge that “the evolution of the myth did not end with Shakespeare” (Aitchison 130), attesting to its fundamental applicability and adaptability to different contexts and purposes.

Mythological Appropriation in *Dunsinane*

It is in this complex mythological web that rewritings like *Dunsinane* must be situated. From this perspective, it can be argued that it is not Shakespeare's tragedy *tout court* that Greig's play appropriates, but the wider myth that has been woven around the figure of Macbeth – which is, however, as we have seen, fundamentally shaped by the seminal status Shakespeare's text has come to occupy in the cultural imaginary. In this sense, *Dunsinane* itself can be understood as participating in the perpetuation and rewriting of this myth, exploiting its powerful influence for its own purposes by both contesting familiar elements of the narrative and shaping its own version: rather than rejecting the familiar myth *per se*, *Dunsinane* interrogates particular aspects of it and stages a complex juxtaposition of different perspectives. For this purpose, it creates a "contact zone" which, according to Mary Louise Pratt, represents a "[space] where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other" (34; cf. Müller and Wallace, "Neutral" 2). Bringing a variety of texts and contexts into dialogue with each other, *Dunsinane* is itself turned into a (literary and mythological) contact zone, in which conventional concepts, motifs and storylines are radically estranged. Thus, instead of simply resisting Shakespeare's influential version by developing a distinct counter-narrative, *Dunsinane* pursues a more intricate strategy. Employing self-reflexivity as a fundamental ingredient of its approach to appropriation, the play raises awareness of its own role in the mythologisation of the historical figure. Introducing a profound ambiguity at the heart of its text, which destabilises any claim to hierarchy and authority, Greig's version critically reflects on the potential of myths as a means of re-imagining the past as well as of re-shaping the present.

As the core of its appropriative strategy, *Dunsinane* deliberately raises expectations only to directly subvert them. Thus, the English soldiers are confronted with events and circumstances which are completely different from what they were prepared for and the resulting process of disorientation and alienation the English army is undergoing in Scotland can be said to be to some extent mirrored in the spectators' experience of the play. This is encapsulated by the title, *Dunsinane*, which explicitly recalls *Macbeth*'s infamous setting and establishes an intimate connection between both texts. At the same time, however, it also indicates a decisive alteration by foregrounding the importance of place – or rather displacement – at the expense of character (cf. Wallace, "Unfinished" 200). Indeed, while looming over the entire play, Macbeth himself does not appear in *Dunsinane*, he is dead and not even referred to by name in the characters' accounts. A similar mechanism is employed at the beginning of the play, which opens with the English army's preparations for the battle of Birnam Wood. Rather than presenting it as a successful and straightforward strategy of invasion, however, Greig's depiction of the soldiers' clumsy disguising as trees is ironic and undermines assumptions of the English characters' ostensible superiority over their Scottish enemies. Evoking familiar tropes, characters and events from Shakespeare's version only to interrogate them, the opening sets the tone for the play's complex intertextual strategy. As Emily Linneman writes, it soon turns out that "*Dunsinane* is not the play we thought we knew. [...] At the end of *Macbeth*, we are certain of several things. [...] In *Dunsinane*, most of our suppositions turn out to be false" (2). In this sense, constructed first and foremost as "a challenge to

its *audience*” (Linneman 2; my emphasis) rather than to Shakespeare, *Dunsinane* questions vital elements of Shakespeare’s version of the story by directly implicating the spectators into its explorations: Like the English soldiers, “we are plunged into a world of misunderstandings and half-revealed truths that impinge on our conception of Shakespeare’s play” (Linneman 9).¹

Similarly, while the English soldiers claim to be experienced in warfare, the wilderness, cultural customs and political conditions they encounter in Scotland radically defy their expectations. Their increasing alienation is expressed in prologues at the beginning of each of the play’s four sections. Realised in the form of a chorus, the collective voice of the English regiment describes the journey to Scotland as an expedition into the unknown: “Some of us new and eager for a fight and others / Not so sure but all of us *both knowing and not knowing* / What lay ahead of us” (9; my emphasis). The longer they stay in the country, the greater their sense of estrangement and displacement becomes. Despite the soldiers’ acknowledgement of their alienation, they stubbornly refuse to engage with Scottish culture and to adjust to the local conditions, insisting instead on their supremacy and on the rightfulness of their mission. The English army’s ultimate failure is most vividly illustrated by their general Siward, to whom the task to settle the conflict and to re-establish peace seems straightforward enough: “We’ll set a new king in Dunsinane and then summer will come and then a harvest and by next spring it’ll be as if there never was a fight here” (24). Adopting a strictly dichotomous way of thinking based on supposedly clear distinctions between, for example, war and peace, good and bad, winning and losing, Siward is obsessed with “draw[ing] a line” (108) and creating “consensus” (38). Yet, the play goes on to expose the naivety of his approach, emphasising that, in Malcolm’s words, “[i]t’s not as simple as that” (32).

While reproducing the stark contrast between English and Scottish characters which Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* has often been understood to stage,² *Dunsinane* to some extent reverses the conventional image of these intercultural relations by prioritising a Scottish perspective on the events. As representatives of their respective nations, the characters are contrasted in their understanding of politics, culture and, crucially, history. Whereas the English army is presented as too rigid and simplistic in their preconceptions and

¹ These misunderstandings acquire a very literal dimension because certain passages of the dialogue are spoken in Gaelic, as the stage directions indicate (cf. 8) – a language most spectators will not understand.

² Summarising widespread interpretations of Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*, Sharon Alker and Holly Faith Nelson observe that “Macbeth’s duplicity, violence, and rejection of ‘legitimate’ authority are all customary aspects of the Scot (and indeed of the hostile, foreign Other in general) presented in many Elizabethan plays. Such elements generally proclaim the barbarity, and therefore inferiority, of the Scot and the need to enforce English superiority” (383). In their insightful article, however, the authors compellingly challenge such reductive understandings of the characters and of the relations between the nations by foregrounding “a sense of contradiction and multiplicity of the discursive formation of the nation” evident in *Macbeth*: “The continual slipperiness of the characters, the opposition between ‘a Scotland rapidly succumbing to misrule’ and an image of a Scotland united against injustice, the shifting geographical borders, and the ambiguity of Scottish relations with England all combine to encapsulate the fragmentation and dissonance in the configuration of the ‘British’ nation at the moment of its tumultuous birth” (396).

intentions, the Scots pursue a more ambiguous and flexible approach which they use to strategically manipulate their enemies in the fight for the throne. The complications arising from these intricate conditions are particularly evident on the level of language. Gruach explains that whereas the English soldiers employ language literally and descriptively as “a woodworker’s tool” which is “sent out to capture the world in words,” language in Scotland “*is* the forest” (76; my emphasis), underscoring that meaning is never solid, fixed or objectively given – an idea which is central to the Scottish characters’ interactions. Thus, Siward bases his mission on the belief that communication establishes “clarity” (108), but his “insistent literalness” (29) rather prevents any successful negotiation with the Scottish enemies, because vital semantic distinctions are called into question by the Scottish rulers competing for the throne. In contrast with Siward, who is convinced of the ‘unequivocality’ of the political situation, Malcolm offers a “more nuanced” (110) understanding which leaves room for interpretation because he realises that “[i]t all depends on the definition of the words” (82). Consequently, the Scottish characters offer an approach which, to the English soldiers, seems highly paradoxical and undermines any form of mutual understanding between the nations. Thus, as David Pattie argues, in the play “simple binaries (the conqueror and the conquered, the ruler and the ruled, the past and the present, the real and the unreal) collapse, quickly and irrevocably, into undecidability” (30). In this ambivalent environment, Siward’s stubborn insistence on “draw[ing] a line” prevents him from understanding the complexity of Scotland’s political and cultural terrain: His “[c]larity is dangerously close to corruption” (108) and his supposedly “good intentions” (135) end up causing even more violence and instability instead of bringing about peace and establishing order.

Hence, the play employs a strategic ambivalence in its depiction of Anglo-Scottish relations which also – and most significantly – crystallises on an intertextual level. It is in an implicit dialogue with *Macbeth* that *Dunsinane* targets specific aspects of the myth introduced and/or reinforced by Shakespeare’s play. As Greig explains, “to some degree for Scottish writers it’s always felt a little bit cheeky that unquestionably the greatest Scottish play was written by the great English playwright” (qtd. in Wallace, *The Theatre* 92). For this purpose, Greig stages a series of explicit reversals of Shakespeare’s seminal version. Thus, in *Dunsinane*, Macbeth’s wife Gruach, whom the English soldiers had assumed to be dead, has not only survived the English army’s conquest, but, indeed, also presents herself as a powerful leader. More to the point, she has a son, Lulach, who claims to be the legitimate heir to the throne and therefore competes with Malcolm for leadership. More generally, *Dunsinane* challenges the image of Macbeth as a ruthless tyrant. Gruach, for example, presents a considerably more positive and sympathetic picture of the figure (as it can be found in other sources) when she asserts that

[h]e was a good king.
 He ruled for fifteen years.
 Before him there were kings and kings and kings but not one of them could rule more than a year
 or so at most before he would be killed by some chief or other.
 But my king lasted fifteen years.
 My king was strong. (32)

It is with a focus on these explicit reversals of central elements in Shakespeare's text that Greig's play has been widely understood not only as a form of 'writing back' to the English playwright, but also as an ostensibly more 'authentic' story which seems closer to historical records, as critics have noted (cf. Wallace, *The Theatre* 92; Price 22-5; Brown 196; Reid 66). It is certainly true that Dunsinane is invested in reversing certain elements of Shakespeare's version of the myth of Macbeth, problematising above all the negative portrayal of the Scottish king and, by implication, of the country, its history and national identity more broadly. Yet, such interpretations overlook the fact that Greig's strategy is decidedly more subtle, as it stages its critique by introducing a fundamental ambivalence at the core of the play. As Aitchison notes with regard to the evolution of the myth in general, the revisionist impulses often attributed to rewritings – and particularly evident in criticism on Dunsinane – are ultimately themselves motivated by an equally "preconceived agenda" (133) and therefore end up "simply reject[ing] one mythological tradition, that of Macbeth as murderer, tyrant and usurper, in favour of another" (134). In fact, it is this very trap which Dunsinane tries to avoid through its ambivalent strategy: It is not interested in merely fashioning a new image of the Scottish king, but rather in juxtaposing multiple perspectives by consciously drawing on as well as revising central aspects of the myth of Macbeth without, however, resolving the paradoxes in the end. In this respect, the fact that Macbeth himself never appears on stage makes it possible for Greig to draw attention not to the protagonist of the myth himself, but to the wider context in which Macbeth ruled and to foreground the relations between the characters and the nations they represent. Most crucially, Dunsinane emphasises the intricacy of Anglo-Scottish relations and suggests that the conflicts between both nations cannot be as easily resolved as the English army may believe.

The complexity of this specific strategy of appropriation comes to the fore in *Dunsinane's* reflections on the forms, functions and implications of (re)telling the past. More precisely, Greig's text acknowledges its own participation in the construction and perpetuation of the myth of Macbeth and offers a critical examination of the potential and problems of this mythological legacy. This is particularly evident in the strategic distribution of information on the part of the Scottish characters. Thus, most of the English soldiers' expectations with regard to the situation in Scotland turn out to be false, as Siward is forced to realise:

SIWARD. You told me she was dead.

MALCOLM. Did I?

SIWARD. You told me she went mad and died.

MALCOLM. Mmm.

SIWARD. You told me the tyrant had lost the support of the chiefs and he had no son and his queen had died of madness and so there would be no resistance to you but on the other hand we were likely to see a swift and general acceptance and the chance to establish a new and peaceful order. (28)

Irritated about these accusations, Malcolm explains that Scottish culture is characterised by a radically different approach to historical knowledge and the uses it is put to, rejecting notions of objectivity and facticity in favour of a more context-sensitive and adaptable understanding of the past:

In Scotland to call me a liar is really unacceptable [...] the way we manage this sort of thing in Scotland is by being careful not only not to tell lies – but also to be very very careful about the way we hear and understand words. [...] people have to pussyfoot around when obviously one simply wants to [...] describe the facts of the world as they are. (28)

Malcolm's emphasis on nuance, subtlety and subjectivity creates profound misunderstandings on the part of the English soldiers, which he, however, strategically uses to enforce his own political interests and to secure his power in the fight for the throne. For this purpose, his negotiations with the English army are deliberately paradoxical, as he self-consciously shapes his accounts of past and present situations to meet his ends. Foregrounding processes of constructing historical narratives and underscoring the significance of context and interpretation, the Scottish characters' understanding of history is thus fundamentally shaped by storytelling and mythology. Essentially depending on the repetition and circularity inherent in the practice of retelling, Scottish principles radically clash with Siward's belief in an "unswerving linear" (Botham 95), chronological and teleological approach to historical development.

Uncovering in this way the fault-lines between history and myth-making, *Dunsinane* explicitly stages the creation and spread of myths and the power they may subsequently unfold. Thus, when the Boy Soldier asks Gruach whether she eats babies, as rumour has it, the Scottish Queen readily acquiesces and embraces the mysterious aura people attribute to her by convincing the innocent young Englishman of her magical skills (cf. 60-5). By exposing these processes, *Dunsinane* refrains from any claim to accuracy and authenticity and instead raises awareness of the multiplicity of versions which circulate in the cultural imaginary: it is itself one participant among many in the wider mythological web built around Macbeth's reign in Scotland. While *Dunsinane* is to some degree a "historically grounded" (Brown 196) rewriting of Shakespeare's play, Greig also deliberately "creates his own improbabilities" (Brown 196) and complicates any stable understanding of the past. Thus, "[t]he foundation of *Dunsinane* as a history play is not verifiable fact, not even orthodox 'facts of history'" (Brown 195). Rather, the play "construct[s] versions of history embodying new mini-myths" (Brown 189) by employing a strategic ambivalence. Contrasting different narratives of the past without establishing clarity, *Dunsinane* brings them into a dynamic and paradoxical dialogue, neither asserting authority for its own account nor explicitly rejecting Shakespeare's version – or any other variant, for that matter.

Through its specific strategy of mythological appropriation, *Dunsinane* presents a complex response to Shakespeare's *Macbeth* which refuses to clarify or resolve central conflicts and paradoxes – regarding both the relations between the texts and between the characters. Even though Siward is ultimately capable of acknowledging his "mistake" (132) in his ruthless pursuit of his mission and the damage he has caused, he is unwilling to give in and surrender. Instead, he keeps searching for a way of defeating Gruach and her son Lulach in order to see Malcolm safely established on the Scottish throne – an endeavour which the play has, however, revealed as futile: the clarity and order Siward strives for are defied by the complexity of the political and social reality in Scotland. While aware of this fact, Siward stubbornly continues his quest, disappearing, without orientation, into the infinity of the snow-white countryside at the end of the play (cf. 138). With the central conflict remaining unresolved, the play "ends

in an impasse” (Bommer) and reflects a fundamental indeterminacy with regard to the future of the characters and the relations between England and Scotland. Envisioning Scottish culture as radically ambivalent and adaptable and as offering an infinite range of possibilities, *Dunsinane* emphasises that concepts of nationhood, history and culture are never fixed, but always provisional and subject to interpretation and negotiation. Underscoring the significant role of myth-making for constructing, reinforcing and, crucially, revising notions of historical and national identity, it is through this self-reflexive participation in the mythological network which continues to evolve around the figure of Macbeth that *Dunsinane* has remained an acutely relevant piece of political theatre in the post-Brexit moment.

Conclusion

Appropriating the broader myth of Macbeth through its complex rewriting of Shakespeare’s play, *Dunsinane* brings different texts, contexts and perspectives into conversation. In this political, cultural, historical and intertextual contact zone, Greig’s play does not only challenge expectations and debunk popular preconceptions, but also critically reflects on its own participation in their creation in the first place. In this respect, *Dunsinane*’s relation to *Macbeth* can be considered rhizomatic in Douglas Lanier’s sense of the term. Challenging common understandings of adaptation and appropriation as processes based on a relation between original and adapted or appropriated product (cf. 25), Lanier borrows the concept of the ‘rhizome’ from Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari to describe adaptation as a horizontal rather than vertical practice. Such an understanding “situates ‘his’ [Shakespeare’s; AH] cultural authority not in Shakespeare’s text at all but in the accrued power of Shakespearean adaptation, the multiple, changing lines of force we and previous cultures have labelled as ‘Shakespeare’, lines of force that have been created by and which respond to historical contingencies” (29; cf. Capitani 29; Desmet, Loper and Casey 3-4). To the extent that Greig’s play lays bare the complexity of historical and mythological narratives and refuses to trace its origin back to a single root, it reflects the “multiple, non-hierarchical nodes of meaning and interpretation” (Desmet, Loper and Casey 4) connoted by the rhizome and illustrated by the myth of Macbeth. Through this intricate engagement with the mythological legacy, *Dunsinane* complicates straightforward readings of both past and present, reflecting on the functions of (dramatic) storytelling for creating a shared sense of nationhood and, most significantly, on the role of literature in shaping, reinforcing and redefining notions of cultural and national identity.

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Zusammenfassung

Als Fortsetzung von William Shakespeares *Macbeth* ist David Greigs *Dunsinane* nicht ausschließlich, wie bisher oft dargestellt, als revisionistische Adaption zu verstehen, sondern zeichnet sich vielmehr durch seine intertextuelle Komplexität aus, die sich aus der Auseinandersetzung beider Stücke mit dem mythologischen Erbe ergibt. Der Mythos des Macbeth hat über die Jahrhunderte ein deutlich negatives Bild des schottischen Königs als rücksichtslosem Krieger und Tyrann und damit auch der schottischen Identität und Geschichte entworfen, das in der kulturellen Imagination fest verankert ist – ein Prozess, an dem Shakespeares Tragödie maßgeblich beteiligt war. Während *Dunsinane* diesen Einfluss Shakespeares kritisch hinterfragt, verfolgt es in seiner Adaption eine nuancierte und ambivalente Strategie, indem es verschiedenste Texte, Kontexte und Perspektiven nebeneinanderstellt und seine eigene Partizipation an dieser Mythologisierung der historischen Figur hinterfragt. Durch diese Ambiguität eröffnet es insbesondere eine neue Perspektive auf die Implikationen literarischer Adaptionsprozesse und die Bedeutung des Mythos für die Aushandlung eines nationalen, kulturellen und politischen Selbstverständnisses in Zeiten des Wandels.

WHO KILLED THE KING? - PATHOS FORMULAS AND THE TRANSLATION OF TRAGIC AFFECT IN ADAPTATIONS OF SHAKESPEARE'S *RICHARD II*

BY

MARIE MENZEL

Recent productions and adaptations of Shakespeare's *Richard II* display a preference for implementing a specific revision of the early modern source text. This revision consists in changing the identity of the character who performs the murder of King Richard at the end of the play to one of Richard's favourites: Lord Aumerle. The three relevant adaptations of the play that share this feature and will be under scrutiny in this paper are the British Broadcasting Corporation's (BBC) television film from the network's 2012 *The Hollow Crown* series (dir. Rupert Goold, perf. Ben Wishaw), and the filmed performances of two stage productions which were broadcast in cinemas and later released for home video: Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC) 2013 (dir. Gregory Doran, perf. David Tennant) and Shakespeare's Globe (SG) 2015 (dir. Simon Goodwin, perf. Charles Edwards). Strictly speaking, they represent two somewhat distinct artistic forms: one is a screen adaptation taking a cinematic approach, the other two were originally conceived as traditional stage productions of which one performance has been filmed and recorded. However, with the stage performances having gone through a medial transformation from stage to screen, the resulting three films share a number of culturally significant qualities. At the time of writing of this paper (summer 2019) they constitute the only recent professional audio-visual versions of the play that are widely and easily available. As such they have the potential to reach a more diverse and larger audience than other stage productions, and because of the permanence of the medium film they will retain more of their cultural relevance than the run of a stage production. Additionally, all three are presented by high-profile cultural institutions in the United Kingdom that assume an educational mandate and along with that a certain cultural authority.¹ For these reasons it can be argued that they have the ability to set a hegemonic contemporary standard of staging the play and that they influence its wider cultural perception for the current moment, which makes it all the more significant that all three chose to implement the exact same revision of the text. Since Jan Kott's *Shakespeare Our Contemporary*, it has become a commonplace to assume that every culture and age adapts and thus 'translates' Shakespeare's plays according to its own needs and that aspects of presentist readings are part of any adaptation. If the apparently hegemonic version of *Richard II* for our time includes this revision, what does this tell us about our own cultural preoccupations and the way we approach historical plays at the moment?

¹ The BBC famously assumes its mandate as the nation's primary broadcaster to "inform, educate and entertain" ("Mission"). The theatre companies' websites provide resources for performing, studying and/or teaching Shakespeare: "Education" (RSC), "Learn" (SG).

As this paper will demonstrate, reassigning the role of murderer to Aumerle constitutes a much more significant interference with the play's plot, character constellations and character development than one might think at first glance. This, in turn, creates new possibilities of reading the play. In order to determine the quality of these changes, I will analyse the structural properties of this revised version of *Richard II* and turn to the approach of "crossmapping" that has been proposed by Elisabeth Bronfen. Drawing on the work of various 20th-century critical thinkers from different disciplines, a crossmapping engages in the comparison of multiple texts across not only historical distance but often also across genre and medium (Bronfen 5), highlighting similarities that are not implemented as conscious and obvious citations, but more subtly indicate "unusual or overlooked" (Bronfen 3) instances of diachronic continuities of specific ideas and their functions as signifiers of affect. Crossmapping makes visible the cultural afterlife of "aesthetic formalizations" of "emotional intensities" (Bronfen 3) which emerge upon close examination in the form of surprising parallels between sometimes widely different texts. These covertly recurring forms and structures, which have previously been conceptualised as *Pathosformeln* (pathos formulas) by Aby Warburg or as the *energia* of aesthetic works by Stephen Greenblatt,² are understood as artistic expressions (for instance, character constellations or basic plot structures) that in case of a successful cultural afterlife have retained significance and return incognito as part of culture's imaginary. Of course, their transhistorical resilience is not due to any unchanging essential qualities, but to constant successful translation and reformulation in accordance with changing cultural discourses over time (Bronfen 3). A crossmapping can thus also reveal striking differences between realisations of a formula and so contribute to a critical deconstruction of both historical and contemporary texts (Bronfen 7-8).

This paper argues that the alternate ending of *Richard II* which recasts Aumerle as the murderer and which has recently been so frequently and prominently employed in adaptations, can be read as the recurrence of highly resilient pathos formulas. In an analysis of the RSC's production one critic, for instance, observes about the alternate ending that it "heighten[s] the tragic element of the play's end" (Higginbotham 71). I want to further explore this notion of heightened tragic effect as a feature of all three incarnations of the revision and as the result of its echoing of constellations and structures of pathos formulas, specifically of the culturally prevalent tragic tropes of 'star-crossed' affection and personal betrayal, which can be traced most prominently to Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* and *Julius Caesar* respectively. By incorporating these highly effective pathos formulas into current versions of *Richard II*, these adaptations successfully translate the play's potential to evoke tragic affect for a 21st-century audience that is arguably not responsive to many of the original play's tragic features, such as the particularly steep fall of an aristocrat and the introspective examination of

² Bronfen gives a full introduction to the many concepts and perspectives that have influenced her approach in the introduction to her book.

the question of royal identity in a religious context.³ Appearing in these otherwise rather traditional and faithful adaptations, these pathos formulas work to enhance the play's qualities as a tragedy for the current moment and thus enable an intensified emotional engagement with the historical material for a wider contemporary audience.

Revising the Play's Resolution: Precedents and Approach

Reassigning the role of Richard's murderer to another character is in itself not entirely unprecedented. Earlier productions have explored this option, which indicates an occasional desire to revise the text specifically in regard to its resolution.⁴ One reason for that could be the authoritative text's somewhat jarring disregard for dramatic conventions: The crucial action of Richard's murder is performed by a minor character (Piers of Exton) who is not introduced until the last act and has very limited characterisation and no further dramatic function. However, available evidence suggests that previous to its more recent conspicuous prevalence, the decision to replace Exton has been taken rarely. It thus cannot be considered a performance convention in any way, and even less so the current agreement on one specific character (Aumerle).

All three versions in question present stagings of *Richard II* that are 'faithful' Shakespeare adaptations in the sense that they do not take many freedoms with the source text. All three indicate visually the medieval setting of the historical events portrayed in the play and thus do not explicitly encourage presentist readings. Furthermore, although in all cases the script has been edited slightly, this does not exceed what is needed in order to occasionally enhance conciseness.⁵ Similarly, there is no supplementary text in the form of faux-Shakespearean verse or appropriate verse from another play. As I will explain in more detail, even the one significant alteration of replacing Exton with Aumerle and the accompanying adjustments are done carefully and with minimal additional impact on the play text. All of this suggests that the preservation (and presentation) of the original text is important to these productions and consequently, that they do not understand themselves as political, revisionist, transcultural or simply highly creative adaptations. As a result, the one significant revision of the plot gives the impression of a useful adjustment 'in the spirit of the original' rather than that of an intentional rewriting. However, this way of adapting the text clearly strikes a chord with theatre creatives at this particular moment, and one that apparently takes precedence over originality in the current high-profile theatre

³ In his article "Unstable Identity in Shakespeare's *Richard II*" Forker provides an analysis of this theme that also considers a performance-interpretive consequence of a modern lack of understanding for the theological paradigm of kingship (15-18).

⁴ E.g. Berliner Ensemble, 2000 (dir. Claus Peymann). In this production, the Duke of York (Aumerle's father), replaced Exton along with some other character rearrangements (Smout 244).

⁵ Only the BBC film (the first entry in the sequence) could be seen as an exception. This screen adaptation has cut a complex and complicating side plot with the suspicious death of the Duke of Gloucester. This does have a significant impact on both the protagonist's and antagonist's character profiles. However, I would argue that this omission primarily serves the cinematic and visual approach of the project by slimming down plot and script. This is not the case with Exton's replacement.

landscape.⁶ Independent of whether the directors who adopted the revision were conscious of participating in a trend, this interest suggests not only an individual but also a cultural preoccupation of the present moment with the effects that this alteration has on the play. Thus, this repeated occurrence of the same phenomenon has to be understood as unusual in documented performance history, as a departure from the authoritative text within the paradigm of ‘faithfulness’, and as significant in a contemporary cultural context.

The Characters Exton and Aumerle in the Original Play

In the original play (as well as in the three adaptations), the incarcerated King Richard II is murdered in his cell following his deposition and Henry IV’s ascension to the throne. The murderer in the play, Exton, is mentioned neither in the dialogue nor in the stage directions previous to the final three scenes, has few lines and no apparent connections to any other characters. He is introduced in a short scene that immediately precedes the event and provides a basic idea of his motive:

EXTON. Didst thou not mark the King, what words he spake:

‘Have I no friend will rid me of this living fear?’

Was it not so?

1 SERVANT. These were his very words.

EXTON. ‘Have I no friend?’ quoth he. He spake it twice,

And urged it twice together, did he not?

2 SERVANT. He did.

EXTON. And speaking it, he wishtly looked on me,

As who should say, ‘I would thou wert the man

That would divorce this terror from my heart’,

Meaning the King at Pomfret. Come, let’s go.

I am the King’s friend, and will rid his foe. (5.4.1-11)

Because there is so little information about him, Exton appears only as a non-individualised supporter of the new king Henry IV, who takes it upon himself to solve the de facto usurper’s problem of the continuing existence of the lawful and anointed monarch. But the apparent limitations of this character do not preclude potential for a complex and topical interpretation. In the version of events presented by the text of this play, it remains ambiguous whether Henry actually spoke the words Exton claims to have heard and, if so, whether they were intended as the call to action that Exton understood.⁷ His possible unreliability as a narrator in regard to Henry’s orders as well

⁶ The reassignment of the murder to Aumerle has subsequently been taken up prominently and internationally, which further proves its current appeal. Examples are the Oregon Shakespeare Festival in 2016, dir. Bill Rauch (Shurgot 464-465), and a French touring production in 2018, dir. Guillaume Séverac-Schmitz, the latter focusing even more on the revision as a central idea of the production with more alterations to the text (Foulquie 115-116).

⁷ See 5.6.34-42. Forker notes that “[t]he repudiation of a murderer by the ruler for whom the crime had been undertaken has many literary and historical precedents” (Introduction and Notes 481-482n34-44). This also echoes the circumstances of Mowbray’s banishment in 1.3. as a result of his apparent involvement in Gloucester’s death, which is said to have been orchestrated by King Richard (1.2.37-

as the sudden affective switch from obsessive eagerness to please the new king to intense moral regret over his actions immediately following the murder (5.5.113-116) lend themselves easily to various modern psychological interpretations. But none of these recent adaptations have chosen to make use of this potential. Instead they reframe Richard's death within the group of principal characters, leading to a very different resolution that introduces new meanings to the play.

The character who kills Richard in the three adaptations is much better developed than Exton. Aumerle is part of Richard's inner circle of favourites prior to the deposition, and – apart from the queen – the one character with whom the king shares the most personal moments and dialogue. Richard's political critics and enemies strategically claim on several occasions that the favourites at court are selfishly manipulative (e.g. 2.1.17-20; 2.1.97-101; 2.1.241-245; 3.1.8-27). This introduces the possibility of Aumerle's opportunism and, thus, of disloyalty to Richard. Furthermore, the accusations formally levelled against him by members of the emerging new court in connection with his previous association with Richard (4.1.1-107) make it clear that Aumerle's role at court in the past might become problematic for him under Henry's reign, especially since Richard's other favourites have already been executed (3.1.28-35).⁸ This circumstance could provide a selfish motive for Aumerle's participation in the treasonous plot to have Richard reinstated. However, as the new king's cousin and the son of a conforming father, he escapes relatively unharmed from the accusations (5.2.41-45) and later even from outright treason (5.3.130-135). This means that simple compliance with the new circumstances would have been the best strategy, had his own advantage been Aumerle's concern. It follows that his eager participation in the extremely risky plot is best understood as motivated by loyalty to Richard as a friend and/or as the anointed rightful monarch, and not as a concern for personal safety or advancement. Following Aumerle's pardon for treason, for which he had to formally renounce his old allegiances, Henry cautions him to finally "prove [...] true" (5.3.144), a warning the culprit has previously received from his father (5.2.50-51). The 'danger' with Aumerle seems to be a lack of flexibility in his loyalties, not selfishness and volatility. As Charles Forker also determines, Aumerle in the play is characterised as entirely loyal to Richard, even if his historical counterpart's situation is more complex (Introduction and Notes 315n0.2). This textual foundation constitutes the context for the revised ending in the three adaptations that inevitably complicates the question of Aumerle's loyalty.

Aumerle and Richard in the Three Films (BBC, RSC, SG)

In Shakespeare's text, Aumerle's storyline ends with the unsuccessful rebellion and his pardon in the middle of the final act, just prior to Exton's introduction. In the three

41). Thus, Exton may be entirely reliable in his report and interpretation of Henry's words and wishes, but naïve in his expectations of the king's ability to proclaim them publicly: "From your own mouth, my lord, did I this deed." (5.6.37)

⁸ To what extent Aumerle is considered to be part of the group of favourites that is repeatedly accused of opportunism and punished harshly for it is not entirely clear. As Richard's cousin he is definitely higher in rank (4.1.20-23) and never explicitly equated with Bushy, Bagot, Green etc., even though he seems to occupy a similar role at Richard's court.

adaptations, the two characters are collapsed into one, resulting in Aumerle's uncanonical reappearance as Richard's murderer.⁹ This provides additional complexity and dramatic closure for Aumerle's character by giving him a more central role and a stage presence in the final scenes, and it also avoids the seeming lack of cohesion caused by Exton's late and perfunctory addition to the cast of characters. But precisely because Aumerle's loyalty is already a topic, the effect on the plot is necessarily more than a reduction of the cast and a streamlining of events.

The interpretation of the text and the characters through directorial choices regarding performances – and in the case of the three films under examination, cinematography – contributes to how these changes to the text are framed and integrated with the prior scenes. Two particularly relevant aspects in this regard concern Aumerle's personality and the nature of the relationship between Richard and Aumerle – the eventual victim and his murderer – in the scenes leading up to the violent event. The three versions take different approaches that shape the resulting possibilities of meaning for the alternate ending in each case.

In the BBC's interpretation, Aumerle's demeanor in his friendship with Richard before the deposition is characterized by an innocent and trusting naiveté. He laughs (inappropriately) at Richard's jokes (00:04:56) and is easily comforted by his misplaced optimism (01:01:15). Aumerle's body language during moments of tension betrays a youthful awkwardness and discomfort (02:04:29) and he seems insecure in his interactions (00:27:21). The character's lines in 1.3. (the trial festivities), which in the play establish his active role at court, as well as the entire arraignment episode and its consequences are cut from this version, and with them any markers of agency. Therefore, Aumerle's only character trait is his admiration for Richard so that his eager participation in the treason against Henry in the second half represents his first independent and active decision. Outrage at Richard's crisis is the one thing that causes personal growth for Aumerle, which puts the focus unambiguously on his loyalty. In contrast to this interpretation, the RSC's Aumerle makes a much more mature and self-assured impression in all his interactions from the very beginning (compare, for instance, 00:35:45). All references to his involvement in different functions at Richard's court are retained (00:18:50, 1:45:20), and additionally, in an instance of reallocated lines, he even briefly acts as Richard's official mouthpiece in the crucial negotiations with Bolingbroke and Northumberland (01:30:08). But although it could be argued that this Aumerle is more involved at Richard's court than the BBC's, would benefit more from Richard's reinstatement, and, thus, is more easily suspected of having his own agenda, there is no indication made that his canonical support for Richard in the rebellion should be read as insincere.

Regarding the personal relationship between Aumerle and Richard, the different approaches of these adaptations are exemplified by their interpretation of the two characters' interaction at Flint Castle, just prior to Henry's seizure of power (3.3.127-171). Richard comments on Aumerle's apparently distressed reaction to his visions of a post-deposition future and seems to attempt to provide comfort:

⁹ The idea that what we are discussing here is really a case of multi-roling can be entirely dismissed in all three cases. The character is always clearly identified by name and costume.

RICHARD. [...] Aumerle, thou weep'st, my tender-hearted cousin!
 We'll make foul weather with despised tears;
 Our sighs and they shall lodge the summer corn
 And make a dearth in this revolting land. [...] (3.3.160–163)

Both the BBC (01:20:05) and the RSC (01:31:47) play this passage as an intimate moment of genuine connection, with the actors emphasising the characters' concern for each other. Richard is interrupted in his anxious self-pity by Aumerle's emotional reaction and redirects his focus on his distraught cousin. Both films frame this interaction as private and intimate: The two characters are positioned physically close to each other in an alcove (BBC) and on a raised platform indicating the castle battlements (RSC). The camera gets in close in a combination of full shots of both characters and medium close-ups. Richard's entourage is either kept outside the frame of the shot (BBC) or not on stage at all (RSC). The RSC production additionally stretches this passage with prolonged moments of silence (01:33:46) that help illustrate the emotional quality of their bonding in non-verbal ways and feature significant physical interaction. This includes a kiss, performed as conventionally romantic (01:33:30), proposing the two characters as lovers, which heightens the stakes of their relationship and imminent separation. Both the BBC and the RSC versions make use of this passage, which is also the characters' last encounter before the murder, to firmly establish the genuine affection between Aumerle and Richard as the groundwork for its apparent betrayal later on in the revised ending.

The SG production takes a noticeably different approach to Aumerle as well as to his relationship with Richard that sets it apart. Beginning with the first scene, this Aumerle seems excessively confident in his position at court, displaying impertinent behaviour such as casually leaning against the throne even in tense situations (00:09:12). His farewell to the banished Bolingbroke (1.3.249–250), which is assigned no particular importance by the BBC and the RSC, is here interpreted as an intervention: Richard is performed as lacking authority in his attempt to enforce his decision of Bolingbroke's banishment until Aumerle steps in to very publicly end the conversation for him (00:25:42). This immediately sets him up as a character who confidently assumes much more authority than his position allows, which makes him suspicious of aspirations, and thus, of selfishness and a lack of respect for the king and social hierarchies. When it comes to his relationship with Richard, their text-based interactions are included, but in contrast to the other two adaptations, the production does not emphasise the emotional quality of their friendship at all. The moment at Flint Castle is here framed as entirely public with several other members of Richard's entourage, possibly even members of the opposing faction in the courtyard, witnessing every word (01:20:00). Aumerle's weeping, only implied by Richard's reference to it in the text, is performed by the character, but also by other attendants (01:20:47), framing it as a ceremonial rather than a personal expression. Furthermore, it also does not result in Richard paying any genuine attention to Aumerle. Instead, he remains self-absorbed and hardly acknowledges his cousin's distress as anything more than a prop in his own increasingly dramatic and histrionic fantasy of the future. But even though their relationship is not explicitly framed as close and in spite of Aumerle's occasionally irreverent behaviour, his

participation in the treasonous plot and an absence of any clear interpretative clues towards the opposite, he is presented as ideologically loyal to Richard.

Although all three films choose to interpret Aumerle's character and the specific quality of his relationship with Richard in different ways, up until the point of revision (5.4.) they unambiguously adhere to the text in presenting him as loyal in accordance with the textual basis.

Aumerle's Return in the Three Films (BBC, RSC, SG)

As mentioned previously, the three adaptations take measures to create and shape the new piece of storyline within the limits of what can be considered a relatively 'faithful' adherence to the text. This is achieved by strategic reassignment and omission of lines and overall only small alterations. The three versions find solutions for the concrete textual logistics of Exton's replacement with Aumerle, which result in again very different possibilities of reading the murder.

Since scene 5.4. is crucial in preparing the subsequent action in the original text, it is an important factor in the shaping of the alternate ending as well. The lines that introduce Exton and preface the murder, and without which, according to Forker, the event would be "too sensationally unexpected and only marginally intelligible" (Introduction and Notes 458n5.4) are, in fact, cut entirely by the RSC. The BBC (02:05:06) and SG (02:06:37) retain them, but do not simply reassign them to Aumerle. Instead, they are spoken *to* him *by* Exton, suggesting that Aumerle is being 'recruited' for the murder in opposition to Exton's self-persuasion of the original text.¹⁰ The text needs only minor alterations for this to work, at least in a pragmatic sense: "he [...] looked on me" (5.4.7) becomes "he [...] looked on you" while "I am the King's friend" (5.4.11) becomes "we are the King's friends."

In the BBC film, Aumerle's motivations for readily agreeing to perform the assassination in spite of his apparent previous loyalty to Richard remain not only ambiguous but also contradictory and arguably confusing. One major point of such contradiction illustrates this: When Aumerle is recruited in the film he seems dejected following the recently failed plot, as well as passive and suggestible, which is entirely in line with what we have seen of him earlier. The recruitment is performed as a seduction (02:06:06), suggesting that, going forward, Aumerle now accepts Henry's kingship and is eager to redeem himself. The determination with which he steps in front of Richard and unflinchingly shoots him with a crossbow (02:14:24) while never expressing the same doubt and regret over his actions that Exton has in the play (lines 5.5.113-116 are cut) supports this reading of Aumerle's 'conversion' into Henry's loyal subject up until that point. But the next and final scene, in which he (also in place of Exton) presents the body of "the mightiest of [Henry's] greatest enemies, Richard of Bordeaux" (5.6.32-33) to the new king seems to revoke this interpretation. The moment is played as confrontational and loaded with bitter irony on Aumerle's side (02:17:02).

¹⁰ To be precise, the BBC film identifies this demagogue character as the Lord Marshall from 1.1 and 1.3 instead of Exton. This also means that the character has been on stage before, even if in an extremely minor capacity, which provided some additional dramatic continuity. But this character's identity has no effect on Aumerle's plot line.

His attitude appears to preclude any intention to win Henry's favour. This final scene would support other, very different readings of Aumerle's loyalties, one of which could be that he has remained loyal to Richard in spirit and performed a mercy killing, sparing his friend a slow and humiliating death, while at the same time laying the blame for regicide firmly at Henry's door. The film suggests both contradictory interpretations as possible readings of the alternate ending but does not settle on one and thus ends up providing incoherent character development. Following his final words, there are no further shots of Aumerle, which suggests that a clarification of the newly created character arch is not a priority for the BBC film.

The RSC may not be as outright contradictory in its interpretation of Aumerle's possible reasons for killing Richard, but by cutting the preparatory scene 5.4. it forgoes providing any context at all for this apparent change of heart, thereby emphasising its surprising quality. This Aumerle speaks the murderer's words of sudden regret – "O, would the deed were good! / For now the devil that told me I did well / Says that this deed is chronicled in hell" (5.5.114-116) – and acts distraught (02:30:45). But since Henry's alleged assignment (5.4.) is not part of this version, there is no context for them. Who is this "devil" and why would this mature and self-assured Aumerle follow such advice? The actor's performance here and in the final scene does not provide any concrete clues either.

In both cases the effect of the alternate ending amounts to an unexpected twist in which the surprise factor of the sudden turnaround of Aumerle's loyalties takes precedence over coherent character development and plot trajectory. The RSC makes the most out of this effect by having Richard literally reveal Aumerle as his murderer both to himself and the audience in his final moments (02:30:12). Both versions toy with the question of Aumerle's loyalties for effect but neglect making this coherent with the rest of the play. In these two adaptations the alternate ending seems to introduce more irritating disruptions than it solves. Its principal function is to cause an audience's emotional response to a surprising betrayal between two characters who were previously established as close.

In contrast again, SG provides a clearer integration of the alternate ending by making it explicit that Aumerle is acting under pressure and that he has, in fact, all along been the target of a strategic and well-prepared conspiracy himself. To that end, four minor characters from the play are collapsed into one rounded and consistent identity: Exton, in addition to briefly appearing in 5.4. as the commissioner of the assassination, also takes on the lines and tasks of the characters Lord Marshall, Willoughby and Fitzwater. This means that he is present at court from the first scene onwards, that he is an active supporter of Henry from the very beginning of his campaign against Richard, and also one of the most eager accusers of Aumerle in the arraignment episode, which thus constitutes his first attempt at disposing of the king's overconfident other cousin. Here, the danger that Aumerle faces as Richard's former favourite, which the text implies but never brings to bear, is fully developed and fits neatly with the newly created storyline. Additionally, Aumerle's recruitment into the murder is framed as blackmail. This is made explicit by his unambiguously performed horror upon the realisation that he is being threatened into committing regicide (02:07:02) and later into taking full responsibility for it (02:15:50). His regret over the killing is thus clearly framed as an

expression of the entirely involuntary nature of his participation (02:15:45). The fact that in the original text Henry banishes the murderer as a result of the problematic nature of regicide (5.6.43-44) here becomes the successful conclusion to Exton's scheme which allows him to rid the court of both Richard and Aumerle at the same time for the benefit of Henry's rule. SG's Aumerle may not be as close to Richard and originally more suspicious of selfish tendencies than his counterparts in the other adaptations, yet it is made very clear that his disloyalty is the result of pressures out of his control. A modern audience with its fondness for anti-heroes will likely sympathise with his situation, and the production thus provides an affecting – and coherent – motive for Aumerle's actions and reactions as one element in a logical plot trajectory that leads to a tragic betrayal.

Despite its different manifestations in the three films, the alternate ending affects the plot and thus the possibilities of interpretation and meaning of the play in one specific way: it always redrafts Aumerle's character and complicates the problem of his loyalty so that he becomes a much more central figure in the play than he is in Shakespeare's text. He dominates the final moments and events of the play in a much more significant way than the plot device Exton, since the question of morals and motivations is more pressing for such a well-established character who is involved in a complex relationship with the tragic protagonist. With the alternate ending, the emphasis in regard to Richard's death is shifted away from a political and moral problem as well as from the pitiable fall of an individual: It takes on (inter)personal qualities.

Shakespearean Pathos Formulas and the Translation of Tragic Affect

By continuing – and in at least two cases heavily emphasising – the relationship between the two established characters and by intertwining their fates beyond what the text provides, these adaptations create a version of the tragedy of Richard II's downfall that is concerned with the interpersonal, a dimension that the original text does not emphasise. More specifically, in the course of this new version of the play the audience's attention is refocused on the story of two people who were once close but are now torn apart and set against each other by external circumstance. Other themes that are crucial to the play's resolution, such as Richard's character development, his reflections on the nature of identity and the specific morality of tyrannicide, primarily take on the function of framework in the two characters' interpersonal tragedy. This effect is particularly pronounced in the two versions that emphasise the surprising quality of Aumerle's betrayal so that it remains especially prominent in the audience's experience as the final unexpected 'twist'.

If this revision of the plot is perceived as enhancing tragic effect and "generat[ing] pathos" (Higginbotham 71), it seems that the attendant shift of focus to the dimension of the interpersonal plays a role in the experience. This does not mean that *Richard II* is turned into a tragedy when it wasn't one before. While usually categorised as a history play (due to the subject matter), it is, of course, in many respects a Renaissance tragedy. Some obvious examples for this include the downfall and death of a royal protagonist and the title character's eloquent and introspective self-awareness which has often prompted comparisons with *Hamlet* (Forker, Introduction and Notes 3). These traditional features of tragedy are major elements of the play. However, they do not

necessarily reflect what a modern audience would experience and understand as “tragic” and thus what would cause them to react with the desired affect of *pathos* and *catharsis*.¹¹ The particular steepness of an aristocrat’s downfall has arguably no currency at all as a pathos formula at this moment in time. This means that if modern productions want the play to function as a tragedy for a wider contemporary audience, they would need to enhance its tragic qualities in currently effective ways, for instance, by employing culturally particularly well-established pathos formulas.

A comparison (or crossmapping, in Bronfen’s terms) of the revised version of *Richard II* with the culturally much more ubiquitous Shakespearean tragedies *Romeo and Juliet* and *Julius Caesar* reveals surprising parallels.¹² With Aumerle and Richard separated by allegiances to warring factions following the deposition, they—like Romeo and Juliet—become ‘star-crossed.’¹³ Their (emphasised) bond becomes incompatible with the social and political structures surrounding them, and Aumerle is conflicted between personal affections and loyalties and the pressures of his social environment (including his family). This conflict then leads to a violent resolution for both characters. Their relationship is presented as the catalyst for the tragic resolution, even when Aumerle’s concrete motivations and mindset are left to the audience’s imaginations.

The properties of the ‘star-crossed’ character constellation converge in the revised ending of *Richard II* with those of the quintessential archetype of betrayal, that of Caesar by his friend Brutus. This works particularly well since the original *Richard II* already shares a kinship with the Roman play in their common topics of regicide and civil war. The revised ending extends the similarities to the aspect of betrayed friendship. On top of this basic constellation the three adaptations provide additional links to specific structures of *Julius Caesar*: In RSC and SG, the murder is executed as a stabbing. The BBC and SG frame the murder as part of a larger conspiracy that includes the manipulation of the assassin into the act. Finally, the RSC provides a direct equivalent of the iconic “Et tu, Brute?” (3.1.77), which David Daniell evaluates as “tragic revelation [...] heightened beyond anything Shakespeare – or any other dramatist in English before him – had yet achieved” (237n77), in Richard’s surprise at the discovery of his murderer’s identity moments before his death.

¹¹ See Woodruff 618-619 for an explication of Aristotle’s concepts.

¹² According to a 2013 survey (Burton), the five Shakespeare plays that are by far most often taught in US high schools are *Romeo and Juliet* (taking the lead with a presence on 93% of curricula), *Julius Caesar*, *Macbeth*, *Hamlet* and *Othello*. *Romeo and Juliet* is also the Shakespeare play that has the most amount of creative online engagement (Yost 196-197) and continues to be ceaselessly adapted in popular culture, both as straight adaptations of the play and in less obvious ways. The ubiquity of specific works in education, entertainment, and subcultures is, of course, an important indicator of the cultural prevalence of their central pathos formulas. The volume *Romeo and Juliet in European Cultures* (Cerdá, Delabastita and Gregor, eds.) provides insights into the uniquely intense historical and modern cultural entrenchment of *Romeo and Juliet* and its “basic matrix” (4) with a focus on European reception, for which the influence of US culture has also become integral.

¹³ This formula emerges independent of whether the relationship is explicitly marked as romantic (as in the RSC production), although this does introduce further interesting aspects. Higginbotham focusses his aforementioned observations about tragic effect in the RSC production specifically on its suggestion of a homosexual relationship.

Upon comparison, the central structures of *Romeo and Juliet* and *Julius Caesar* emerge as pathos formulas from these adaptations of *Richard II* as a result of re-casting Aumerle as the assassin. What they have in common – and what differentiates them from the pathos formulas of the unrevised *Richard II* – is that they formulate the quality of the tragic in the context of interpersonal relationships, which is particularly recognisable for a modern audience, and probably accounts at least in part for the current popularity of these two plays over the histories. Thus, in convergence, these pathos formulas cause a perceived increase in tragic quality. What is more, the fact that it is other Shakespeare plays that present themselves as suitable counterparts for this crossmapping does not mean that the employment of their pathos formulas in current versions of *Richard II* should be understood as conscious intertextual citation of these (or any) specific texts as sources. Although the status and ubiquity of the Shakespearean corpus in Western culture is an important factor in this phenomenon, it must be remembered that ‘Shakespeare’ is merely the most successful locus of reformulation and translation of these basic structures, rather than their origin. This seemingly appropriate encounter of textual structures only illustrates the process through which pathos formulas can gain, keep or lose their cultural afterlife and the role that unconscious reformulations, such as the revised ending of *Richard II*, play in it. Nothing in these three *Richard IIs* invites the audience to consciously think of *Romeo and Juliet* or *Julius Caesar*. Especially the convergence of multiple influences as small additions to an in itself complex play disqualifies these formulas as references. But even so, these pathos gestures are established in the cultural imaginary to a degree where they function dependably as triggers of tragic affect independent of conscious citation or, indeed, recognition. Their non-citational recurrence, reformulation or translation in any context, such as the revised *Richard II*, is both the result and further cause of their continued efficiency as source-independent signifiers.

The function of the alternate ending that recasts Aumerle as the murderer and that seems to resonate so particularly well at the current moment, is to invigorate the tragic qualities of the history play for a modern audience with the help of currently highly effective pathos formulas. This revision is involved in a refiguration, and thus cultural translation, of *Richard II* as a tragedy. On the basis of this, the popularity of the alternate ending can be explained as a result of its efficiency in provoking affective responses, at a time when the notions of ‘star-crossed’ and betrayed personal relationships are firmly established in culture as epitomising tragedy.

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Zusammenfassung

In einer Reihe aktueller Adaptionen von Shakespeares *König Richard II* wird der Mord an König Richard von seinem Freund Aumerle begangen, anstatt durch den eher profillosen Exton. Der Aufsatz schlägt vor, dies als Übernahme erfolgreich tradierter tragischer Pathosformeln (Warburg) zu verstehen. Durch ein Crossmapping (Bronfen) der in diesen Adaptionen neu entstehenden Strukturen mit den heute sehr populären Tragödien *Romeo und Julia* und *Julius Cäsar* lässt sich diese Anpassung des Scripts als unbewusste und unspezifische Anwendung von kulturell besonders etablierten Tragikformeln lesen. Zentrale Themen des Dramas, wie die Moral des Tyrannenmords, treten gegenüber dem Fokus auf zwischenmenschliche Beziehungen und die Spannung zwischen Freundschaft und Verrat in den Hintergrund. Auf diese Weise wird die tragische Qualität des Historienstücks für ein heutiges Publikum übersetzt.

CALL FOR STATEMENTS – SHAKESPEARE SEMINAR 2020

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Dance is a prevalent art form in early modern culture, and an established part of Shakespeare's oeuvre. From masques to interludes to comedy endings to courtly entertainments and weddings: dancing is frequently seen as a cross-class and cross-generic form of entertainment. From the early modern period onward, Shakespeare's poetry and plays have been adapted into different art forms, including dance and music, which offer their own expressive repertoire to interpret Shakespeare's works. "Adaptation, recreations, replications, and reductions enrich our understanding not only of current and past dance practices, but of their performative strategies and material conditions," as Jennifer Nevile asserts in the recently published *Oxford Handbook of Shakespeare and Dance* (2019, 6). The 'bodily turn' in literary and cultural studies, for instance, has offered new frameworks and conceptual approaches to think of the body as integral parts of textual and artistic productions.

This year's Shakespeare Seminar seeks to address this rich archive of Shakespeare and dance. Topics may include, but are not restricted to

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- Shakespeare and body theories
- Music and dance adaptations
- Comparative approaches to dance in different dramatic genres
- Interludes and post-play entertainments
- Masques
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- Textual representation and metaphors of dance
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- Gender, race, class in/and dance
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Our seminar plans to address these issues with a panel of six papers during the annual conference of the German Shakespeare Association, *Shakespeare-Tage* (24-26 April 2020 in Bochum, Germany). As critical input for the discussion and provocation for debate, we invite papers of no more than 15 minutes that present concrete case studies, concise examples and strong views on the topic. Please send your proposals (abstracts of 300 words) by **31 December 2019** to the seminar convenors

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