

REHABILITATING SHAKESPEARE: CULTURAL APPROPRIATION AND
QUEER SUBJECTIVITY

By

Rebecca Chapman

Dissertation

Submitted to the Faculty of the
Graduate School of Vanderbilt University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

English

August, 2009

Nashville, Tennessee

Professor Leah Marcus

Professor Kathryn Schwarz

Professor Lynn Enterline

Professor Katherine Crawford

Professor Katherine Rowe

To Kristen and Tosha, the women
who inspire me
the most.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This work would not have been possible without the incredible support of the graduate students, faculty, and staff members of Vanderbilt's Department of English. They have collectively encouraged me to explore a wide range of interests and the ways these interests affect my scholarship. For this I am grateful. I offer heartfelt thanks to my favorite sounding boards: Janis May, Sara Corbitt, Donna Caplan, and Donald Jellerson. I want to especially thank Professors Leah Marcus, Kathryn Schwarz, Katie Crawford, and Lynn Enterline, who have provided inspirational mentorship during my graduate student career.

Nobody has been more important to me in the pursuit of this project than Kristen Hobbs, who has offered an unmatched degree of support, encouragement, and love. I am eternally indebted.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
DEDICATION	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
Chapter	
I. INTRODUCTION: QUEERING SHAKESPEREAN PRAXIS.....	1
II. PROMISING THE NATIONAL SUBJECT: <i>THE HOBART SHAKESPEAREANS</i> <i>AND MY SHAKESPEARE</i>	30
III. WITNESSING PRISON REHABILITATION: “ACT V” AND <i>SHAKESPEARE</i> <i>BEHIND BARS</i>	78
IV. DREAMING JULIET IN SHAKESPEARE PORNOGRAPHY	125
V. REHABILITATING THE CLASSROOM: PEDAGOGY AND THE PROBLEM OF HISTORY	175
VI. CONCLUSION: CONFRONTING EXCLUSIONS AND INTERSECTIONS	221
Appendix	
REFERENCES	244

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: QUEERING SHAKESPEREAN PRAXIS

This dissertation is about the relationship between normativity and non-normativity, and the ways in which the performative process of rehabilitation produces queer subjectivity as a byproduct of this relationship. Queer subjectivity, as I define it here, is not homologous with the senses of self experienced by individuals or communities who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or other non-normative modes of sexually based identification. Indeed, attempting to tether together multiple forms of non-normatively identified persons to make a singular theoretical claim seems unproductive at best, if not politically apathetic. My use of the term queer, and by extension queer subjectivity, is informed and inflected by socio-cultural politics operating today. More specifically, it is means of understanding the ways in which the figure of Shakespeare circulates in the present moment, and the cultural fantasies and anxieties toward which the circulation of its cultural iconicity gestures. In this dissertation, queer subjectivity signifies a performatively strategic sense of self, one that aggressively works to occupy multivalent identity categories without faithfully inhabiting any one in particular. In attending to contemporary understandings of the use values that possibly arises from the intrinsic value associated with Shakespeare, I argue, we can effectively witness the representation of queer subjectivity. And in witnessing this event, we might also watch as the seemingly discreet boundaries of the normative and the non-normative collide and coincide, if only briefly and fleetingly.

Foundational to this dissertation, I argue that we are in midst of an emergent cultural phenomenon. In the present moment Shakespeare has emerged as a new commodity for cultural consumption, which is to say the commodity of Shakespeare has taken on a new and highly nuanced cultural import today.¹ Over the past decade, the figure of Shakespeare—both as a historical figure as well as the works attributed to that historical figure—has emerged and continues to emerge as a paradigm for rehabilitation, or what I characterize as a cultural performance predicated on the desire to restore a subject to a former capacity in order to ensure a more socially successful future for that subject, as well as for particular cultures more generally. Various types of rehabilitation programs appropriate the name of Shakespeare with the goal of effecting new possibilities for traditionally marginalized communities.

In this dissertation, I adopt an interdisciplinary and performance-based approach to understanding the cultural and political effects and ideologies of the queer byproducts that result from today's obsession with rehabilitation as an effectual mode of Shakespearean praxis. In many ways, my understandings of queer and queer subjectivity fail to synchronize with many current understanding and uses of the term within queer theory, which I confront throughout this dissertation though more directly in the conclusion.² In this dissertation, queerness signifies a processual activity, and queer, or

¹ This should not suggest that Shakespeare's cultural import as a paradigm for social and cultural identification itself is new. In *Meaning by Shakespeare* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), Terrence Hawkes offers the pithy aphorism, "Shakespeare doesn't mean: *we* mean *by* Shakespeare" (6). This point is a well established one. The emergent quality of Shakespeare today lies in the ways in which we use Shakespeare to mean *differently*.

² Although the model of queerness I introduce here and develop throughout this dissertation differs, for the most part in substantial ways, from many theoretical deployments of queer today, my understanding of queerness as a performative process finds affinity with the work of José Esteban Muñoz and Thomas A. King. See: Muñoz, *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics* (London/Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999, and especially "Cruising the Toilet: LeRoi Jones/Amiri Baraka, Radical Black Traditions and Queer Futurity." *GLQ* 13.2-3 (2007): 353-67; and King,

that which yields from queerness as a performative condition, refers to those singular and momentary events that signify as indeterminate, disruptive, and not yet socially legible.

In conceptualizing the queerness of rehabilitative Shakespearean praxis, I take a cue from performance theorist Richard Schechner's concept of "restored behavior," which he loosely defines as a particular mode of living or daily and embodied activity. To describe this concept further, he draws an analogy to the work of a film editor. We can understand restored behavior, he explains, as material records of pastness, like reels of raw footage on celluloid. Much like a filmstrip, restored behavior, or "strips of behavior," refers to lived events in social space that evoke the past insofar as those past events "can be rearranged or reconstructed."³ In the process of restoring, rearranging, or reconstituting past behaviors (each of which constitute related but slightly different forms of engagement with social ideologies of performance), those behaviors associated with the past, once thought of as primary, originary, and prior, "may be lost, ignored, contradicted—even while this truth or source is apparently being honored and observed" (35).

We can understand the queerness of rehabilitation through a slight departure from Schechner's important concept.⁴ In this dissertation, queerness names a mode of restored behavior—or what I broadly conceptualize as the cultural performance of rehabilitation—built upon an ambivalent fetishization and abjection of the past and how the past comes

The Gendering of Men, 1600–1750: Queer Articulations, 2 vols. (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2008).

³ Richard Schechner, *Between Theater and Anthropology* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985).

⁴ In my indebted departure from Schechner follows understandings of the relation between lived performance and pastness also explored by two of the most notable performance theorists, Paul Roach and Margaret Thompson Drewal. See: Roach, *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), and Drewal, *Yoruba Ritual: Performers, Play, Agency* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1991).

to be lived out in daily life. Rehabilitation programs present Shakespeare as an image of the distant past as all too applicable in the present. Attributing a sense of intrinsic value to the cultural iconicity that the sign *Shakespeare* carries, rehabilitation programs programmatically establish the “Shakespearean” past as that which can potentially displace and eventually dispel the personal past experiences of the rehabilitative subject. However, queerness marks rehabilitation as events of failure—a sense of failure (sometimes on the part of the institutions facilitating rehabilitation, sometimes on the part of rehabilitative subjects) that opens strategic identificatory possibilities. The process of rehabilitation situates the non-normative—that is, the markedly inappropriate—subject as that which can be restored to circulation within the economy of properly authorized signification—that is, normative logic. By all means, rehabilitation operates by exclusion and supplementation; but in attempting to establish a system of exclusion against which inclusion is possible, rehabilitation *as a performative process* constructs a conceptual space, however unintentionally and unarticulated, in which the non-normative and the normative coexist over the representation of the rehabilitative body.

Rehabilitation operates as an operation of individuation *qua* liberation: it offers refuge to the non-normative subject within the signifying systems of substitution. Shakespeare-based rehabilitation programs imagine that the rehabilitative subject fulfills the rehabilitative aims by initiating itself in a process of signifying by self-substitution and self-negation. More specifically, as *otherly* signifying (or signifying otherness), rehabilitation displaces the very notion of otherness and non-normativity as things of the past, essences and identities left behind and jettisoned from the future of that subject.

Perhaps the most familiar examples of Shakespeare-based rehabilitation programs are those set in prisons. *This American Life*, a weekly narrative audio program hosted by *Public Radio International* and *National Public Radio* (NPR), aired an episode entitled “Act V,” which documents the use of Shakespeare as a rehabilitative tool for inmates in a high-security prison in Missouri.⁵ By reading and performing Shakespeare, inmates are imagined to open a self-critical space in which they may take stock of past actions and claim responsibility for their crimes—actions, in other words, which they must effectively articulate before the parole board if they are to have a future outside of prison. But the project is built upon a double move, for there is a dual educational imperative in effect. While the inmates learn Shakespeare, the spectator learns about the socio-economic disadvantages that influenced—and at times, the episode suggests, preconditioned—the inmates’ crime and subsequent incarceration. Over the past five years in particular, prison Shakespeare programs have received increased attention in mainstream news reports. The use of Shakespeare as a rehabilitative tool in penal populations has been chronicled and critiqued by major U.S. newspapers, including: *Los Angeles Time*, *Boston Globe*, *New York Times*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, and *Washington Post*.⁶ Last year, *PMLA* issued a special edition on the intersection of incarceration and

⁵ “Act V,” *This American Life*. Prod. Ira Glass. Radio. International Public Radio, 2004. The episode can be accessed online, at: <http://www.thisamericanlife.org/>.

⁶ For a sampling of the media documentation on prison Shakespeare projects, see: Diane Haithman, “London Shakespeare Workout Prison Project puts the Bard behind Bars” in the *Los Angeles Times* (20 Feb. 2008: E1); Susan Chaityn Lebovits, “Shakespeare Goes behind Prison Bars” in the *Boston Globe* (15 July 2007: 8); Jodi Wilgoren, “In One Prison, Murder, Betrayal, and High Prose” in the *New York Times* (29 April 2005: A16); Peter Fimrite, “Convicts action out Shakespeare bare their inner feelings” in the *San Francisco Chronicle* (25 July 2006: B5); and William Wan, “Bard Behind Bars” in *Washington Post* (5 Nov. 2007: B01).

social justice, and prison Shakespeare programs represented two important case studies in this collection.⁷

Prison Shakespeare programs operate with the desire to mobilize inmates toward more socially responsible and self-possessed futures, and the documentations of these programs work to mobilize spectators toward socially educated present understandings of penal systems operating in the U.S. However, they have also mobilized critical attention within the field of Shakespeare studies as well. At their 2006 meeting, the Shakespeare Association of America⁸ screened the popular documentary film *Shakespeare Behind Bars* (dir. Hank Rogerson, 2005), which takes its name from a company of incarcerated adult male actors at a medium-security prison in Kentucky.⁹ The film follows the men over the span of nine months as they cast, rehearse, and stage a full-length production of *The Tempest*. The screening was followed by a discussion with the film director as well as the director of the Shakespeare Behind Bars program. SAA also hosted a workshop that year entitled “Big-House Shakespeare,” organized by Amy Scott-Douglass, author of *Shakespeare Inside: The Bard Behind Bars*.¹⁰ In the workshop, facilitators of various prison Shakespeare programs discussed how and why they use the performance of Shakespeare as a means of communal and social education: to educate inmates as well as the audiences who attend the inmates’ final performances and view or listen to these

⁷ *PMLA* 123.3 (2008). See specifically: Jonathan Shailor, “When Muddy Flowers Bloom: The Shakespeare Project at Racine Correctional Institution,” 623-41; and Jean Trounstine, “Beyond Prison Education,” 674-77.

⁸ Shakespeare Association of America, Philadelphia, PA, 13-5 April 2006.

⁹ *Shakespeare Behind Bars* was screened at several major independent film festivals in 2005, the year of its release. It was nominated for the Grand Jury Prize at the Sundance Film Festival; it won the Special Jury Prize for Feature Documentary at the Independent Film Festival of Boston, the Crystal Heart Award for Documentary Feature at the Heartland Film Festival, and Best Documentary Director’s Choice Award at the Bluegrass Independent Film Festival, to name only a few of its awards. For a full listing of the film’s national and international premiers and awards, see: <http://www.shakespearebehindbars.com/>

¹⁰ Amy Scott-Douglass, *Shakespeare Inside: The Bard Behind Bars* (New York: Continuum, 2007).

performances in the documentary projects that advertise their pursuits. The work of Shakespeare scholars, including Scott-Douglass, Laura Bates, and Niels Herold,¹¹ joins news reports and journalistic pieces in attempting to make sense of the cultural phenomenon of using Shakespeare as a rehabilitative tool for adult male inmates.

The emergent paradigmatic quality of Shakespeare as a mechanism for rehabilitative futurity, I argue, signals the ways in which questions of what it means to identify as an authentic subject have opened to new considerations of how identity can operate strategically to create new political and social possibilities. In other words, Shakespeare-based rehabilitation functions on the level of the individual, with the larger goal of installing an all-encompassing vision of the social in which margins and centers fold in upon themselves. The rehabilitative Shakespeare *A Dream in Hanoi* (dir. Tom Weidlinger, 2002) demonstrates this dynamic particularly well. In 2000, twenty-five years after the end of the Vietnam War, a cross-cultural theater project was created between an American and a Vietnamese theater company to stage a bi-lingual performance of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in Hanoi, Vietnam.¹² The Vietnamese-American Theater Exchange (VATE) facilitated the project, in collaboration with the Ford Foundation and the U.S. State Department, in an effort to supplement, and in the process rehabilitate, failing American foreign policy in Vietnam with theater arts, or what VATE creator Lorelle Browning describes as “our most universal language—one that is absolutely essential to human communication. Since theater’s essence is profoundly collaborative, it requires us, as artists, educators and audiences, to discover and negotiate

¹¹ I discuss the phenomenon of prison Shakespeare and the works of Scott-Douglass, Bates, and Herold in detail in chapter three.

¹² For more information on this program, see the website: <http://www.adreaminhanoi.com>. All press release materials and quotes from program facilitators are taken from this website.

a common bond, a place where we fully experience our human connections and accept and transcend our differences.” Two years later, the documentary film *Dream in Hanoi* was released as a record of this endeavor.

The ostensible subject of the film is the attempt of both companies to, as the film’s opening subtitle states, “creat[e] a bridge between two peoples who were once enemies.” Shakespeare is that bridge. The fantasies of humanist transformation subtending the figure of Shakespeare invariably shape the logic within which rehabilitation can be practiced, and, likewise, how it must be thought. His works are cinematically imagined to transcend geographical and conceptual boundaries of nation and in the process both acknowledge and suture over the problem of cultural difference and the trauma of historical memory. Press materials for the film explain, “this is the first American documentary about American/Vietnamese relations that does not focus on the Vietnam war [sic] or its legacy of human suffering.” Rather, the film focuses on the process of rehabilitating intercultural relations after the trauma of war. It explores the process by which differently identified national subjects appropriate the power of Shakespeare’s international appeal and presupposed transcultural capital in order to find common ground and mutual understanding by rejecting a shared cultural trauma.

Dream in Hanoi dramatizes for us the importance of difference in rehabilitation. When subjects perform rehabilitation (or what we might think of as newly habituated modes of living), they must materially signify difference—that is, they must signify their refusal of repetition. Subjects must represent themselves as selves othered, as self-differentiated, new selves that have sloughed off old ones. Their performance of identity must read as that which has not come before, that which has not been done, at least not by

those subjects. Rehabilitation is the performance of differentiation. But it is also an act of restoration, of resituating concepts of normative identity and how it should be performed in non-normative, marginalized communities. In other words, there are multiple temporalities in play in the performance of rehabilitation. In performing resituated difference, subjects perform in a way that draws attention to differences that matter in specific cultural contexts, the systems of difference that make the representation and signification of identity possible. To bring my understanding of the term *queer subjectivity* and its relation to performative difference into focus, we first must understand the perversity of Shakespeare as it operates in the process of rehabilitation.

As we see through the VATE program, Shakespeare-based rehabilitation projects most often market themselves as inspirational testimonials to a subject's ability to transform for the better. However, the programmatic perversity of these projects troubles their liberatory agendas. This perversity condenses most clearly in the degree to which the figure of Shakespeare represents the instrumentality and agency of the rehabilitative subject. Such perverse agency speaks to the ways in which a critical focus on a subject's potential displaces an understanding of the systems of socio-cultural construction through which subjects are understood *as subjects*. Shakespeare has long occupied a central position in the Western canon and is likewise a powerful force of discipline in the properly social institution of education. As Gary Taylor bluntly puts it:

Shakespeare's power as a literary genius is now inextricably entangled with the institutional power of his official canonization. None of us... can escape from the consequences of that entanglement. What has been done to Shakespeare in canonizing him has affected what Shakespeare does, in countless classrooms, to Shakespeare's subjects.¹³

¹³ Gary Taylor, "Power, Pathos Character" in *Harold Bloom's Shakespeare*, eds. Christy Desmet and Robert Sawyer (New York: Palgrave, 2001) 43-63, 61.

Such entanglements, I would add, likewise shape the ways in which Shakespeare can be imagined to operate as both a subjected and subjecting force of socialization.

To rehabilitate subjects into a potentially new and more flexible sense of self presumes that we can first liberate Shakespeare from the systems of disciplinary power within which he circulates. In *Discipline and Punish*, Michel Foucault defines disciplinary power as that which properly “trains” or normalizes individuals through the mechanisms of surveillance, hierarchical observation, and examination in order to produce “docile bodies,” or bodies “that may be subjected, used, transformed, and improved.”¹⁴ Foucault characterizes these mechanisms of disciplinary power as effective tools developed for the regimentation of other docile bodies, mechanisms that achieve strategic effect through their disciplinary character. These strategies are maintained even when, and most effectively when, they provoke resistance, for acts of resistance, he suggests, demonstrate the necessity of the discipline that provokes them.

However, what emerges in the rehabilitation projects I examine is a figure of Shakespeare who exceeds institutional logics, and, as a result of his symbolic excess, possesses the ability to teach subjects strategies for resistance, but resistance that manages to escape what Foucault describes as the rather exclusively normative-inflected mechanisms of disciplinary power and social regulation. The agency of the subject is predicated on the positioning of Shakespeare as a new technology of the self, or what Foucault describes as a signifying system by which individuals come to know themselves and identify as subjects.¹⁵ However, Shakespeare operates as a mechanism of

¹⁴ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 136.

¹⁵ Foucault defines *technologies of the self* as systems of knowledge and practical reason which “permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to

socialization in rehabilitative Shakespeares precisely because it saturates the social landscape in multiple ways and can be used toward uncountable and unforeseeable ends, like rehabilitation. Rehabilitative Shakespeares suggest that sometimes subjects resist systems of power precisely by embracing those systems. By extensions, they also suggest that there exist multiple systems of power, which may or may not come to programmatically bear on all subjects in the same ways.

Like any cultural phenomenon, Shakespeare's emergent paradigmatic quality is marked by a particular mode of technology. The artifacts attesting to the cultural phenomenon of Shakespeare's rehabilitative power take the form of audio-visual documentary, a genre that markets itself as the most unmediated media representation of reality possible.¹⁶ These documentary projects, what I refer to throughout this project as *rehabilitative Shakespeares*, reflect in the contemporary moment what we might think of as "the desire called Shakespeare" in the age of cinematic reproduction. It is both an authenticating desire—or a desire to authenticate marginally represented subjects—as well as a marketable simulacrum, stamped on celluloid and circulating within popular culture as both a mode of entertainment and inspiration. Thus, my interests in Shakespeare are more presentist and theoretical than historical or properly literary. I contextualize Shakespeare in the present moment and the subjunctive future rather than in the past. For in the contemporary moment, Shakespeare operates as a sort of cultural promise that we as individuals and collective communities can and will improve, that is,

attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality" (18). It is differentiated from three related technologies—those of production, sign systems, and domination—but operates in hermeneutical relation to them. See: *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault*, eds. Luther H. Martin, Huck Gutman, and Patrick H. Hutton (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988).

¹⁶ Over the past decade, documentary theory has produced exciting work in its desire to question the relation among reality, the Real, representation, and spectator reception. At the moment, I leave this claim on documentary's supposed function unmediated, but I discuss this claim in detail in chapter two.

transform for the better, as long as we are willing to work for it. And in working for a better tomorrow, it appears that we are continually working with and reworking Shakespeare with the desire to unwrite our histories.

Rehabilitation as an emergent cultural preoccupation is itself historically marked. It may represent an emergent cultural phenomenon, but it is one built upon an early modern understanding of *rehabilitation* and its queerly out-of-joint temporality. The *Oxford English Dictionary* cites the first recorded use of *rehabilitation* in Henry VIII's Act of Supremacy (1534) as a synonym for a *Perinde valere*, or a judiciary writ by which royal favor previously granted is revalidated.¹⁷ Rehabilitative writs, in other words, give the effect to judiciary and sovereign revalidation of going back to the original time in which the grant was dispensed. The early modern lexicographer Thomas Blount explains in his legal dictionary *Nomo-Lexikon* (1670) that the term *Rehabilitation* "Is one of those Exactions mentioned in the said Statute, to be claimed by the Pope heretofore in England; and seems to signifie a Bul or Breve, for re-inabling a Spiritual Person to exercise his Function, who was formerly disabled; or a restoring to former ability."¹⁸ William Prynne's (1645) use of the term *rehabilitation* in his account of the trials against Irish rebel Lord Connor Maguire similarly refers to an act of restoring a subject to a former condition with the contingent promise of an improved future. He offers as an appositive to the term: "to dispence therewith, or grant to any other any power or faculty of

¹⁷ "rehabilitation," *The Oxford English Dictionary*. 2nd ed. 1989. OED Online. Oxford University Press. 4 Apr. 2008 <<http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry/50201415>>.

¹⁸ Thomas Blount, *Nomo-Lexikon, a law-dictionary interpreting such difficult and obscure words and terms as are found either in our common or statute, ancient or modern lawes: with references to the severall statutes, records, registers, law-books, charters, ancient deeds, and manuscripts, wherein the words are used : and etymologies, where they properly occur* (In the Savoy: Printed for Thomas Newcomb John Martin and Henry Herringman), Kkk.

dispensation, rehabilitation or restoring the [delinquent] to his former condition.”¹⁹ The process of rehabilitating by Shakespeare, in other words, carries with it early modern understandings of subjects as subjected to judicio-political mechanisms of state power, mechanisms that exert force through a retrospective logic.

It is precisely the mark of the past that allows rehabilitative transformation to register as efficacious, while also troubling the very efficaciousness of rehabilitation as a liberatory project—a queerly signifying logic that the early modern etymological baggage of the term *rehabilitation* explicitly suggests. *Dream in Hanoi* typifies the degree to which history—the personal histories of subjects in the process of rehabilitation, history as a subject of inquiry, and history as a subjecting force—haunts the rehabilitative imperative. What quickly becomes apparent in the film is that the rehabilitation project and the process it takes is one of American design, most innocuously demonstrated by the fact that the film is in English and circulated exclusively in the United States. Less innocuously, the film primarily concentrates its interview sequences on the experiences of the American cast members, and occasionally on the ways in which the Vietnamese cast have come to respect their American colleagues. The film documents several moments of intercultural strife, including American objections to the Vietnamese director’s desire to add characters to the play, cut scenes, incorporate a traditional Vietnamese dance sequence, and have the actors and actresses abstain from acts of intimacy on stage, like hugging or kissing. On the latter objection, the American director retorts rather straightforwardly that the young lovers are just that, in love, and the way to signify that one is in love is through exuberant emotion and physical intimacy. Without

¹⁹ William Prynne, et al, *The vvhole triall of Connor Lord Macquire with the perfect copies of the indictment, and all the evidence against him* (London 1645), Ev.

witnessing hugging and kissing on stage, she suggests, the audience may not realize the passionate dynamic between the lovers and the problems that occur when Puck interferes with these dynamics. She objects loudest, however, to the notion of emending Shakespeare. The act of altering the playtext embodies the American limit of intercultural exchange.

By the film's end, testimonies of mutual understanding overwrite the scenes of obvious intercultural conflict. Subtitled interview sequences with the Vietnamese cast and directors structure the final scene and primarily center on what the Vietnamese have learned about Americans. For instance, one of the Vietnamese actresses explains that she previously thought of Americans as having big personalities and closed minds, but she has changed her mind after working with the American theater company. "So I am completely surprised to find that you are very gentle," she tells the camera and subsequent American audience. Another actress professes to the camera, "you have brought to your Vietnamese friends a very good way of working. I will miss your way of working." Her coded testimony draws attention to the ways in which Vietnam's socialist regulations become a primary point of contention in the theater project. At one point, the American stage manager threatens to quit if the Vietnamese cast continues to take two-hour lunch breaks, while the Vietnamese director complains that American obsessions with timetables and schedules infringes on his creative process. Rehabilitating international relations at this point in the film lapses into an assertion that American conceptions of capitalist meritocracy can liberate Vietnamese socialism, a claim that seems to be supported by the actress's lament that she will regret the Americans' departure and along with them their methods of capitalist labor. The performance of

rehabilitating international relations slides into a colonialist project of disciplining Vietnamese minds and bodies not only on the proper ways in which Shakespeare should be performed but also on the virtues of American democracy.

But the joke, it seems, is on the Americans. In the final scene, they bid an emotional farewell to their new Vietnamese friends. The American actor playing Lysander professes on behalf of his theater company and the Vietnamese cast, “we fell in love.” But it is painfully apparent that American love for the Vietnamese is not returned in the way the Americans would have it. The Vietnamese cast reciprocates the embrace of the Americans with what the spectator cannot help but notice as reserved propriety, appropriate to the point of unsettling. While the Americans offer laments cut short by choking emotion, the Vietnamese respond with sighs and bouquets of roses, an American semiotic of love that seems incredibly deflated when we compare it to the Americans’ incessant wiping of tears with shirt sleeves. Clearly, something has been lost in translation. The narrator’s announcement that, “After three months in Vietnam, it is time for the Americans to go home,” echoes with discomforting irony at this moment.

On one level, the rehabilitative project succeeds in its objective to publicly stage a productive cross-cultural encounter in the name of Shakespeare. What it produces as a final staged performance, however, is a version of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* that reflects the American cast’s ideas of what a bi-lingual production of Shakespeare should look like, and the Vietnamese have apparently come to understand and agree with the supremacy of this version, however coerced this agreement may have been. The process of rehabilitation, in other words, reflects (rather painfully at times) dominant ideologies of culture and its relatively stealth mechanisms of appropriation. Yet, the Vietnamese cast

performs their farewell to the Americans so properly coded in red roses and pregnant sighs that the spectator must wonder to what degree the Vietnamese cast has actually internalized the American ideologies of affect and meritocracy established by the film. They perform the role of the properly disciplined subject so well that mimetic identification with the dominating American culture appears as just that: a performance, rather than the internalization of American ideologies as naturalized truth. Whether or not the American cast recognizes the (at least) partial failure of their rehabilitative project is of little matter; in fact, they appear rather pleased with themselves at film's end. I am concerned with the way in which the performative discipline of the Vietnamese cast precludes the documentary film's foundational assumption that Shakespeare can serve as a paradigm of cross-cultural mediation, that which bridges disparate peoples, cultures, ideologies, and histories so as to build a better future.

A Dream in Hanoi, as well as the other rehabilitative Shakespeares I examine, dramatizes the reality of disciplinary power, or the representation of the ways in which Shakespeare becomes an alibi for troubling political agendas. But in watching the spectacle of normativity, we also see moments in which it breaks down. For the film also suggests, however counterproductive to its cinematic aims, that disciplined subjects can learn to co-opt the normative power which Shakespeare is made to represent in ways that turn normativity against itself. If the naturalization of truth can be appropriated as a rehabilitative performance of regulated selfhood, then the agency both of power and the subject come into question: who or what exactly is doing the appropriating in the performance of rehabilitation, normative ideologies or the rehabilitative subject?

The perverse position of the figure of Shakespeare in projects of rehabilitation underscores the double function of rehabilitation. On one level, made clear in *Dream in Hanoi*, rehabilitation operates as a mechanism of normative regulation. On another level, rehabilitation is a cultural performance, and like any cultural performance, rehabilitation must socially signify as operating within cultural norms and ideological systems of valuation. Precisely because rehabilitation functions both as a normalizing social mechanism *and* a cultural performance of identity transformation, it must be understood within a queer temporal logic. The socially regulatory mechanism of normativity functions in the future perfect.²⁰ Performativity, however, signifies the performance of the past through repetition and reiteration. Rehabilitation mediates these dual functions as parallel operations that exceed both/*and* *and* either/*or* logics. Thus, it represents the site of the rehabilitative body as a palimpsest of multiple temporalities. When subjects perform to signify resituated difference, their performance constitutes a mode of self-production: it insinuates a subject into a future tense. It is also a performance of self-negation: the rejection of the non-normative identity position which the subject once occupied. But this mode of self-negation can only signify once a new sense of self-production is first established. In this way, the performance of normative identity requires a belated signification of the non-normative: that which the self is no longer, that which it opposes, and that which brings normativity into the present as the desire of the subjunctive future. Non-normative identity becomes a proleptic construct, the performance of an identity position that occurs in the past only insofar as the present moment works toward a more appropriate and appropriable future. The necessarily queer

²⁰ For instance, Foucault claims that the function of modern discipline is to prevent repetition of unsanctioned behavior (*Discipline and Punish*, 26-28).

logic of rehabilitation both allows for and demands the appropriation of queer subjectivity.

This queer logic also demands a reconsideration of what it means to name queerness as a *performative* process. Rehabilitative Shakespeares suggest that the logic of habituating a subject again and again constitutes a crucial performance or reiterated and ritualistic imperative which normativity must follow according to its own operational design. Judith Butler's work on performativity here is crucial to an understanding of the possibilities of resistance to performances of power. Drawing upon Jacques Derrida's work on citationality,²¹ Butler establishes the now well-known argument that identity is performative; it brings itself into being through the repetitive performance of norms which precondition how identity may be performed. Drawing a distinction between *performance*—what we might think of as the act of doing—and *performativity*—the social norms by which an act is done—she writes:

Performativity cannot be understood outside of a process of iterability, a regularized and constrained repetition of norms. And this repetition is not performed by a subject; this repetition is what enables a subject and constitutes the temporal condition for the subject. This iterability implies that 'performance' is not a singular 'act' or event, but a ritualized production, a ritual reiterated under and through constraint, under and through the force of prohibition and taboo, with the threat of ostracism and even death controlling and compelling the shape of the production, but not, I will insist, determining it fully in advance.²²

In Butler's formulation, *performativity* denotes the conditions of possibility within which identity is performed or enacted. We might think of the performance of identity, then, as

²¹ Analyzing the indeterminate conditions of any context or event, Derrida argues that utterative quotation—what he refers to as citation—marks the difference between representation and the reproduction of an original. "Every sign, linguistic or non-linguistic, spoken or written (in the current sense of this opposition), in a small or large unit," he explains, "can be cited, put between quotation marks; in so doing it can break with every given context, engendering an infinity of new contexts in a manner which is absolutely illimitable" (320). See: "Signature Event Context," trans. Alan Bass in *Margins of Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982) 309-330.

²² Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 95.

the event or the doing of an act of identity that has been done before. In doing an act already done, a subject highlights the rules that structure the possibility of that event and its continuation. Performative reiterability ensures the reproduction of norms within social space, without fully or completely prescribing the forms that the performance of norms might take. For there is always the possibility of failure, that the event will exceed the rules of its condition in some way. To paraphrase Derrida, with repetition comes indeterminacy of effect. Since identity is always a repetition of the norms that enforce its rule, Butler makes the claim that “it is only within the practices of repetitive signifying that a subversion of identity becomes possible.”²³

To shift critical consideration from the process of habituation to the necessity of regulatory power to rehabilitate subjects is to call into question the ways in which certain modes of performance must be understood as resisting the prior conditions of its rule. When subjects perform identity to signify as rehabilitative performances, or newly habitual modes of living, they must materially signify difference, and likewise signify their refusal of repetition, or the performance of prior conditions. Rehabilitative subjects must represent themselves as selves both inside and outside prior conditions of legibility. This assumes multiple systems of legibility, or multiple possibilities for the ways in which pre-conditions of rules can be thought.

Such multiplicity also allows for productive conceptual conflict between the distinction between *performance* and *performativity*. Rehabilitative Shakespeares suggest that the distinction between two may not be as discreet as Butler would have it. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick warns that differentiating between the two potentially replicates a hierarchical and taxonomical othering which performance studies once sought to trouble.

²³ Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (London: Routledge, 1990), 145.

Calling attention to the “obliquities between *being* and *doing*,” she suggests that the division between the terms demonstrates a critical desire to determine once and for all “whether particular performances (e.g. of drag) are really *parodic and subversive* (e.g. of gender essentialism) or just *uphold* the status quo. The bottom line is generally the same: kinda subversive, kinda hegemonic. I see this as a sadly premature domestication of a conceptual tool whose powers we really have barely yet begun to explore.”²⁴ The emergent paradigm of Shakespeare as a rehabilitative phenomenon demonstrates the ways in which a subject’s performance can—and repeatedly *does*—fail to register the normative conditions in which it is produced. In other words, rehabilitative performances cannot signify within the normative conditions of its production. In response, they reframe the conditions of performance so as to account for the resistance. Thus, performance, in certain contexts, produces the conditions in which it can be thought as belated constructions. These belated conditions of rule signify as (ineffectually) normative in scope, but differently normative, nonetheless.

Over the span of each of the following chapters, I develop my model of queerness and queer subjectivity in more depth by exploring it from various angles. I present this introduction, in part, as the first move in articulating this model by establishing some notable differences. Differentiating my use of the term queer seems incredibly necessary given the degree to which queer has itself experienced a series of rehabilitations over the past two decades. Queer has been used in various ways: to refer to something as strange, odd, or perverse; to signify negative characteristics (as in *counterfeit* or *worthless*); to

²⁴ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, “Queer Performativity: Henry James’s *The Art of the Novel*,” in *GLQ* 1 (1993): 1-16, 15.

express pejorative, homophobic sentiments; and to denote socio-political movements—like ACT UP and their rallying cry, “we’re here, we’re queer, so get fucking used to it!”—that work to reclaim the sense of perversity once associated with *queer*.²⁵

Likewise, the term has been used contemptuously and endearingly to colloquially refer to gay, lesbian, and bisexual sexual orientations; more recently, *queer* has been reformulated in queer theories to denote that which signifies otherly gendered and sexualized identities, such as transgenderism, pansexuality, and genderqueer, rather than lesbian, gay, or bisexual.²⁶

Although queer theory is now recognizable as an academic methodology, it nevertheless continues to actively resist the reifying effects of institutionalization. *Queer* has its own troubled history, as the term is made to signify in (sometimes radically) different ways within various theories. Partially, at least, this difference registers a desire to reserve a critical focus on the process of (un)becoming, as *queer* positions itself both within and without academic disciplinarity. Recently, theorists have worked to recuperate *queer* as a non-identity and even anti-identitarian qualifier in the hopes that such a move would, in the words of Carla Freccero, “urge resistance to its hypostatization, reification into nominal status as designating an entity, an identity, a thing, and to allow it to continue its outlaw work as a verb and sometimes an adjective.”²⁷ Such an anti-identitarian agenda sounds strikingly similar to earlier understandings of *queer* as *odd* or

²⁵ For a genealogy of *queer* see: Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2006); Nikki Sullivan, *A Critical Introduction to Queer Theory*. New York: New York University Press, 2003); and William B. Turner, *A Genealogy of Queer Theory*. Philadelphia, P.A.: Temple University Press, 2000).

²⁶ See: Judith Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place* (New York: New York University Press, 2005); Howell Nestle, Clare Howell, and Riki Wilchins, eds., *Gender Queer. Voices From Beyond the Sexual Binary* (New York: Alyson Books, 2002); and Susan Stryker and Stephen White, eds., *The Transgender Studies Reader*. New York: Routledge, 2006).

²⁷ Carla Freccero, *Queer/Early/Modern* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 5.

strange, at a time before the term was deployed within identity politics. In other words, *queer* has become ostentatiously *weird* again. I take a cue from these contemporary theorists in my deployment of queer subjectivity, or what I consider to mean that which signifies oddly-poised subject positions, ones in which a subject works to position itself both alongside and specifically outside power structures.

In this dissertation, queer (again, as a performative event) signifies a theoretical disruption, a mode of epistemology that questions epistemology itself, or the structures by which we think we know the truth of subjects, histories, and identities. Thinking queerly performs, in the words of Donald E. Hall, a “project of creative abrasion,”²⁸ the speculative wearing away and potential damaging of the integrity of normative structural logics that organize understandings of how identity both constitutes and is culturally constituted. For this reason, queer theories usually presuppose that *queer* follows an anti-identitarian logic in that it cannot describe an authentic identity but rather an alternate to identity. Lee Edelman writes, for instance, that queer “can never define an identity [but] only ever disrupt one,”²⁹ a claim that echoes Leo Bersani’s insistence that queer signifies “anti-identitarian identity”³⁰ and Annamarie Jagose’s astute summary that queer is “less an identity than a *critique* of identity.”³¹

My theoretical project in this dissertation follows this emergent understanding of queer as disruptive of identity rather than a synonym for identity positions that have traditionally been posited as non-normative, like gay and lesbian. But I follow this model only to a calculated point. Let me make clear my intervention in conceptualizing the

²⁸ Donald E. Hall, *Queer Theories (Transitions)* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 71.

²⁹ Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2004), 17.

³⁰ Leo Bersani, *Homos* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), 101.

³¹ Annamarie Jagose, *Queer Theory: An Introduction* (New York: New York University Press, 1996) 131.

relationship between queer and identity: though queer operates within a non-identitarian logic no longer homogeneous with non-normative identity, I maintain in this dissertation that an examination of how non-normative identity positions are produced as byproducts of the desire to know subjects—both how they perform and how they might perform differently—allows us to understand the cultural work that Shakespeare-based rehabilitation performs. And this cultural work, first and foremost operates on the level of identity.

In my conclusion chapter, I confront the ways in which queering Shakespearean praxis requires a theoretical understanding of the degree to which identity, though socially constructed, nonetheless remains the dominant cultural signifier of social power, cultural capital, and the politics of which subject may access what resources. Queer theory may allow us to deconstruct the normalization of certain modes of sexuality and the ideologies of socio-sexual reproduction; but at times it also tends to misremember that processes of normalization can take dramatically different forms across various contexts. Queerness, in this dissertation, names an ambivalent approach to the relationship between the social and the political. Although queer theory has successfully demonstrated the social and political need to deconstruct identity boundaries based upon sexually reproductive capability, the next step in the future of queer theory lies in the need to question both how these identities are constituted and to take seriously the fact that social regulation, however much they are built upon fantasies of the normal and the stability of identity, nonetheless, continue to enforce severe consequence for deviating from these fantasies.

In underscoring the enigmatic dynamism of *queer* I want to refrain from conferring upon the term a sort of “Tinkerbell effect,” or what Nikki Sullivan refers to as the “claim that no matter how hard you try you’ll never manage to catch it because essentially it is ethereal, quixotic, unknowable.”³² The shifting nature of the term *queer* registers a changed (and still changing) socio-political and theoretical formulation of the relationship between identity construction and desire. The contingent and fleeting forms that queer subjectivity takes will be informed by the supplemental relation of normative and non-normative identification with and against which it operates. While queer subjectivity cannot be definitely describes in advance, we can, however, examine its discursive construction from multiple perspective to better understand the conditions of possibility for which it allows. For this reason, I focus each of the following chapters on identity- and context-specific modes of performing Shakespeare-based rehabilitation, and examine the different visions of queer subjectivity that these identities and contexts produce. Although each chapter examines queer subjectivity from a different set of conditions, this should not imply a development of thought. Rather, I present each chapter in conversation with the others. I understand each chapter calling back and forth to the others on the topic of what the event of queer subjectivity looks like, as well as the conditions of its emergence.

The following two chapters explore rehabilitative Shakespeares that represent the figure of Shakespeare as a formally organized and properly institutional means of social futurity for specifically marginalized subjects. In chapter two, “Promising the National Subject,” I examine two rehabilitative Shakespeares, *The Hobart Shakespeareans* (dir.

³² Nikki Sullivan, *A Critical Introduction to Queer Theory* (New York: New York University Press, 2003), v.

Mel Stuart, 2005) and *My Shakespeare: Romeo and Juliet for a new Generation* (dir. Michael Waldman, 2005), both of which position the figure of Shakespeare as American and British national ideals, respectively, as a means of acculturating youth and young adult immigrant communities of color. Tracing the tensions between local and national operating in these documentary films, I argue, demonstrates the multiple and perverse modes of mimetic identification and supplementation so programmatic in the genre of rehabilitative Shakespeares at large. The ambivalent trope of mimetic identification in these two films demonstrates the failure of the national ideal to register within the framework of rehabilitative success; but it also points to the fissures between the ideological constructions of normativity and non-normativity wherein we witness moments of queer subjectivity.

Chapter three, “Witnessing Prison Rehabilitation,” shifts considerations of identity and context to an examination of Shakespeare’s presence in medium- and high-security correctional facilities. Building on an understanding of the ambivalent performance of mimetic identification that open a space for the emergence of queer subject, I argue in this chapter that the figure of Shakespeare as an image of social redemption suggests that queer subjectivity confounds social legibility of the level of affect. Both of the rehabilitative Shakespeares I examine in this chapter, *Shakespeare Behind Bars* and “Act V,” represent Shakespeare as a redemptive force that allows inmates (all males and primarily violent sex offenders) to take responsibility for their past crimes and forgive themselves, in order to then begin the task of seeking the forgiveness of society outside of prison. Rehabilitative success, then, exists in the production of authentic public performances of regret and remorse. However, because these

rehabilitation programs are institutionally sanctioned by the prisons, *Shakespeare Behind Bars* and “Act V” call into question the degree to which the production of authentic affect can ever register as authentic, which is that wonder whether it can register at all. Prison Shakespeare represents queer subjectivity as perversely affective relation between the subject and the social, one built upon simultaneously authenticating and inauthenticating productions of public emotional display.

In the fourth and fifth chapters, I deploy the term *rehabilitation* in the title of this dissertation in its gerund form. Just as formalized rehabilitation programs imbue the figure of Shakespeare with the power to rehabilitate marginalized subjects, less traditional modes of rehabilitation identify the cultural value of Shakespeare as their rehabilitative subject. I include an examination of these non-traditional understandings of rehabilitation to make the point that queer subjectivity cannot reduce to a byproduct of social institutions or circulations of properly understood disciplinary powers. More socially endemic, queer subjectivity marks those conceptual spaces in which any system of normativity, formally articulated or left relatively unspoken, must continually renegotiate itself against its own belated production of the non-normative. Though the public display of social institutions may dramatize this relationship most forcefully in traditionally understandings of how power operates, I am more interested in the last two chapters in exploring those social spaces not often associated with the production of proper social regulation.

In chapter four, “Dreaming Juliet in Shakespeare Pornography,” I expand the notion of socially marginalized bodies to include genre. More specifically, I explore the ways in which hard- and soft-core pornographic film occupy a liminal space in terms of

cultural value: though pornography generates more monetary capital than any other film genre, it nonetheless remains a sort of social secret. In this chapter, I reference the larger body of recently produced Shakespeare pornography, while examining two pornographic adaptations of *Romeo and Juliet* in particular: *Shakespeare Revealed* (dir. Ren Savant, 2001) and *Tromeo and Juliet* (dir. Lloyd Kaufmann, 1998). Both present their Juliet figures as constantly fantasizing about or having nightmares over perverse, pornographic sexual activity. These films suggest that a productive encounter between Shakespeare and pornography exists only in the imaginative, not the literal, because, as they parodically point to, pornography and Shakespeare occupy conflicting points on the social spectrum of taste, appropriateness, and legitimacy. While each of the Juliet figures decide to willfully subvert these hierarchies and implement pornographic sex into their Shakespearean prescriptions, however, the films also follow a normative teleological representation of female sexuality. Moving from lesbianism to romantic, heterosexual monogamy, the Juliet figures subvert cultural standards of taste only insofar as they simultaneously subscribe to heteronormativity. To understand the emergence of queer subjectivity in these projects, I shift critical focus to the production of mimetic identification and authentic affect on the level of the spectator body, the primary level of which pornography operates. As I lead into the next chapter, I explore the question of what it means to represent Shakespeare as a pinnacle of cultural legitimacy, as is the programmatic move of the rehabilitative Shakespeares I examine in chapters two and three. In chapter four I argue that pornographic attempts to “dirty up” Shakespeare cannot register successfully because, quite simply, his function in culture today is just not as cleaned up as pornography would have it. I use chapter four to underscore the point that

queer subjectivity operates as a reminder that the relationship between cultural capital and social legitimacy involve continual renegotiations of identity, affect, and context.

Chapter five, “Rehabilitating the Classroom: Shakespeare and the Problem of History,” explores the possibilities of rehabilitating Shakespeare from the perspective of pedagogy. I spend the majority of this chapter examining one rehabilitative Shakespeare that differs from the others, in degree but not in kind. *In Search of Shakespeare* (dir. David Wallace, 2003), a two-disc BBC biography on Shakespeare, documents the attempts of television personality Michael Wood as he engages in a two-fold project: to discover the truth of who Shakespeare really was, while also demonstrating to those who teach Shakespeare that an approach to history (and in particular, British early modern history) built upon affective similarity rather than difference offers an opportunity to better engage students and to recognize the ways in which the past continually erupts as trace moments in the present. This methodology finds an affinity with Jonathan Goldberg and Madhavi Menon’s understanding of “homohistory,” or what they describe as a mode of “question[ing] the premise of a historicism that privileges difference over similarity.”³³ What emerges from Wood’s homohistorical project, however, is a mode of historical mastery that evokes exhausted images of Shakespeare that we also see in the pornographic projects I examine: a heterosexual, one-woman-loving man who may have written works that *sound* homoerotic, but only if we misunderstand that those moments of male-male love refer to his paternal love for an absent son. In order to liberate Shakespeare from normative modes of historicity, then, *In Search of Shakespeare* represents him as particularly heteronormative. The film demonstrates the ways in which

³³ Jonathan Goldberg and Madhavi Menon, “Queering History,” in *PMLA* (120.5, Oct. 2005), 1608-1617, 1609.

queer projects built exclusively on either sameness or differences reproduce alternately fetishistic and totalizing mastery narratives of identity and its relationship to the social in ways that draw attention to those subjectivities excluded from queer projects.

Though we can never identify in advance the forms which queer takes, in retrospectively taking stock of these forms, we witness a series of performative strategies that, taken together, constitute an emergent and always emerging method of exposing possible context-specific and situational tactics of embodying identification in ways that resist that inertia of normativity. Closing this dissertation, I propose as a final reflection on the multiple forms of queer subjectivity that we bring its nonrationality and asymmetry to bear more forcefully on queer theory itself and the normative politics that its critical fetishization in the present moment of either identificatory sameness or difference performs.

CHAPTER II

PROMISING THE NATIONAL SUBJECT: *THE HOBART SHAKESPEAREANS* AND *MY SHAKESPEARE*

The multimodal and multimedia cultural artifacts I organize in this dissertation under the experimental term *rehabilitative Shakespeares* programmatically invest in the belief that dramatic mimesis can effect real psychological and social change. These audio-visual artifacts document institutional demands that subjects under rehabilitation physically perform the playtext, which implicitly lays the claim that acting out Shakespeare offers transformative potential that other modes of engagement cannot (e.g., reading the playtext as literature or watching film adaptations).¹ In this way, Shakespeare becomes a communal enterprise, a physical task carried out by multiple material bodies to generate social meaning.² This mode of rehabilitation also demands that subjects psychologically identify with aspects of the playtext, to find those moments when Shakespeare speaks directly to them in their current situation. Such a demand echoes the familiar myth of Shakespeare's power to understand and empathize across time and space

¹ The programmatic investments of rehabilitative Shakespeare in the supremacy of performance as an interpretative find affinity in H. R. Coursen's *Shakespearean Performance as Interpretation* (London and Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1992), in which he demands, "a Shakespeare script exists in performance only. Period" (15). Though I disagree with the absolutism of this claim, I take a cue from his insistence that "Production...is a mode of interpretation" (23).

² The multiple articles in Sonia Massai's edited collection *World-wide Shakespeares* takes this premise as a starting point, in order to further explore the degree to which separating a consideration of the local and individual from the national/global and communal tends to produce reifying and hegemonic understandings of the Shakespeare's use value today. Massai elaborates on the stakes of such an intervention in her introduction. See: Sonia Massai, "Introduction: Defining Local Shakespeares" in *World-wide Shakespeares: Local Appropriations in Film and Performance*, ed. Sonia Massai (London and New York: Routledge, 2005) 3-14.

and across boundaries of identity.³ Simply put, the performance of rehabilitation in these programs asserts an analogical implication: to perform Shakespeare is to know Shakespeare, and to know Shakespeare is to come to know one's self. And in coming to know one's self (that is, in getting to know Shakespeare) the individual interacts with a community of other like-minded subjects.

Not so much concerned with the models of mimesis operating within the playtexts, these audio-visual documentations of "real life" performances of Shakespeare presuppose that Shakespeare's ideological function in the contemporary moment supplies the necessary force by which a subject might come to embody representations of that which qualifies as culturally appropriate, successful, and socially productive. They register the mimetic systems of socio-cultural power imbued within the figure of Shakespeare and the Shakespearean playtext today. An exemplar of rehabilitative Shakespeares, *The Hobart Shakespeareans* (dir. Mel Stuart, 2005), documents the work of Raif Esquith, award-winning American teacher, over the span of one academic year.⁴ Esquith uses the performance of Shakespeare to teach the primarily first- and second-generation Latino and Asian immigrant students in his fifth-grade class and afterschool program the tenets of American citizenship. The afterschool program, from which the

³ Anthony Dawson offers an important assessment on the representation of Shakespeare as a cross-cultural signifier in his analysis of the multiple film adaptations of Akira Kurosawa. He writes, "Shakespeare's international cache enables a partnership between local and global, freeing the demotic language as a kind of resistance to cultural standards...At the same time, of course, Shakespeare and the cross-cultural values associated with him provide the occasion by which such moves are enabled and justified. Even more to the point, perhaps we should be looking for ways to ask different questions, ones that move away from political negotiations. What alternatives to the cultural studies path might be worth following?" (158). For Dawson, the answer lies in a shift to understanding cinematic adaptation as a distinct reading practice discreet unto itself. With a similar question in mind, I explore the ways in which cinematic readings are always steeped in cultural studies, and, as such, are inescapably tied to social politics, even, and perhaps especially when, those reading practices attempt to distance themselves from social politics, as is the case in rehabilitative Shakespeares. See: "Cross cultural Shakespeare: Akira Kurosawa Reading Shakespeare" in *A Concise Companion to Shakespeare on Screen*, ed. Diana Henderson (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), 155-175, 158.

⁴ For more information on the Hobart program, see: <http://www.hobartshakespeareans.org>.

film takes its name, offers the children in Los Angeles's Hobart Elementary a space off the street, a place to go when school is out and where Shakespeare is always in. In the process of witnessing the efforts of these children to work against systems of race- and class-based systems of inequality, the film explicitly challenges the spectator to question the identity-based criteria in which we imagine the possibility of upward social mobility.

While *The Hobart Shakespearians* centers on the attempts of one instructor to help students decontextualize from their local, urban Los Angeles community-based identity in exchange for a broader American citizenship, the other film I examine here, *My Shakespeare: Romeo and Juliet for a New Generation* (dir. Michael Waldman, 2005), follows the efforts of aspiring director Patterson Joseph as he works with primarily Afro-British young adults to negotiate a performance of Shakespeare that speaks more directly to their current local environment, the impoverished town of Harlesden in the greater London area. Under Joseph's tutelage, the urban community comes together in the space of the theater to explore what a Harlesden Shakespeare might look like and how it might compare to the time held English tradition of staging Shakespeare. In the process, the film challenges the spectator to question the ethnic and class-based modes of evaluation that structure social understandings of particular productions of Shakespearean theater as "legitimate," and by extension, those assumed "illegitimate" or socially unsanctioned.

Both films represent the figure of Shakespeare as a technology of the self: a signifying system by which individuals come to know themselves and identify as subjects. Foucault explains that technologies of the self "permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in

order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality.”⁵ What appears at first glance as a relatively radical social activist project offering marginalized youth communities increased resources to aid in their ability to navigate social space—namely, the cultural capital imbued in the figure of Shakespeare—is, in effect, an aggressively disciplinary project based upon normative categories of national identity. As I will discuss in what follows, it is not so much that the subjects learn what it means to identify as authentically and legitimately American or British; rather, the youthful subjects learn *how to* identify in these nationalistic ways. There follows the imperative that they now must also perform these national identities if they are to navigate social space in a way that signifies their rehabilitative success.

Signification, however, requires difference. In both films, the process of rehabilitation projects normative identity within nationalistic terms; but nationality is a conceptual mode of identity that cannot signify as essentially given or as a stable ontology.⁶ Benedict Anderson has famously defined *nation* as “an imagined political community [that is] imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign.”⁷ Nations are socially constructed systems of identification and disidentification, systems of psychological recognition (that is, individual identification with an imagined communal body) that operate on a social level. If nationality is to signify as an ideal and disciplinary

⁵ Foucault differentiates technologies of the self from three related technologies—those of production, sign systems, and domination—but notes that each operates in hermeneutical relation to one another. With the technology of the self, in other words, comes technologies of domination, or a mode of social discipline. See: *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault*, eds. Luther H. Martin, Huck Gutman, and Patrick H. Hutton (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988), 18.

⁶ This concept has been examined by a series of scholars who bring the ideologies of nationality in productive conversation with queer theory. See, in particular: Lauren Berlant and Elizabeth Freeman, “Queer Nationality” in *Fear of a Queer Planet*, ed. Michael Warner (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993) 193-229; Robert Caserio, “Queer Passions, Queer Nationality: Some Novels about the State of the American Nation, 1946-1954” in *Modern Fiction Studies* 43.1 (1997): 170-205; and Lisa Duggan, “Queering the State” in *Social Text* 39.2 (1994): 1-14.

⁷ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1983) 6.

subject category, it requires a supplement to signify its normativity: it requires a referent of non-normativity. *The Hobart Shakespeareans* and *My Shakespeare* position the non-normative point of resistance with material and spatial terms. The urban street signifies a space of social contamination, that which has mimetically contributed to the impoverished and endangered state of Esquith's and Joseph's students. The programs of rehabilitation, then, work to supplant one system of mimetic power—that associated with urban street life—for another—Shakespearean theater.

The process of rehabilitating nationalism in the name of Shakespeare requires dislocation. But as a process, dislocation also prioritizes space within hierarchical systems of valuation and propriety, systems of cultural value that the films purport to call into question. The subjects of rehabilitation work within a dialectical negotiation of becoming and unbecoming: unbecoming a product of local and site-specific urban cultures in exchange for the ability to perform a more appropriate version of the national subject. Yet the films also go to great lengths to frame the localized urban street within cinematic semiotics of socially marginalized systems of racial, ethnic, and class identity. The forms of mimetic transformation that performing and identifying by Shakespeare take in the name of rehabilitated nationality, as I will argue, belatedly project ethnic- and class-based identities as the non-normative point of being that subjects must resist. The films construct non-normative identity as an anachronistic byproduct that serves to justify their simultaneously disciplinary and liberatory nationalization of marginalized subjects.⁸

⁸ Let me mark more clearly that, in my following analysis, I am interested in the representation of the rehabilitative subject and the psychological and social effects that Shakespeare-based rehabilitation programs claim to have. In the following chapter I also extend this analysis to the psychological and social effects rehabilitative Shakespeare imagine to have on the spectator audience. I am not, however, interested in psychologizing marginalized subject, program facilitators, or the spectator.

This double move of resistance and recapitulation places stress on the liberatory fantasies on which the discourse of rehabilitation is built. The investment in mimetic identification, so programmatic in rehabilitative Shakespeares, places the concept of transformation as the primary characteristic of rehabilitative success, but the transformations that occur take vastly different forms than those authorized by the programs. These audio-visual artifacts go to great lengths to explain, however perversely and paradoxically, how mimesis operates in the performance of rehabilitation. Yet, their explanations fall far short, and cannot account for their programmatically queer temporal structure of producing simultaneously self-possessed and self-negating subjects that emerge from the process of rehabilitation. Which begs the questions that organize my analysis in this chapter: how is mimesis imagined to operate in Shakespeare rehabilitation programs? And how do these operations come to be encoded in rehabilitative Shakespeares?⁹

The representations of dramatic mimesis organizing these rehabilitative narratives are framed in systems of fascination and anxiety strikingly reminiscent of early modern debates over theater's potential to transform actors and spectators, for better or worse.¹⁰ Both the films and early modern theatrical and anti-theatrical debates encounter a similar crux: what cultural work does mimesis perform? The controversy over the Elizabethan and Jacobean English theater centered on a discussion of the relationship between performance and being, and the power of mimesis to affect this relationship.

⁹ Throughout this dissertation I refer to the effect of Shakespeare-based rehabilitation. I refer explicitly to the effects of the media artifacts of rehabilitative Shakespeares only, not the "true" or "actual" outcomes of the programs as they operate in social space. Although this dissertation concerns itself with the social, I refrain from sociological methodologies.

¹⁰ For a brilliant discussion of the cultural anxieties fueling the debates, see: Jean E. Howard, *The Stage and Social Struggle in Early Modern England* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), especially chapter three, "Antitheatricality Staged," 47-73.

The two primary mimetic models in the early modern period are those of Plato and Aristotle.¹¹ In *The Republic*, Plato denounces the poet as an imitator who possesses through the power of art the potential to deceive the naïve reader. Three degrees of separation prevent the artist from providing an authentic representation: the ethereal form of an object, the physical manifestation of an object, and knowledge of the physical manifestation. An artist merely copies the surface of an object, working on the level of mere appearance without an awareness of that object's fuller substance. Thus, for Plato, the artist is an "imitator [who] will neither know nor have right opinion about what he imitates relative to its excellence or vice."¹² While it attempts to claim truth as its domain, for Plato, art as a process of imitation is a deceptive but essentially superficial and imperfect enterprise. Theater possesses a particularly corruptive potential because of its dependence upon spectacle. It deceives the audience into sympathizing with those who grieve excessively, who lust inappropriately, who laugh at base things, all vicariously. Within this system of vicariousness lies the primary danger: the enjoyment the audience feels in indulging these emotions can transfer to their own lives and ultimately transform the theater-goer in the grotesque sorts of people they saw on stage or heard about in epic poetry.

The anti-theatricalists adopt Plato's model of mimesis in their attacks on the theater.¹³ For instance, in *Histriomastix* (1633), a diatribe against plays, actors,

¹¹ Though Aristotle's *Poetics* was not published until the mid-sixteenth century (and even then it was available only in Latin and Italian), Horace's *Ars Poetica* was widely available and had assimilated Aristotle's notion of mimetic action. See: Brian Vickers, "Introduction" in *English Renaissance Literary Criticism* (Oxford 1999), 11-12.

¹² Plato's *Republic*, trans. R.E. Allen (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004) 336.

¹³ For a general overview of Platonic anti-theatricalism, see: Jonas Barish, "The Platonic Foundation" in *The Anti-Theatrical Prejudice* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 5-37; and Anne Melberg, "Plato's Mimesis" in *Theories of Mimesis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

playwrights, and spectators, William Prynne expresses social concern about theater's counterfeit nature:

If we seriously consider the very forme of acting Playes, we must needs acknowledge it be nought else but grosse hypocrisie. All things are counterfeited, feined, dissembled; nothing really or sincerely acted. Players are always counterfeiting, representing the persons, habits, offices, callings, parts, conditions, speeches, actions, lives; the passions, affections, the anger, hatred, cruelty, love, revenge, dissentions; yea, the very vices, sinnes, and lusts; the adulteries, incests, rapes, murders, tyrannies, thefts, and such like crimes of other men, of other sexes, of other creatures; yea, oft-times of the Divell himselfe, and Pagan Divell-gods. the whole action of Playes is nought else but feining, but counterfeiting, but palpable hypocrisie and dissimulation which God, which men abhorre: therefore it must needs be sinfull.¹⁴

For Prynne, theater's representation of the world is degraded by the base imitative nature of the plays and the players. He goes beyond Plato in demonizing the act of counterfeiting. But like Plato, he fears what these false representations induce in the imaginations of spectators. For several anti-theatricalists, the falsity of theatrical representation catalyzes a blurring of categorical difference that threatens the very values that constitute Englishness. In *The Schoole of Abuse* (1579), Stephen Gosson imagines England at wartime and the particularly destructive force of the Poet to national security: "If the enemy beseege us, cut off our victuals, prevent forrain aide, girt in the city, & bring the Ramme to ye walles, it is not Ciceroes tongue that can peerce their armour to wound the body, nor Archimedes prickes, & lines, & circles, & triangles, & Rhombus, & rifferaffe, that hath any force to drive them backe."¹⁵ Gosson offers an apocalyptic vision of mimesis here: poets weaken the nation in their morbid fascination with appearances and their distance from reality. The endpoint of poetry, Gosson warns, could result in the violent destruction of England.

¹⁴ William Prynne, *Histrionmastix*. (London, 1633) sig. X3v.

¹⁵ Stephen Gosson, *The Schoole of Abuse* (London: F. Shoberl, 1577) sigs. D8r-D8v.

In a radically different representation of mimetic power, Aristotle's model positions imitation as a tool for teaching virtuous behavior. In his *Poetics*, poetry becomes a pedagogical tool that defines humanity:

Poetry in general seems to have sprung from two causes, both natural ones. First, the instinct of imitation is implanted in man from childhood, one difference between him and other animals being that he is the most imitative of living creatures, and through imitation learns his earliest lessons; and it is also natural to delight in imitations....Objects which in themselves we view with pain, we delight to contemplate when reproduced with minute fidelity. The cause of this again is, that to learn is gives the liveliest pleasure, not only to philosopher but to men in general; whose capacity, however, of learning is more limited. Thus the reason why men enjoy seeing a likeness is that in contemplating it they find themselves learning or inferring, and saying perhaps, "Ah, that is he." For if you happen not to have seen the original, the pleasure will be due not to the imitation as such, but to the execution, the coloring, or some such other cause.¹⁶

This model provides the backbone of the defenses of poetry and theater. In *Defence of Poesie* (1595), Philip Sidney defines poetry as "an art of imitation, for so Aristotle termed it in his word mimesis, that is to say, a representing, counterfeiting, or figuring forth—to speak metaphorically, a speaking picture—with this end, to teach and delight."¹⁷ The Aristotelian model also figures in Thomas Heywood's somewhat belated defense of theater, *An Apology for Actors* (1612):

If we present a Tragedy, we include the fatall and abortive ends of such as commit notorious murders, which is aggravated and acted with all the Art that may be, to terrifie men from the like abhorred practices. Either the vertues of our Country-men are extolled, or their vices reproved. [We do this] either animating men to noble attempts, or attaching the consciences of the spectators, finding themselves toucht in preventing the vices of others. If a morall, it is to perswade men to humanity of good life, to instruct them in civility and good manners, shewing them the fruits of honesty, and the end of villany.¹⁸

¹⁶ Aristotle, *Poetics*, trans. S.H. Butcher (New York: Hill and Wang, 1961), 5-6.

¹⁷ Philip Sidney, *The Defence of Poesie* (London: James Roberts, 1595), sig. C2v.

¹⁸ Thomas Heywood, *An Apology for Actors* (Nicholas Okes: London, 1612), sig. F4v.

Sidney's "speaking picture," though not originally referencing the theater, provides an apt metaphor for the stage. Hamlet famously instructs his company of players not to overact but to perform as theater intends, "whose end, both at the first show and now, was and is, to / hold as 'twere the mirror up to nature" (21-22). The trope of "copy as mirror" figures prominently in both Plato and Aristotle and is a ubiquitous image in early modern literature and drama. Texts place a mirror before the reader; the text-as-mirror functions both as a mirror of the world and also a mirror whereby readers may see themselves reflected back, recognize their faults, and correct those faults in the pursuit of virtuous behavior.¹⁹ For Heywood, the mirroring effect of theater teaches civility and potentially inspires appropriate nationalism on the part of the spectator. Thus, the spectator becomes the performer in the space of theater; dramatic mimesis blurs the line between the subject and object on stage and off. Theater for Heywood, then, is always already nationally inflected and holds the power to fashion the national subject into the ideal image.

Central to a discussion on rehabilitative Shakespeares is the question of how the transformative potential of dramatic mimesis comes to be articulated and rearticulated as a coincidental discourse that bridges the early modern and the contemporary moment. The performance of rehabilitation, then, bears witness to the coinhabitation of two historical junctures that meet at the mutual anxiety over the possibility of performance to

¹⁹ For a discussion of four basic ways in which the literary trope worked, see Herbert Grabes, "A Typology of Works Bearing Mirror-Titles" in *The Mutable Glass*, trans. Gordon Collier (London: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 38-63. For deliberations on early modern mirror technology and the implications this has for the mirror metaphor, see: Adam Max Cohen, "Shakespeare's Hall of Mirrors" in *Shakespeare and Technology: Dramatizing Early Modern Technological Revolutions* (New York: Palgrave, 2006), 151-70; Christian Billing, "The Distorting Mirror." *Refiguring Mimesis: Representation in Early Modern Literature*, eds. Jonathan Holmes and Adrian Streete (Hatfield: University of Hertfordshire Press, 2005) 137-59; and Arthur F. Kinney, "Shakespeare's Mirrors" in *Shakespeare's Webs* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 1-33.

affect identity in unauthorized and unanticipated ways. In other words, *The Hobart Shakespeareans* and *My Shakespeare* offer a contemporary meditation on an early modern anxiety.²⁰ Mimesis is fractured along local and national lines and at the ambivalent point of the ability of performance to reveal the dynamic potential of the subject. Successful performances of dramatic mimesis depend upon kinesis, or the performance of dynamism. These films dramatize the efforts of subjects to rehabilitate by Shakespeare, as well as navigate the various models of the power of theater.

The dual modes of mimetic identification operate as parallel structures, and produce compounding possibilities by which subjects might conceive of themselves in relation to Shakespeare. But these possibilities are also confounding in that they threaten to unravel the systems of legibility by which rehabilitative transformation culturally signifies. In the performance of rehabilitating by Shakespeare, mimetic desire for identification—to identify with socio-cultural systems of power and the desire to be identified or made intelligible by these systems—depends upon a perverse mode of subjectivity built upon dialectics of discontinuity and conflict, resistance and acceptance, coercion and consent. The pursuits of rehabilitating a subject (that is, the process of allowing a subject to embody a mode of psychologically and socially intelligible subjectivity) depend up that subject’s ability to queerly signify across fractured lines of identification, at once individual and communal, a product of the street and of the nation, a reproduction of the identification and disidentification with multiple and conflicting ideologies. The way these conflicting theories of representation and mimetic

²⁰ Like a haunting demand to “remember me” (*Hamlet* I.iv.91), early modern anxieties over the place of the theater in cultural reproduction inflect rehabilitative Shakespeares in their desire to make the claim that embodied performance effects. All quotes from Shakespeare throughout this dissertation are taken from *The Riverside Shakespeare*, ed. G. Blakemore Evans (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Group, 1997).

identification underwrite the phenomenon of rehabilitative Shakespeares today, I suggest, registers contemporary ideologies of what it means to signify as an authentic and legitimate subject. The dual and contradictory models of mimesis at play in *The Hobart Shakespeareans* and *My Shakespeare* function with the mutual goal of registering a subject's ability to cross-identify—that is, to identify across conceptual and culturally determined boundaries of identity, like race, ethnicity, and class, as well as geographical and conceptual boundaries of nationality.

The sense of self these films produce is one of co-location and diffuse agency, a subjectivity of infinite forms and possibilities—in other words, a mode of subjectivity that signifies as a queerly conceptualized spatial and temporal position. This, however, is not the subject position authorized by the rehabilitative project, but rather one that emerges, much like the belated construction of non-normativity, as a byproduct of the system of signification within which rehabilitation conceptually and cinematically signifies. It is the programmatic queerness of rehabilitation as both a cultural performance of transformative subjective possibility *and* as a mechanism of disciplinary power that places as imperative a demand on rehabilitation to signify as an efficacious use of Shakespeare, as rehabilitation places on the subject in process to signify normatively. Queer becomes the unauthorized effect of rehabilitation that, in turn, requires that rehabilitation belatedly construct the non-normative as a means of stabling its system of signification. Thus, in my analysis of the programmatic process of rehabilitative nationality, I begin with the construction of the non-normative.

Contextualizing Rehabilitation

To rehabilitate by Shakespeare is to embody the transformative power of performance. In the process of literary-cultural ownership—claiming identification with the Shakespearean playtext and specific characters as a means of claiming individual and communal identity—the process of individuation initiates the subject of rehabilitation.²¹ Through the process of identifying as an individual who belongs to a larger cultural community, the subject is reborn, refashioned, rehabilitated. Such programmatic beliefs position knowledge not as a mode of cognition but rather as practical activity: the ability to navigate cultural performances demanded in and by various social contexts, from acts of individuation to those that foster a sense community formation. Inherent in this model of performance is the mediation between knowledge and being, and the ways in which modes of contextualization can reformulate this relation.

A two-fold investment in psychological and social transformation links the individual and the communal on the level of performativity: the ways in which habitual behaviors and actions (or performances) affect and are affected by culturally sanctioned ideologies of identity, or how particular beings properly act out particular states of being. In *Bodies that Matter*, Judith Butler argues that a body comes to matter—to materialize and to mean, to be situated and to signify—as a belated effect of discourses surrounding that body's origins, its transformation, and its potentiality. A body's means of mattering, or the ways in which bodies come to be intelligible, is not given but constructed. Butler

²¹ In his Introduction to *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare and Popular Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), Robert Shaughnessy writes, “When the transmission and appropriation of Shakespeare are at stake, considerations of taste and aesthetic value are also bound up with inevitably vexed questions of cultural ownership, educational attainment and class, and with issues of who the desired and actual consumers of ‘popular’ Shakespeare may be, who these hope to include, and who they don’t” (2). The question of cultural ownership inevitably follows (*haunts*, perhaps) any mode of adapting, reimagining, and revising Shakespeare; for rehabilitative Shakespeares, however, the process of cultural ownership becomes the primary concept on which questions of Shakespeare’s function in popular culture programmatically return.

identifies the production of the body's intelligibility at the site of performativity, or the "specific modality of power as discourse."²² Bodies come to matter in the process of rehabilitation by mattering *differently*. Because a subject enters into rehabilitation, there follows a belief that the subject once signified inappropriately, performed unsuccessfully, and through an engagement with the playtext and with Shakespeare, that subject can come to perform selfhood in a way that is socially legible, or legitimate. Again, transformation is the key element, and is always predicated on the establishment of distance from the subject's origin (in this case, the point of being he or she performed upon entering into the rehabilitation program). But that fantastical point of origin always circulates within the economy of transformation, as that which legitimizes change while also inescapably linking the subject to its past.

The possibility of rehabilitating by Shakespeare presupposes that the subject is socially constructed and that subjectivity is malleable. It also presupposes that an appropriate contextualization stands alongside—and specifically outside—an inappropriate one. The discursive construction of the rehabilitated subjects in *The Hobart Shakespeareans* and *My Shakespeare* depends upon the concept of *performing differently*, or articulating the performance of spatial identification with the urban street as differentiated with the performance of identifying as a national subject. If the performance of rehabilitation depends upon both the possibility and necessity of a subject's entrance into a more appropriate context, then the very process of contextualization always involves a *recontextualization* as well as a *decontextualization*. Thus the subject must first be decontextualized from the socio-cultural structures—the

²² Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 187.

urban street—that previously informed a sense of self. The subject must move from outside in, into a socially acceptable identity. That which has formerly been internalized, must be rejected for rehabilitation as a cultural performance to successfully operate within the frameworks by which it structures itself. To understand the discursive construction of the rehabilitated subject, then, it is first necessary to understand the context of origin (in these cases, the spatial materiality of the urban street) and how that point of origin is constructed and imagined to operate within the rehabilitative economy.

The opening sequence of *The Hobart Shakespeareans* establishes the film's formulaic treatment of Los Angeles as a spatial threat not only to the rehabilitative aims of the film but also, and more sensationally, to the students' lives. The film's cinematic style adopts the familiar documentary convention of pastiche, which registers clearly in the introductory sequence. It opens with brief interview sequences with Esquith's students who explain that before working with the Hobart Shakespeareans program they had either never heard of Shakespeare or never understood what the playtexts were about. In a particularly adorable moment, one of Esquith's students claims, "First when I read *Hamlet*, I didn't know what it meant, but Raif kept explain us, like five times, like every time, and now I got it." These young students are so effervescent with the excitement of reading and performing Shakespeare that they repeatedly choke through their testimonials, their words unable to match the real life adventures they try to describe. It's easy to get caught up in the excitement. These are students that some of us dream about: students who are so eager to learn that it's difficult to match their enthusiasm. The film moves to quick images of the student's final performance of *Hamlet*. We see the students huddled together as they cheer "Will Power!" (the group motto in the Hobart

Shakespeareans) and prepare to take the stage. Then: fade to black. The camera shifts to an image of the Los Angeles cityscape shot in an overhead panoramic perspective. As the title of the documentary enters as paratext writ large across the Los Angeles urban sprawl, the camera pans down to reveal the industrial landscape of East Los Angeles, which is visually choked with a thick layer of smog. The overhead shot and accompanying helicopter sound effects visually and auditorily mark Los Angeles within semiotics of danger, crime, and surveillance.

The opening sequence establishes the tone of overexposure and physical threat associated with the urban street that will weave throughout the film. At one point, Hobart Elementary enters into lockdown just as the school lets out because an unknown assailant opens fires mere blocks from the school. What is most striking in this moment is the students' reaction. They appear unfazed by the violence of the situation, and routinely settle in to their seats to await the announcement that they may leave. Later in the film, the camera documents Esquith's morning commute to Hobart Elementary, and as he drives through the streets of Los Angeles he points to various dilapidated and ominous-looking industrial buildings that make the area appear more like a war zone than a community. Esquith explains, "When I began teaching here twenty years ago it was a poor neighborhood. These days it's a poor neighborhood and it's also a rough neighborhood, and it makes it very difficult for the students going to school there." Hobart Elementary is one of the largest schools in the U.S. and is situated in the heart of downtown Los Angeles, an area known for high numbers of undocumented immigrants, an equally high crime rate, and a low socio-economic status. Yet *The Hobart Shakespeareans* promises hope. In the midst of such a sprawling landscape so saturated

with urban violence, there exists something special, if only we know where to look. The camera helps us with this project of discovery by zooming in from the panoramic perspective of Los Angeles to an overhead shot of the Hobart Elementary schoolyard.

The camera movement represents the students of the Hobart Shakespeareans program as situated in their local urban context, while also implying that they are somehow different, unique, special, and their trials worth watching. These children devote endless hours to Esquith's Shakespeare curriculum. They voluntarily attend the Hobart Shakespeareans program after school and on most weekends. They spend tireless hours in rehearsal, constructing the sets for the final production, and learning to play musical instruments so that they can create a multimodal performance for their audience. And, as the opening sequence blatantly claims, these children are working against incredible odds. In an area in which walking home from school can be a life threatening act, these fifth graders strive to create art and classical entertainment in the face of such adversity. The film documents the real life experiences of these students through a melodramatic lens. Because the term *melodrama* carries with it a history of pejorative use based on specifically gendered-terms,²³ let me be clear here that I refer to melodrama as a rhetorical strategy that articulates an imagined struggle between moral forces in the modern world. This stratagem uses heightened emotional, visual, and stylistic language to convey and articulate moral dilemmas.²⁴ Linda Williams's work on melodrama is useful

²³ Some of the contemporary monikers for melodramatic films include: tear-jerkers, women's films, and chick flicks. For a discussion on the pejorative and gendered treatments of melodrama, see: Christine Gledhill, *Home is Where the Heart Is* (London: British Film Institute, 1984), and Mary Ann Doane, *The Desire to Desire: The Woman's Film of the 1940s* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987).

²⁴ For definitions of melodrama in film, see: Peter Brook, *Melodramatic Imagination* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995); Christine Gledhill, "Rethinking Genre" in *Reinventing Film Studies*, eds. Christine Gledhill and Linda Williams (London: Hodder Arnold Publication, 2000) 221-43; and Linda Williams, "Melodrama Revisited" in *Reconfiguring American Film Genres: History and Theory*, ed. Nick Browne (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998) 42-88.

here. Williams argues that the anxiety over melodrama lies in its dependence upon affect, which is critically positioned as an antagonist to cinematic reality. But as she explains, “supposedly realistic cinematic *effects*—whether of setting, action, acting, or narrative motivation—most often operate in the service of melodramatic *affects*.”²⁵ She suggests that melodrama is less a genre than a modality or an expressive code that cuts across always tenuous and culturally bound generic taxonomies. The documentary genre is no exception. Williams notes, “[i]n cinema, the mode of melodrama defines a broad category of moving pictures that move us to pathos for protagonists beset by forces more powerful than they and who are perceived as victims.”²⁶ The opening sequence of *The Hobart Shakespeareans* clearly formulates the relation between the local context of Los Angeles, and the victimization of youth communities within analogous terms. Thus, a move toward grounding the reality of pathos necessarily calls attention to the narrative construction of the protagonist’s context, as well as the role of the spectator in bearing witness to the children’s attempts to break free from the bondage of local identification.

There is also a distinctly ethnographic logic to the construction of urban reality in *The Hobart Shakespeareans*.²⁷ It withholds the use of traditional semiotics of Los Angeles to situate the geographical context of these students. There are no shots of the Hollywood sign or picturesque shots of Venice beach. In fact, the absence of clichéd signs of the city is as conspicuous as it is telling of the cinematic effect to which the

²⁵ Williams, “Melodrama Revisited,” 42.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ This is not to say that *The Hobart Shakespeareans* and *My Shakespeare* qualify as ethnographic films. Karl G. Heider has made the claim that “all films are ‘ethnographic’: they are about people” (4); but both films stray from Jay Ruby’s definition of what distinguishes a documentary film from a properly ethnographic one are still widely accepted in the world of documentary filmmaking, and these films fail to satisfy those criteria. Rather, the use of ethnographic technique demonstrates the unstable relation between reality and drama in these films. See: Hedier’s *Ethnographic Film* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2006) and Ruby’s *Picturing Culture: Explorations of Film and Anthropology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

construction of urban reality hopes to have on the audience. The opening sequence of *The Hobart Shakespeareans* offers an alternate view of the city. The difference is in the documentation. It purports to record the dirty, gritty truth of Los Angeles, which marks the physical facade of condemned storefronts, outdated billboards, and abandoned dirt lots in architectonics of urban disrepair. This is a sober Los Angeles, told like it is, without the glitz of Hollywood filmmaking to suture over the dangers of the Hollywood area itself. Documentary film has often been referred to as a “discourse of sobriety,”²⁸ with the assumption that it divulges information (in its most objective form) about reality and any use of expressive devices is supposed to be on the terms dictated by the subject matter; it is more about content, subject matter, and information than about form, style, or spectator pleasure; it is more real than fictive.²⁹ To paraphrase Lacan, the desire for the “real” is the desire for absence by which the possibility of presence is affirmed while yet restating loss, absence itself. The play of the presence and absence of the real tantalizes, offers the structure of desires its insatiable drive. Documentary generically traffics in the play of presence and absence. As documentary theorist Michael Renov notes, “every documentary claims for itself an anchorage in history; the referent of the nonfiction sign is meant to be a piece of the world...once available to experience in the everyday.”³⁰ The process of representing documented reality, then, presumes the existence of a profilmic event, or a reality in front of the camera whose spatial and temporal integrity filmmakers

²⁸ The term was first introduced by Bill Nichols in *Representing Reality: Issues and Concepts in Documentary* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991) and has since circulated widely in critical discussions of the genre.

²⁹ However, Michael Renov has brilliantly argued that documentary, as well as other modes of nonfiction film, “contains any number of ‘fictive’ elements, moments at which a presumably objective representation of the world encounters the necessity of creative intervention...[w]ith regard to the complex relations between fiction and the documentary, it might be said that the two domains inhabit one another.” See his introduction to *Theorizing Documentary* (New York and London: Routledge, 1993) 2-3.

³⁰ Michael Renov, “Toward a Poetics of Documentary” in *Theorizing Documentary*, ed. Michael Renov (New York and London: Routledge, 1993), 12-36. 31.

strive preserve as much as possible, a space of truth and reality outside the frameworks of representation and outside of the celluloid frame..³¹ The ethnographic promise in *The Hobart Shakespeareans* to offer an alternate, and thus more *real* than *reel* representation of Los Angeles, preconditions the reality of the rehabilitative scene as a type of spectator seduction.

The cinematic semiotics of reality in *My Shakespeare* more aggressively construct the melodrama of urban street life within a structure of spectator temptation. *My Shakespeare* follows the impulses of *The Hobart Shakespeareans* to frame the rehabilitation of street subjects by first representing the contextual reality of urban life as a spatial threat. The film deploys multiple exposition shots of the Harlesden urban scene within its pastiche opening sequence. It opens abruptly on a young man dressed in camouflage. Perched atop an industrial building that overlooks the city, he recites a spoken word/rap rewriting of the prologue of *Romeo and Juliet*:

Two households, love between ‘em as cold as the South Pole,
Their story is now told.
Lend me ears and come close as drama just unfolds onto you.
Capulet and Montague
Claim indignity, a flaming infamy.
But can’t they see their conceit and vanity leads to complete tragedy
In this mad city of despair:
Fair Harlesden.

The rap prologue offers a seductive hint as to what “Harlesden Shakespeare” might look like, but the performance is little more than a tease at this point. In fact, by the end of the film, the spectator realizes that the rap prologue is staged for the opening sequence and

³¹ The preservation of the profilmic reality is characteristic of many but not all mode of documentary filmmaking. *The Hobart Shakespeareans* and *My Shakespeare*, however, follow a primarily observational and expository mode of documentary filmmaking, attempting to unobtrusively observe the process of rehabilitating by Shakespeare, while also using interview sequences to persuade the view of the reality of the subject’s transformation.

never becomes part of the final performance. The Harlesden *Romeo and Juliet*, staged at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts and done in heritage language mixed with modern dress, reads like any other staging of the play. What we finally get by the film's close is something of a "straight" Shakespeare.³² The rap prologue, then, functions in the larger film project as little more than cinematic "pillow talk."

Having peaked the spectator's interests, the opening sequence later features a brief interview of the director of the rehabilitative project, Patterson Joseph, as he explains his goals for the Harlesden community. The camera follows as he walks the Harlesden streets, which are equally crowded with people and portentous signage. A voiceover narrates, "Harlesden in Northwest London is where Patterson Joseph grew up. He has returned with an ambitious project in mind." Before this project can be explained, however, the film draws the spectator's attention to street signs through the use of multiple quick cuts, which juxtapose street traffic with commercial postings promising fast mortgages, even faster payday loans, and government plaques warning that the streets are policed by plain clothes officers. "Robbers Beware," one sign reads. Combining these images with shots of locked storefronts, the film marks the urban street here as steeped in the social dangers of crime and poverty. Following the series of street signs and illegal commercial postings that mark Harlesden as a space of danger, Joseph explains that the rehabilitation program he has imagined offers the citizens of Harlesden an opportunity to dissociate themselves from their local surroundings. "When I was eighteen, I was a painfully shy boy," he remembers. "I felt myself to be unimportant and

³² Susanne Greenhalgh and Robert Shaughnessy argue, "[t]he rap prologue is a red herring: the Harlesden *Romeo and Juliet* is empathetically realist, text-centered and character-driven—typically English theater, we might say" (93). See: "Our Shakespeares: British Television and the Strains of Multiculturalism" in *Screening Shakespeare in the Twenty-First Century*, eds. Mark Thornton Burnett and Ramona Wray (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006) 90-112.

uninteresting. And when I came across drama I suddenly found that I could express myself and be understood.” Performing on stage offered Joseph not only a sense of self, but also and equally important to the filmic project, it offered him a way out, a chance to leave Harlesden behind. He later explains that he moved to London to pursue theater, and in his turning away from Harlesden he managed to shed the self-loathing and poor self-esteem of his adolescence. More specifically, Joseph identifies Shakespeare as the catalyst: “Shakespeare’s changed me,” he explains, “and what I’m doing here, basically, is trying to encourage, excite, and maybe challenge the people I grew up with to do kind of the same: to get articulate, to say what they think, to have an opinion.” Joseph’s homecoming, then, has a specific purpose: to help the citizens of Harlesden instantiate a distance between themselves and the environment in which they have been raised.

Queer Turns

While the opening sequence of *My Shakespeare* melodramatically constructs the urban street as the space of non-normative mimetic identification, it likewise troubles the degree to which the subjects of rehabilitation can actually distance themselves from that fantastical point of origin. Ending the opening sequence, the film quickly lapses into a hyper-kinetic and color saturated montage sequence that uses split screen and double exposure. Clips from the cast’s final performance of *Romeo and Juliet* share frames with exposition shots of Harlesden, as the dual contexts of the street and the theater blur together to form a single, queerly palimpsestic cinematic space. Images of the cast’s final curtain call, for instance, share exposure with shots of crumbling brick walls and exposed rebar. *Romeo and Juliet*’s “palmer’s kiss” mixes with a long shot of low-income housing

projects. The subject of rehabilitation reads as a palimpsest, at once conditioned by the urban street origin and the theatrical space of rehabilitation. In other words, the end point of the rehabilitative project—the final performance—carries with it the visual remainder of the street, just as the opening montage cannot represent the street without alluding to the final performance. As with any palimpsest, the visual formulation of the subject as spatially and temporally caught between origin and transformation calls into question the very delineation of the origin.

The melodramatic reality-effect of the urban street operates in *The Hobart Shakespeareans* and *My Shakespeare* by establishing an imperative of dislocation within the performance of rehabilitation. By analogizing urban disrepair with moral despair, the films make the argument that Esquith's and Joseph's students exist within deadly systems of mimetic identification with their local environments. Esquith's students candidly discuss drug use among their parents and siblings, and the number of family members they know to be in prison. In *My Shakespeare*, the amateur actors discuss gang wars in which they've participated. One cast member nonchalantly recounts a recent knife fight he had with another Harlesden youth. The films draw the implication that if the students have any hope of futurity, they must turn away from the urban street on which their initiation into the rehabilitative scene is predicated. It must be realized as an othered space against which the subject of rehabilitation must work to dislocate. Julia Kristeva's theory of abjection helps to clarify the ways in which these films represent the space of the street within the economy of rehabilitation. Kristeva describes abjection as part of the process of psychically creating an individuated identity. It is a "struggle [that] fashions the human being, the *mimesis*, by means of which he becomes homologous to another in

order to become himself.”³³ In order to distinguish between the self and the not-self, boundaries must be established between the self and those elements of the self which will come to occupy an abject space, that which is designated as “other” or the not-self. In the process of making those boundaries, the abject object becomes one of distance and disgust. Abjection marks boundaries and, as such, anything or one considered foreign to the self becomes cordoned off in the space of abjection. However, abjection is a perverse process because of its borderlessness, its ambiguousness, and its ability to draw attention to the fragility of the construction of difference. She explain, “The abject is perverse because it neither gives up nor assumes a prohibition, a rule, or a law, but turns them aside, misleads, corrupts, uses them, takes advantage of them, the better to deny them.”³⁴

But as the montage sequence in *My Shakespeare* suggest, the urban street will always mark rehabilitative performances in these films as an inescapable and haunting remainder. The subject’s past—past home space and past history as street subject—circulates within the rehabilitative economy as a haunting abject, the return of the dislocated other, variously acknowledged but left unarticulated. The urban street can never be rejected or abjected; instead, the process of dislocation marks the reality of the street as the crucial marker of rehabilitative success. According to Derrida, every concept contains the trace of its opposite, and mutual contamination between opposing concepts is unavoidable.³⁵ In the concept of rehabilitation, this oppositional difference is more than

³³ Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, trans Leon S. Roudiez (Columbia: Columbia University Press, 1982), 13.

³⁴ *Ibid*, 15.

³⁵ In his elaboration on *différance* in *Speech and Phenomena* (trans. D. Allison, Evanston: Northwest University Press, 1973), Derrida offers: “*Différance* is what makes the movement of signification possible only if each element that is said to be ‘present,’ appearing on the stage of presence, is related to something other than itself but retains the mark of a past element and already lets itself be hollowed out by the mark of its relation to a future element. This trace relates no less to what is called the future than to what is called

unavoidable: it is necessary. The process of rehabilitation must continually posit the point of urban street origin as a means of gauging successful dislocation. Thus, the children in *The Hobart Shakespearians* and the teenage and young adults in *My Shakespeare* are cinematically positioned in a paradoxical relation to the urban street. They are at once products of their local environment, while also distanced from that environment as differentiated. But this sense of distance rebounds on the subject, threatening to erase difference in the very process of establishing it. And it is this process that will carry the subject into the future: that teleological point so coveted but never reached by rehabilitation. These subjects will always be part of the street, by virtue of their material manifestation on celluloid, always accessible for the film viewer. The street will always construct the rehabilitated subject in these documentaries, just as the documentaries will have always already constructed the street as the site of the privileged encounter between Shakespeare and marginalized subjects who would be saved by Shakespeare.

The complex and paradoxical localized identity of the subject of rehabilitation as both within and without the urban context registers within a queer spatial and temporal logic. As I outline in the introduction, I use the term *queer subjectivity* to refer to a rehabilitative sense of self that simultaneously and aggressively occupies normative *and* non-normative identity positions. The queer temporal logic arises as a result of queer spatial occupation in these particular films. In belatedly occupying a non-normative identity position tied to the local, the causal and teleological sense of disciplinary transformation doubles back on itself as a reiterative and reiterating performance. Judith Halberstam offers a productive working framework for thinking about queer time and

the past, and it continues what is called the present by this very relation to what it is not, to what it absolutely is not; that is, not even to a past or future considered as a modified present" (142-3).

space. In her analysis of the production of queer counter-cultures, she uses the term *queer time* to refer “to the place-making practices within postmodernism in which queer people engage and it also describes the new understandings of space enabled by the production of queer counterpublics,” while *queer time*, she explains, describes “those specific models of temporality that emerge within postmodernism once one leaves the temporal frames of bourgeois reproduction and family, longevity, risk/safety, and inheritance.”³⁶ But there is something seemingly contradictory about the operations of queer spatiality and temporality in the performance of rehabilitation. In the queer configuration of the urban scene, the normative structures of Los Angeles and London—crime and poverty—are already established as non-normative points of resistance. The melodrama of these films lies, at least in part, in the assertion that the local threatens both physical and social death. In the struggle toward rehabilitating away from the urban street, the subject must come to recognize that the normative practices of the local register outside of the city in non-normative ways. Shots are fired, knives are drawn, and against all odds the subjects remain alive, ready to fight for a space of safety, to work toward a future, to strive for longevity. The queerness of rehabilitation as a psychological and social process places tension on the division between normative and nonnormative structures, and the effects such structures might have, queer or otherwise. Delineating either “normative” or “non-normative” depends upon a temporally suspension of the subject’s rehabilitative process.

³⁶ Judith Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place* (New York: New York University Press, 2005), 6. It’s worth noting that in her examination of the operations of queer time, Halberstam posit the local as the queer space *par excellent* on a metacritical level. In her introduction, she states, “the ‘local’ for postmodern geographers becomes the debased term in the binary, and their focus on the global, the abstract, and even the universal is opposed to the local with its associations with the concrete, the specific, the narrow, the empirical, and even the bodily” (11). In the performance of rehabilitation, however, the local becomes a belated and supplemental byproduct necessary (and necessarily failing) in the disciplinary desire to make the national signify as concrete, specific, and empirical.

Both categorical performances can only be understood within a supplementary logic as giving rise to the other.

This struggle to recognize and negotiate what qualifies as a normative is precisely what makes a project about fifth graders performing Shakespeare sexy and exciting, worth watching.³⁷ *The Hobart Shakespeareans* offers a sense of hope only insofar as the students in the Shakespeare program exist within a dangerous proximity to the street *and* as long as they strive for an identity position that elevates them above the debased plane of the street. Without this tension, what we see of their final performance of *Hamlet* might look strikingly similar to any other grade school performance of Shakespeare. In making this claim, I don't mean to demean the struggles these students face in their real lives, in the lived experience of their daily trials; rather, I question my ability as a spectator to access a determinate understanding of the reality of these trials when they are represented to me as a belated effect of a fantastical Shakespearean engagement. In a documentary film that conspicuously organizes lived experience within a melodramatic narrative structure, the constructed relation between audience and the spectacle of reality becomes equally conspicuous, if not incredible suspicious. This film, like *My Shakespeare*, conditions spectator empathy, which raises the question of the role and effects such empathy performs in the larger rehabilitative projects played out in the name of Shakespeare.

If the subject must be made to identify and disidentify with the street, then so, too, must the spectator. The melodrama of real life in these films blurs the distinction between

³⁷ On the cinematic strategies of Shakespeare adaptations, see: Mark Thornton Burnett and Romona Wray, eds. *Screening Shakespeare in the Twenty-first Century* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006); Richard Burt, *Shakespeare After Mass Media* (New York: Palgrave, 2002); and Courtney Lehmann and Lisa A. Starks, "Introduction: Images of the 'Reel': Shakespeare and the Art of Cinema" in *The Reel Shakespeare: Alternative Cinema and Theory* (London: Associated University Press, 2002) 9-24.

the fictive and the real. The alternate ethnographies these films offer have the effect of making the familiar strange, a performance that situates the spectator in an uncanny position. Alternate urban reality serves a didactic function insofar as it teaches the viewer not to take representation for granted. The chiding message here is that Los Angeles and London are not the fantasy worlds that the silver screens of *Beach Blanket Bingo* and *Mary Poppins* would have one believe. Direct interviews with the subjects in the programs as they attest to the dangers of the city serve to highlight the absence of a fourth wall, that imagined space in which an audience might take a passive relation to the images represented. These representational techniques fall under the category of devices that Bertolt Brecht argues would potentially lead to a distancing effect (*Verfremdungseffekt*) “which prevents the audience from losing itself passively and completely in the character created by the actor, and which consequently leads the audience to be a consciously critical observer.”³⁸

However, herein lies the paradox: the lesson not to take representation for granted can only be taught through the use of representation. The duplication of reality is always a problematic process, one steeped in politics of identity and performance, seeing and knowing, differentiation between subject and object. In the attempt to “fix” on celluloid what lies before the camera, the process of selection (camera angle, technologies of split screen and double expose, the use of voiceover, etc.) will always intrude in the concept of objectivity. The resulting “reality,” thus, is always mediated: documented reality emerges as a result of multiple modes of intervention, from technologies of cinematic representation, to the creation of narrative structures that most adequately package reality for the aims of the arguments organizing the documentary. These interventions inevitably

³⁸ *Brecht on Theatre*, ed. and trans. John Willett (New York: Hill and Wang, 1964) 91.

come between the cinematic sign (what the spectator witnesses on screen) and the referent (that profilmic event that once existed in the world). And the ways in which these interventions are negotiated is as telling as the interventions themselves.

Like the immigrant and at-risk youth and young adult communities in *The Hobart Shakespearians* and *My Shakespeare*, the spectator becomes a subject of rehabilitation in these films. The audience is subjected to multiple and conflicting modes of mimetic power of the dramatic images. The films position the audience to perform in a mode of spectacle that Louis Althusser calls “internal distantiation,” or a virtual distancing. For Althusser, we look to art to perceive the world and the workings of ideology without necessarily *knowing* those workings: “What art makes us *see*, and therefore gives to us in the form of ‘*seeing*,’ ‘*perceiving*,’ and ‘*feeling*,’ (which is not the form of *knowing*), is the *ideology* from which it is born, in which it bathes, from which it detaches itself as art, and which it *alludes*.”³⁹ The virtual distance of art dramatizes the perception of ideology as “a *retreat*, an *internal distantiation*,” the effect of which makes us perceive “in some sense *from the inside*, by an *internal distance*, the very ideology in which [art] is held.”⁴⁰ Images of urban life exercise a mimetic power of representation on both the street subject and the spectator alike. The art of documenting rehabilitation—the manifestation of real bodies moving in real space and time with the hope of transforming from the inside of

³⁹ Louis Althusser, “A Letter on Art,” *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2001) 151-55, 152.

⁴⁰ Ibid. Steven Mullaney relates Althusser’s use of literary example in his formation of “internal distantiation” to the theater, and more specifically, early modern modes of theater to which performances of rehabilitation discursively return: “Althusser’s examples are novelistic, but the situation he depicts is essentially dramatic, like the language he employs. Drama is the literary art of space, virtual or otherwise; it is the art that most concretely employs distance—literal, aesthetic, ideological, and historical—to bring reigning ideologies and cultural climates into view. . . . The spatial metaphors of a later age do not always figure so prominently in the literal situations of the past, but Elizabethan drama took smatters of place and space, distance and displacement, quite seriously.” See: *The Place of the Stage: License, Play, and Power in Renaissance England* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995) 52.

their deadly geographical contexts—demands of the spectator a paradoxically removed and critically distanced performance of empathizing objectively: sharing feelings with the rehabilitative other on the level of concrete reality by traversing subject and subject/object boundaries in the act of understanding the other's position.

The project of empathetic objectivity, however, becomes as impossible to realize as the subject's ability to reject the urban street context in the process of rehabilitation. For both depend upon a material manifestation of the relationship between (cinematic) language and acts, the interference and the interaction between the referent and the signifier: what Lacan refers to as "the Real." For Lacan, the very notion of referentiality is an impossibility: unimaginable, indescribable, the Real is "the essential object which is not an object any longer, but this something faced with which all words cease and all categories fail, the object of anxiety par excellence."⁴¹ While Lacan's Real remains the most elusive of the tripartite schema organizing consciousness (along with the Symbolic and the Imaginary),⁴² for the purposes of this project I want to stress Lacan's insistence that the Real can be adequately localized in relation to discourse.⁴³ To offer a history of the Real, it is: "marked by symbolic nihilation,"⁴⁴ "that which always returns to the same

⁴¹ Lacan, Jacques. *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: Book II*, trans. Sylvana Tomaselli (New York: Norton, 1988), 164.

⁴² Žižek has argued that Lacan's account of the Real in the 1960s and 1970s begins to approach what, in the 1950s, Lacan deems the Imaginary. He suggests that the immediate coincidence of opposite or even contradictory determinations is precisely what *defines* the Lacanian Real. See: *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (London: Verso, 1989), 162, 171.

⁴³ Michael Walsh has made the claim in a recent and persuasive essay for the pertinence of the Lacanian Real for film studies. See: "Returns in the Real: Lacan and the Future of Psychoanalysis in Film Studies," *Post Scripts* 14 (fall 1994 – spring 1995) 22-32. Michael Renov argues that documentary film has become an important means for both examining and constructing selfhood in the contemporary, media-saturated cultural moment, and that a mediation on the relation between death and mourning, and the Lacanian Real is crucial to such analysis, given the increasingly autobiographical quality and generic shifting of the documentary genre. See: *The Subject of Documentary* (University of Minnesota Press, 2004).

⁴⁴ Lacan, *The Seminars of Jacques Lacan: Book III*, trans. Russell Grieg (New York: Norton, 1993) 148.

place,⁴⁵ “being without alterity,”⁴⁶ and “what resists symbolization absolutely...[the] literal ineffable.”⁴⁷ Combining several of these usages, Žizek argues: “the point is that it does not matter if it has had a place, if it has ‘really occurred’ in so-called reality. The point is simply that it has created a series of structural effects (displacements, repetitions, and so on). The Real is an entity that must be constructed afterwards so that we can account for its distortions of the symbolic structure.”⁴⁸

The structural effects of the Real of the urban street serve to subject the spectator to an impossible demand for empathetic objectivity, while also performing a displacing effect. The street becomes the point of origin against which the rehabilitative subject must reiteratively resist in order to fulfill the transformative project. Thus, the melodrama of the real life struggles of immigrant communities who work with Shakespeare to gain a sense of cultural legitimacy and legibility conditions the spectator to gauge rehabilitative success on their queer dislocation from the urban street. But in the process of rehabilitation, every good turn requires another. Turning from the local constitutes but one layer of the process of rehabilitation in these films. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, both *The Hobart Shakespearians* and *My Shakespeare* present their Shakespeare performance projects as rehabilitative tools in explicitly nationalistic projects. Joseph explains in the opening sequence of *My Shakespeare* that his desire is for the Harlesden citizens to “be more articulate,” or to learn to be read in ways that register legitimately in their larger national context. Esquith is more blatant about the desires of his program. As

⁴⁵ Allan Sheridan, “Translator’s Notes.” *Écrits: A Selection*, by Jacques Lacan (New York: Norton, 1977) x.

⁴⁶ Mikkel Borch-Jacobsen, *Lacan: The Absolute Master*, trans. Douglass Brick (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991) 192.

⁴⁷ Lacan, *The Seminars of Jacques Lacan: Book I*, trans. John Forrester (New York: Norton, 198) 66.

⁴⁸ Žizek, 162.

he simply puts it, “I want these kids to be Americans.” In the process of rehabilitation, liberalist cultural fantasies that buttress the figure of Shakespeare as a transcendental signifier likewise serve as an alibi for conservatively ideological hierarchies of race, ethnicity, and class. As I will argue, the melodrama of resisting localized mode of mimetic identification in *The Hobart Shakespeareans* and *My Shakespeare* sutures over the startling monolithic structures of normative cultural identification that drives the rehabilitative project of performing successful models of national identity.

Normative Impossibilities

The queerness of dis/identifying with the space of the street as a means of underwriting rehabilitative success operates alongside normative performances of disciplining subjects into an image of the national ideal. *The Hobart Shakespeareans* and *My Shakespeare* present Shakespeare as a conduit through which an individual on the street might turn toward the power of the nation, and embody that power as a means of registering as a legitimately nationalized subject. In the cinematic imaginations of these films, Shakespeare functions as a social mechanism that operates with the ability to pull the margin into the center, to consolidate individuals into subjects in a way that registers on a national scale as a process of self-sovereignty. But the dialectic between becoming a subject and becoming subjected to systems of power is a multilayered process in these films, as with rehabilitative Shakespeares more generally.

In its hailing function, Shakespeare is made into the embodiment of “the voice of power” that Althusser allegorizes in the figure of the police officer. But the use of Shakespeare as a rehabilitative tool problematizes his allegory. Althusser’s officer can be

any officer of the law, any function of the state apparatus that not only wears the uniform, but also and more importantly speaks a language that is already part of that apparatus. His officer will always hail with “Hey, you there,” just as he will always look to hail the street subject whose face he cannot see. He is a diffuse figure, but Shakespeare is imagined in these rehabilitative projects as singular. Rehabilitative success, we are to believe, stems directly from Shakespeare’s unique and unsurpassed brilliance, his ability to speak across boundaries of history and identity. But his rehabilitative call demands both normative and queer performances of subjectivity. Thus, to be hailed by Shakespeare in the call of rehabilitation is to be hailed by a complex of ideologies: the regulations of space and time, productive longevity, ethnicity and acculturation, education, and class mobility.

Like Althusser’s police officer, Shakespeare doesn’t hail just anybody in the allegory of rehabilitation. His performative call is reserved specifically for the individual on the street. Reading the allegorical nature of Althusser’s drama, Judith Butler has noted:

If we accept the scene as exemplary and allegorical, then it never needs to happen for its effects to be presumed....Interpellation, on this account, is not an event, but a certain way of staging a call, where the call, as staged, becomes deliteralized in the course of its exposition or *darstellung*. The call itself is also figured as a demand to align oneself with the law, a turning around (to face the law, to find a face for the law?), and an entrance into the language of self-ascription—“Here I am”—through the appropriation of guilt.⁴⁹

His theoretical theater may be a *staged* call, but it is necessarily staged in the street. For Althusser, the allegory of ideology *is* the allegory of the street. He adds the disclaimer: “Assuming that this theoretical scene I have imagined takes place in the street, the hailed

⁴⁹ Judith Butler, *Psychic Life of Power* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997) 106-7.

individual will turn around.”⁵⁰ Which begs the question: why must we assume the individual/subject in this drama is situated in the street? In what ways does the spatiality of the Althusserian street pre-condition the subject’s mis/recognition of himself as having once been not a subject interpellated by ideology, as once having been outside ideology (which is to say, on the street)? Much like the drama of rehabilitation, Althusser’s theory abjects the spatiality of the street as a place of necessary misrecognition, the point against which ideology continually works. Butler also notes that the performative nature of power for Althusser places stress on the systems of agency circulating in his allegory: “As Althusser himself insists, this performative effort of naming can only *attempt* to bring its addressee into being: there is always the risk of a certain *misrecognition*. If one misrecognizes that effort to produce the subject, the production itself falters.”⁵¹ To question the motivation of a subject’s turn toward power structures, then, is to question the subject’s agency in relation to power.

The interpellation of a subject by state apparatuses requires a threat of interpellative prevention. The space of the street, or the fantasy and misrecognition of being outside ideology, acts as a site of resistance in the allegory of interpellation, one that motivates the hailing function of ideology. A subject must be in the street, with back turned, in order to turn around toward the interpellative call. Misrecognized submission to the state apparatus is first preconditioned upon defiance. Interpellation presupposes an originary moment of willful refusal, symbolically registered in the would-be subject’s back-turned act of not-looking at and not-facing the officer. Without setting the space of the street, in other words, there can be no officer of the law to perform the act of hailing,

⁵⁰ Althusser, “Ideology and the Ideological State Apparatus” in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*. Trans. Ben Brewster. New York: Monthly Review Press, 2001. 85-126, 116.

⁵¹ Butler, *Psychic Life of Power*, 95.

no localized embodiment of ideology to perform its structural function. But misrecognition takes on a double meaning here. The Althusserian subject misrecognizes that he is already a subject, and thus subjected to state power, when he turns to face the officer. There is also a sense in which the subject may misrecognize the officer's synecdochal representation of state power. There are the possibilities that the subject either doesn't recognize the hailing call as coming from an officer of the Law, and by extension the possibility that the subject misrecognizes that turning toward the officer of the law is a turn toward the Law of reproductive state power.

These compounding possibilities of potential misrecognition on the part of the state disciplined subject take resonance in the nationalistic rehabilitative projects of *The Hobart Shakespeareans* and *My Shakespeare*. We can use Althusser to understand more clearly the process by which Shakespeare becomes an interpellative call in the rehabilitation programs; but we can also learn from these films the ways in which the performativity of state power can confuse the relatively hermetic process of subjecthood operating in Althusser's formulation.

As the opening sequences of the films demonstrate, the materiality of the street recursively antagonizes the process of rehabilitation; however, the subjects are also placed in a defiant relation to the national image. In *The Hobart Shakespeareans*, Esquith greets the make-shift theater audience to the Hobart performance of *Hamlet* by explaining what he posits as the cultural work of the program. He explains, "This is about fifty kids who work unbelievably hard and defy the culture both of their neighborhood and of their country. They immerse themselves in a culture where people are good to each other, where hard works matters, and character matters even more." While the opening

sequence of the film highlights the ways in which the students are expected to defy their neighborhood, it is unclear what Esquith means when he claims that the students work to defy their nation. In one sense, he seems to suggest that the performance of nationality surrounding the students in their site-specific locales inappropriately represents Americanness—that the national ideal is not built upon crime and poverty but centers more ideally on camaraderie. Esquith explains that he uses Shakespeare along with other conventional and non-conventional modes of curriculum to teach the students how to be American. At one point he analogizes Shakespeare and baseball, the great American pastime. Baseball, or what Esquith calls “the greatest game ever invented, the fairest game by far,” teaches students a sense of democracy that they also find in performing Shakespeare. In baseball, “the defense holds the ball, every kid gets a chance.” Similarly, “by learning Shakespeare these children are learning enormous amounts of vocabulary, enormous amounts of discipline, teamwork, the respect for one another,” qualities he identifies as paramount in the successful performance of Americanism. The motto of the Hobart Shakespeareans program, “Be good and work hard,” suggests the ways in which Americanism in the film becomes synonymous with meritocracy and morality. If the analysis of the relation between Shakespeare and Americanism sounds particularly tenuous here, that is because its relationship in the film is unsubstantiated. To be sure, Shakespeare occupies a synecdochal relation to America, but the basis of that relation remains inarticulate enough throughout the film to trouble the foundational presupposition driving the entire project: that Shakespeare can rehabilitate marginalized communities in the United States.

On another level, the claim that his students work to defy their nation points toward the students' identity as first- and second-generation immigrants, and calls attention to the disturbingly homogenous means toward which the camaraderie and "teamwork" of the American identity operates in the film. Esquith explains that Shakespeare operates as a unifying structure in his classroom, and that the timely themes of *Hamlet* cross the multiple systems of nationality and culture represented by his students. He explains of them, "A lot of them are new to this country or haven't been in this country that long. At the end of this year, when I ask, 'What are you?' I want them to say 'I'm an American. I'm as American as George Washington, Abraham Lincoln; I'm as American as Fredrick Douglass. I'm one of them.'" In his understanding of how the performance of Shakespeare functions as a rehabilitative tool, he collapses identity and being: to identify as Americans, the students must initiate themselves into a community of other Americans and claim membership with that community.

For Esquith, Shakespeare functions as a system of ethnic sameness that corrects the emphasis he sees in contemporary curriculum development on observing too stringently systems of cultural difference. He claims that the "political correctness" of adopting ethnic- and cultural-specific modes of pedagogy has instilled within youth educational programs an unnecessary, if not stifling, complication in how students grasp learning fundamentals and how teachers engage with their students: "We actually have classes now like 'How to Teach Latino Kids Mathematics' or 'How to Reach Asian Children.' You know, two and two is still four. We're making it so complicated." In Esquith's estimation, if cultural differences overcomplicate a child's developmental narrative, a return to essentials promises a cure. Shakespeare is that cure, and in his name

ethnic and cultural difference collapses under national identity. As the students work toward an appropriate performance of the American identity, they are expected to defy their nation in the sense that they are asked to adopt the identity title of “American” rather than a hyphenated ones like “Korean-American” and “Mexican-American,” or hybrid ones like “Nisei” and “Chicano/a.” To defy one’s nation in the cinematic space of *The Hobart Shakespeareans* is to refuse race and ethnicity as socio-cultural constructions, and instead to embrace “American” as a fixed and prediscursive signifier.

While these two meanings of national defiance seem paradoxical, they combine to construct the American identity as a performance of individuation that unites the individuals in a patriotic sense of resistance that escapes the normative logic the film works toward but can never fully establish. The film initiates a simultaneous project of recognition and misrecongition by positioning Shakespeare as a disciplinary state apparatus. The students turn toward Shakespeare, but this should not imply their recognition, compliance, or consent in turning toward the homogenizing vision of Americanism established by the film. Rather, the rehabilitative project positions Shakespeare as an alibi for the erasure of ethnic difference that can never full be erased. Because the film cannot represent an authentic image of what “American Shakespeare” would look like, it cannot effectively articulate the relation between Shakespeare and the American imago.

Over the past two decades, scholars have studied the idiosyncratic ways in which Shakespeare has come to inform and likewise be informed by ideal notions of American identity. As Michael D. Bristol has claimed, “a detailed critical history of Shakespeare’s

position within American culture has not yet been written.”⁵² This may be as impossible a task as writing a history of Shakespeare media adaptation. Rather, scholars have focused on localized and historically specific modes of Americanizing Shakespeare. While Lawrence Levine once claimed, “Nineteenth-century America swallowed Shakespeare, digested him and his plays, made them part of the cultural body,”⁵³ scholars have since complicated this sense of gluttonous American consumption of Shakespeare. Frances Teague has made the claim that Shakespeare functioned in the colonial period as a sort of cultural “beard” behind which the national imaginary explored controversial issues, like their historical relation to England.⁵⁴ Kim C. Sturgess argues that Shakespeare became particularly American because he became a sacred space in which Americans refused to displace onto him American contempt felt for England and the English.⁵⁵ For Thomas Cartelli, postcolonial Shakespeare characteristically circulates within an ambivalent structure. The ways in which “Shakespeare” is made to signify at different moments (Englishness, British values, imperialism) are engaged and refashioned to serve particularly American social and political interests.⁵⁶ However the position of Shakespeare in American identity formation changes across time, these scholars point toward the ways in which the relationship requires the opposition of Englishness.

Through this opposition, the ideal of American individualism emerges as a community

⁵² Michael D. Bristol, *Shakespeare's America, America's Shakespeare* (London and New York: Routledge, 1990), 52.

⁵³ Lawrence Levine, *High Brow/Low Brow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1988) 24.

⁵⁴ Frances Teague, *Shakespeare and the American Popular Stage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

⁵⁵ Kim C. Sturgess, *Shakespeare and the American Nation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

⁵⁶ Thomas Cartelli, *Repositioning Shakespeare: National Formations, Postcolonial Appropriations* (New York and London: Routledge, 1993).

making force. In *The Hobart Shakespeareans*, however, what reads as “proper Britishness” becomes a supplement to Americanism.

The actorly presence in *The Hobart Shakespeareans* demonstrates the way in which Shakespeare is not so much an effective synecdoche of American identity as much as a metonym for the American valuation of education. The American identity gives way to a consideration on how education serves as an American ideology of upward social mobility. And this mobility is particularly framed within British semiotics of celebrity. Both Ian McKellen and Michael York visit the Hobart Shakespeareans program and talk with the students about the beauty of Shakespeare’s works, the effects his works might have had on early modern audiences, and the importance of every character, big or small, in the complex workings of the playtexts. The students greet the learned actors with screams of glee and ask for their interpretations of particular lines. Tellingly, both these actors are famous for their work on the English stage. They aren’t Americanized by any stretch of the imagination. In fact, the film emphasizes their Englishness. The students giggle at McKellen’s pronunciation as he bids them “hullo.” Before McKellen’s arrival, the camera zooms in on a close up shot of a poster in the classroom window advertising his one-man show *A Knight out...In Los Angeles*. The show, along with the camera’s depiction of the advertisement poster, puns on k/night in a way that draws attention to McKellen’s English national identity.⁵⁷ When York enters the cheering room, Esquith affects an English accent: “You know how to make an entrance, sir!” York uses the moment to wittily reference *Hamlet* for the students in his response, “I come most

⁵⁷ In *Knight Out* one-man show series, McKellen weaves together two narratives: how he came to love acting, and his process of internationally coming out as gay. When he arrives in the classroom, his life partner also escorts him. While the film poster also plays on the term “out,” this pun doesn’t receive explicit attention in the film.

carefully upon my hour.” York offers the students a rather lengthy history lesson on Elizabethan theatrical practices, and McKellen commends the students for their rigorous study of the play. He praises, “The best thing about the Hobart Shakespeareans is they know what they’re saying....You understand every word, and that couldn’t be said of all actors who do Shakespeare.”

The actors operate as the guest experts on Shakespeare, thus figuring Shakespeare as particularly English. But a mutual love of Shakespeare, as well as dedicated study of the playtexts, unifies the students and the actors. It is unsurprising then that the form of American defiance that the students practice in making Shakespeare their own is the pursuit of education. The mimetic identification produced in the space of rehabilitative Shakespeare in the *Hobart Shakespeareans* operates as a paradigm of national reproductivity, and the outcome yields a potentially educated class from a school district with one of the lowest matriculation rates. Along with posters of Shakespeare and banners with slogans like “There are no shortcuts!!!” and “Take the Lead,” the walls of the Hobart Shakespeareans’ classroom are lined with college and university pennants and below each is a list naming former students who have studied there. Esquith explains, “My students who go through the Shakespeare program come back to me five years later, ten years later, and tell me it’s what they learned on this stage that helped them get to Princeton, or to Harvard, or to UCLA or USC.” At one point in the film, the students tour the UCLA campus, during which Esquith reminds them, “This is the life you’re working for.” Several students pledge to complete their high school education and attend college. Statistically, the end point of this program is impressive; the documentary implies that the Hobart Shakespeareans program produces university-bound students, which is rather

exceptional given that the Los Angeles Unified School District averaged a drop out rate of just less than one quarter.⁵⁸

In *My Shakespeare*, a Shakespearean mode of performative resistance takes a particularly unauthorized form, one that the film goes to great lengths to unsuccessfully mediate in its final sequence. While the space of the Harlesden street returns as the queer remainder in the subject's attempt to dislocate from the local, it also acts as an interrogating and interrupting force in the program's nationalistic project. Joseph describes Harlesden as a "ghetto," "one of the least likely places to have Shakespeare, to have this high art." Thus, the film preconditions the rehabilitating Harlesden street citizens as an impossibility. In an early interview sequence, Joseph explains:

What I'm trying to do is put a West End show on with people who have never even seen a show on the West End. I don't want to do a church hall version of *Romeo and Juliet* because everybody thinks that's what's going to happen with it, that people from Harlesden are not going to be able to learn lines, that they're not going to be able to articulate strange English words, they're very limited, their imagination is small. That's not true. I don't believe that to be true. And I'm going to prove it's wrong.

Joseph poses the question, "Why can't the people of Harlesden do Shakespeare?," directly to the camera. Made for British television, the question implicates the audience in an operation of the national imaginary that would position Shakespeare as an icon of privilege, of exclusionary culture. His rhetorical question would rehabilitate on the level of spectatorship as well as the level of street subject. He would show the nation that Harlesden might be a lower-income and crime-ridden area, but that with hard work and dedication the people of Harlesden can perform Shakespeare as well as the professionals

⁵⁸ According to the most recent statistics available from the Los Angeles School District, in the academic year this film as released, 2005-06, 23% of students dropped out before graduating high school. This statistic rose in 2007-08 to 36%. For studies on district-wide matriculation rates, see: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/>.

on West End. The fantasy here is that the subject will perform English Shakespeare so well, that English cultural hierarchy structuring Shakespeare would likewise transform in the process to a more meritocratic system.

The process of vernacularizing Shakespeare in the desire for national legitimization positions the concept of the “authentic” Harlesden as the nodal point at which the non-normative and the queer meet in the most illuminatingly problematic moment in the film. During the early rehearsal with his cast, Meyers frames this production as a communal project in which Shakespeare and Harlesden become mutual surrogates for one another. Opening the first day of rehearsals, Meyers explains to his new cast, “basically we’re just going to find out who our characters are and what I really badly need, because I can’t make it all up myself, is the stuff that comes from you guys, what you think your character might be doing or who they are....Whatever we do, we’re going to have to replicate what people would do on the streets of Harlesden.” Through the process of adapting Shakespeare in a particularly Harlesden perspective, Joseph imagines that the nation, as the larger viewing audience, will come to view the subjects as authentically English, made into legible figures through the very process of reimagining Shakespeare in a different way. However, this process is less paradoxical than it is traditional of English treatments of Shakespeare. Michael Dobson notes that the processes of adaptation and canonization are less paradoxical than they are supplementary to the means by which Shakespeare has come to be fashioned as the English national poet. “[S]o far from being contradictory processes,” he explains, adaptation and canonization “were often mutually reinforcing ones...the claim of

Shakespeare as an Enlightenment cultural hero both profited from, and occasionally demanded, the substantial rewriting of his plays.”⁵⁹

My Shakespeare calls upon the celebrity presence of Baz Luhrmann to authorize its insistence that adaptation can create national iconicity. When the made-for-television documentary was first released on DVD, it was advertised under the title *My Shakespeare: Romeo and Juliet with Baz Luhrmann*.⁶⁰ His ubiquitous presence acts as a long-distance inspiration for both Joseph and the cast, as he repeatedly conferences with them on tele-monitors.⁶¹ The documentary pays tribute to his film adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet* by offering a two-minute clip of the infamous brawl scene (which is given more cinematic time than the cast’s final performance of *Romeo and Juliet*). While lounging on the deck of his spacious colonial estate, Luhrmann traces his humble beginnings. He casually recalls his first experience reading Shakespeare as a child and seeing *Twelfth Night* for the first time at the theater: “I could understand every word, I knew every person. It was the incredible moment when you realize that that is the power of the theater...” Serving as a match on action, the camera quickly cuts to an image of Luhrmann standing in front of the Sydney Opera House, as he finishes his sentence, “someone had drawn the curtain back on the mystery and the obstacle that stood between myself and the power of what Shakespeare has within his work.” The quick cut figures Luhrmann as a Shakespearean arriviste, a model of upward mobility, that which can be attained through a deep understanding of the inner and supposedly mystified workings of the Shakespearean playtext. But he is also visually marked as Australian, as much an icon

⁵⁹ Michael Dobson, *The Making of the National Poet* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 5.

⁶⁰ Now that the film is primarily marketed for educational purposes, it has since changed its title to *My Shakespeare: Romeo and Juliet for a New Generation*.

⁶¹ In this way, Luhrmann appears oddly like a Big Brother figure, while also referencing the opening frame-within-a-television-frame sequence of his film.

of Australian national identity as the Sydney Opera House. Though not essentially characterized as English, the performance of adapting Shakespeare becomes synonymous in Luhrmann's mentoring sequences with upward class mobility. The message is: he resisted perceived and traditional notions of how Shakespeare should be staged, and it paid off.

However, the performance of resistance takes a dramatically different form than Joseph or Luhrmann seem to imagine. As Joseph's anxieties over the possibility of bringing a Harlesden Shakespeare to the West End give way to doubt, the cast members becoming increasingly unruly and resist the rehabilitative aim. Two female cast members in particular voice resistance to the Shakespeare playtext, and claim that *Romeo and Juliet* is too anachronistic for them to relate. One woman describes Shakespeare as "rubbish" and summarizes Juliet's character as idiotic. She summarizes in a combative tone, "Juliet kills herself. That's dumb," effectively dismissing any sense of tragic romance from the playtext. (Unsurprisingly, she is assigned the role of Abraham.) The woman cast to play Juliet attempts to rehearse her kiss with her Romeo but cannot get through the scene without a grimace. Not only is she uncomfortable at the thought of having to kiss the young man, but she also considers the wooing scene ridiculous. "That's so stupid," she summarizes, "Who does that!" The most striking moment of resistance, however, takes place during the last week of rehearsals, when Joseph asks one of the older cast members, Karen, to leave the production. She was cast to play the Nurse and was charged to speak her lines with a Caribbean accent in a move to perform Shakespeare within specifically Harlesden culture. However, the amateur actress muddles through the accent in a way that frustrates Joseph. He believes that she refuses to

affectively relate to her character; after all, he notes, she is of Afro-Caribbean decent. Presented as a threat to the project, she is let go, and Joseph's Londoner assistant steps in as understudy.

Joseph's last minute casting decision begs the question of why Karen was asked to perform with a Caribbean accent in the first place. Such a directorial decision implies that casting young adults that Joseph found on the streets of Harlesden cannot actually produce an authentically "Harlesden" Shakespeare. Rather, a woman of African-Caribbean decent must also speak with a Caribbean accent in order for the racial and ethnic diversity of Harlesden to register within the symbolic economy of West End stage Shakespeare. Karen's struggle with the accent reveals the ways in which Harlesden itself becomes the primary site of resistance. Harlesden, materially represented through the cast members, must be rehabilitated in order to occupy "Harlesden," the imagined urban space, as a cultural signifier. In other words, local identity is made to synchronize with the national ideal of how Harlesden functions in English culture. It becomes the retrospectively constructed space of opposition that supplements the normative project of "becoming British," but it is also a space that cannot signify non-normativity in a way that clearly articulates rehabilitative success.

Harlesden, then, comes in as a site of resistance, effectively undercutting the degree to which the cinematic focus can rest on rehabilitative efficacy. Instead, the film shifts its cinematic concern away from process and toward product: the West End performance. Fitting with the documentary's melodramatic mode, the rehearsal process is framed in a pastiche of excitement, frustration, tears, and tantrums. In the final performance, the endpoint of the long awaited and painful filmic project, we get a

typically stage production of *Romeo and Juliet* in modern dress. There is nothing particularly surprising or unique about this performance, except that a group of young people from the Harlesden streets actually made it to the West End. In other words, Joseph never proves his would be critics wrong, as the tensions between the local and the national give way to what appears more like a modernized heritage approach to Shakespeare than a vernacular one.

The most chilling consequence of Harlesden's resistance to the nationalistic project is that there are no consequences. Despite the efforts of the cast members to convince Joseph that Shakespeare simply doesn't work in their streets, the film delivers its message of hope in the form of class ascension. In the final interview sequence, cast members speak of their experiences in the performance project while the camera freezes frame to introduce in narrative subtitles where they are now. While their accounts of the program are less than enthusiastic, their post-program identities are made to temper what sounds like nonchalant observations into claims of transformation. For instance, the woman who earlier called Shakespeare "rubbish," explains, "this was actually the first thing I had started and finished, from beginning to end, that I actually completed." The subtext reads: "Christina Emmanuel is now studying for a diploma in childcare and health." The young man who played Tybalt is more enthusiastic, and speaks of his a newfound hunger to see more Shakespeare. We are told that he is now training to be a plumber. Perhaps most spectacularly, the Harlesden Juliet plans to visit the theater at least once a year, and we are informed: "Muska Khpal is now studying to become a doctor and plans to return to Afghanistan to practice medicine." Of course, her transformation involves emigrating from England. To be fair, other cast members

describe the experience as “thrilling” and “fantastic.” The young man who played Romeo claims he has been bitten by the theater bug and is now pursuing acting.

Whether the program was enjoyable to the subjects is of little concern; rather, in the absence of collective pleasure and consent, the queer subjectivity that emerges as a byproduct of the performance of rehabilitation allows us to witness cultural fantasies and their attending anxieties in motion. The cultural belief that Shakespeare can rehabilitate subjects implies that transformation into a better, more successful future is indeed possible. By extension, this also implies that normative identity is appropriable, rather than stable or given. If a subject can appropriate a normative identity, that subject might also possess the ability to occupy normative identity without faithfully adhering to that identity as normative, or the most socially successful identity position available in a given context. A subject who has indeed transformed may occupy a normative position by *performing* that role, rather than by internalizing it as naturalized. It might just be that the subject has appropriated normativity in a strategic way. The anxieties of infidelity that attend our cultural desire to believe in the possibility of a universally successful future depend upon a sense of limited agency, which the performance of rehabilitation cannot contain.

CHAPTER III

WITNESSING PRISON REHABILITATION: ACT “V” AND *SHAKESPEARE*

BEHIND BARS

Whores and Thieues...

All are like actors, in this wauering age,
They enter all vpon the worlds great Stage:
Some gaine applause, and some doe act amisse,
And *exit* from the scaffold with a hisse.¹

In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault sketches a genealogical picture of the transformation of disciplinary mechanisms of power, in which pre-nineteenth century public spectacles of torture gives rise to modern privatized and regimented institutions of discipline, like prisons, or what are more commonly referred to today as correctional complexes. He opens with a contemporary recounting of the spectacular violence of the public torture of Robert-François Damines, who was convicted of regicide in 1757. Drawing attention to the theatrical qualities of this public ritual, Foucault describes the performance of disciplinary power as intent on two particular social effects. First, the spectacle marked the violence of the crime onto the offender’s body as a public message of warning. The body thus became a site of individual punishment, but also one of mass discipline. Second, the torturous scene served to publicly align the social body with the sovereign body: presupposing state law as synonymous with sovereign law, the violation

¹ John Taylor, “A Comparison between a Thiefe and a Booke” in *An arrant thiefe, vvhom euery man may trust in vvord and deed, exceeding true and iust. With a comparison betweene a thiefe and a booke* (London, 1622), sig. C6r.

of one implies the violation of the other. Thus, the offender is violated for enacting the crime, just as the sovereign is in having his law violated.

Performances, theatrical or otherwise, however, invariably produce unintended consequences. Foucault explains that the spectacle of violence constructed the offender's body as a public locus for spectator sympathy. Through the creation of public sympathy for the offender, the performance of discipline also, and without sovereign authorization, initiated a rift between the public mass and sovereign power. Discipline ultimately doubled back on itself. Thus, public torture was an ineffective use of the criminal body precisely because of its theatricality. As the eighteenth century gave way to the nineteenth, Foucault writes, "the entire economy of punishment was redistributed. It was a time of great 'scandals' for traditional justice, a time of innumerable projects for reform."²

We can look askew, both backwards and forwards from the eighteenth century and the institutionalization of disciplinary "training," to witness a mutually pre- and postmodern concern over the proper means of disciplining criminal offenders. In 1621, for instance, a draft bill was presented to British parliament that registers social desires to reform prison houses. The bill reads:

Long imprisonment in common gaoles rendereth offenders the more obdurate and desperate when they are delivered out of the gaols, they being poor, miserable, and friendless, are in a manner exposed to the like mischiefs, they not having means of their owne, nor place of habitation nor likely to gaigne so much credite from any honest householder as to interteyn them.³

² Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1995).

³ Commons debates, 1612, as quoted in J.A. Sharpe, *Crime in Early Modern England, 1550-1750* (London and New York: Longman, 1984), 182.

The image of the reformed yet “obdurate” inmate signals early modern concerns not so much with the inhumane treatment of inmates but with the social problem of recidivism. Prisons, the bill suggests, place society outside of prison in the rather desperate situation of having to care for civil offenders when they are released and, the implication follows, until the former inmate offends again, this time perhaps against the very honest householder who would offer shelter and resource. Prison reform, in this context, calls for the creation of more self-reliant parolees.

In the present moment, numerous social activist projects operate with the desire to make public (again) the inhumane conditions of quotidian prison life.⁴ The rehabilitative Shakespeares I examine in this chapter join these activist discourses in the desire to publicly represent prison conditions and to foster increased social awareness. The first of these projects, a narrative audio segment entitled “Act V,”⁵ was released the same year that the U.S. media began to widely televise images of the inhumane treatment of detainees by U.S. military forces at Guantanamo Bay. “Act V” documents a group of all male adult inmates in a high-security prison in Missouri as they rehearse and stage the final act of *Hamlet*. While the inmates discuss their experiences in the program, they also share with listeners the contours of life inside. The second rehabilitative prison project I examine in this chapter, *Shakespeare Behind Bars*,⁶ was released a few months after the shocking images of prisoner abuse by U.S. military forces at Abu Ghraib hit mainstream media reports. *Shakespeare Behind Bars* offers a more aggressive critique of prison life,

⁴ See, for instance: Paul Mason, “Cinematic Penal Discourse and Populism 1995-2005” in *Social Semiotics* 16.4 (December 2006).

⁵ “Act V,” *This American Life*. Prod. Ira Glass. Radio. Narr. Ira Glass (Audio. International Public Radio, 08 August 2002; re-aired 12 October 2007).

⁶ *Shakespeare Behind Bars*, Dir. Hank Rogerson (Film. Shout Factory, 2005).

suggesting that prison, as a social institution, works, in effect, to produce criminals rather than to rehabilitate them.

Certainly, considerations of the secretive and torturous practices of the prison industrial complex and the need for social justice have become particularly timely in the present moment, in mainstream media reports and politics. But it has also taken precedence in academia as well, clearly demonstrated in a recent special edition of *PMLA*, which was dedicated to an exploration of the role of the academic institution in the potential intervention of current prison practices sanctioned by the U.S. government.⁷

Though these considerations are particularly timely, the rehabilitative Shakespeares I examine in this project adopt a perversely anachronistic approach in their attempts to raise public discourse and awareness. “Act V” and *Shakespeare Behind Bars* raise the question of how prisons function in the present moment. Do we imprison offenders to punish them or to rehabilitate them? This question continues to motivate popular debate, and in no way do I attempt to answer it here. Rather, I explore the ways in which rehabilitation itself operates as a mode of disciplinary power that, much like Foucault’s understanding of premodern spectacles of torture, fails to achieve the desired effects on its spectators. As rehabilitative Shakespeares demonstrate, mechanisms of modern power have become public once again. I describe the ways in which these two cultural artifacts offer the argument that prison should be a space of rehabilitation, in that it should operate in a way that allows inmates to critically question the events that led to their imprisonment. The argument suggests that prison should ultimately work to produce more remorseful and redeemed subjects, ones who can successfully navigate life outside of prison without the threat of recidivism. However, the way that Shakespeare gets used

⁷ *PMLA* 123.3 (2008).

in these programs, which becomes a selling point in these projects, emerges as the primary problem in the rehabilitative impulse.

Both of these projects position Shakespeare as a particularly appropriate figure for proper training for life outside. Shakespeare, the argument goes, encapsulates within his dramatic texts the very essence of humanity, the most succinct image of “the human condition,” one that rings as true today as it did during the early modern period. As Curt Tofteland, director of the Shakespeare Behind Bars program, claims, “[Shakespeare’s] gift truly was insight into human behavior, because in his plays I can find human behavior that is as true now as it was four hundred years ago.” But what makes Shakespeare a particularly appropriate paradigm for inmate rehabilitation, these projects explain again and again, is that he was once himself considered a criminal.⁸ Speaking of his company of convicted actors, Tofteland insists, “Shakespeare would adore this group [because they are] very true to Shakespeare. People in the theatre back in Elizabethan times were thought of as pickpockets, thieves, rapists, murderers, so I think he’d be proud.”⁹

Tofteland points here to early modern pamphlets and laws on criminality, which frequently cited actors and “players” on their lists of undesirable and cozening civil subjects. The 1572 Act of Punishment of Vagabonds, for instance, declared that

⁸ Shakespeare scholars make similar claims on the relation between Shakespeare and the figure of the criminal or the early modern concept of criminality. See: Derek Cohen, *The Politics of Shakespeare* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1993), and Bryan Reynolds, *Becoming Criminal: Transversal Performance and Cultural Dissidence in Early Modern England* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002).

⁹ As I will discuss further, in this chapter and throughout this dissertation, rehabilitative Shakespeare formulaically frame the perversity of Shakespeare as an icon of both legitimate and “illegitimate” non-normative culture, like criminality, by fracturing systems of historicity. As we see, Tofteland represents Shakespeare as a historical figure with which his cast of inmate actors should identify with precisely because he can occupy the acme of cultural privilege in the present moment, while still remaining marked by early modern understandings of criminal culture.

“common players in the interludes and minstrels, not belonging to any baron of this realm or towards any other honorable personage of greater degree...shall be deemed rogues, vagabonds and sturdy beggars” and would likewise “be deemed a felon in all respects and shall suffer and forfeit as a felon.”¹⁰ The political pamphlets of Robert Greene clearly address the social anxiety surrounding the figure of the stage player and this figure’s potential power to affect similarly theatrical effects even when off stage and out of character.¹¹ Greene wrote extensively on the need for the public to educate themselves on the techniques of duplicitous criminals, or as he dubs them “connys,” and the ways in which they perform, much like stage actors, to manipulate sympathies and actions of ignorant citizens at large.¹² In *In Defense of Conny-Catching* (1592), he writes from the assumed identity of Cuthbert Cunny-catcher, to warn:

there was no more faith to be held with Plaiers, than with them that valued faith at the price of a feather: for as they were Comaedians to act: so the actions of their liues were Cameleon like, that they were vncertaine, variable, time pleasers, men that measured honestie by profite, and that regarded their Authors not by desart, but by necessitie of time. If this may serue you for a shadow, let mee vse it for an excuse of our Single illegible letter Conny-catching: for when we meet a country Farmar with a fulpurse, a miserable Illegible word, that eyther rockes his Tenants rents, or selles his graine in the market at an vnreasonable rate: we hold it a deuotion to make him a Conny, in that he is a Caterpillar to others, and gets that by pilling and polling of the poore ¹³

¹⁰ See: *Select Statutes and Other Constitutional Documents Illustrative of the Reigns of Elizabeth and James I* (2nd ed.), ed. G.W. Prothero (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1898), 69-70.

¹¹ For a more comprehensive account of Greene’s anti-theatrical polemics, see: Kirk Melnikoff, *Writing Greene: Essays on England’s First Notorious Professional Writer* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008), and Werner Senn, *Studies in the Dramatic Construction of Robert Greene and George Peele* (Bern, Franke, 1973).

¹² For a more comprehensive account of the ways in which Greene fetishizes the figure of the conny as a means of social regulation, see: Derek B. Alwes, *Sons and Authors in Elizabethan England* (Newark, DE: University of Delaware Press, 2004); and William C. Carroll, *Fat King, Lean Beggar: Representations of Poverty in the Age of Shakespeare* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996).

¹³ Robert Greene, *The Defense of Conny-Catching. Or A confutation of those two iniurious pamphlets published by R.G. against the practitioners of many nimble-witted and mysticall Sciences* (London, 1592), sig. H.

Green characterizes players as eternal chameleons and caterpillars, always in the process of physically adapting and thus becoming a new identity that they may deploy for strategic ends, which, in most cases, takes the form of deceit in order to cozen others from their resources. Actors are “time pleasers” in that they have learned the witting ability to unwrite and thus rewrite their pasts to serve present desires.

The relation that Tofteland draws among Shakespeare, criminals, and actors, as I argue in what follows, raises more questions of how precisely Shakespeare functions in prison rehabilitation than it answers. In the process of publicizing the inhumanity of prison and Shakespeare’s intervention into these conditions, “Act V” and *Shakespeare Behind Bars* ultimately create anxieties similar to those evinced in early modern equations of criminals and actors. The rehabilitative projects operate with the goal of producing more humane, that is, redeemed, inmates through the use of humanist training. We watch as inmates memorize Shakespearean drama, learn proper modes of inflection and rhetorical delivery, and, as the projects imply, affectively identify with the individual Shakespearean characters they perform.¹⁴ In mimetically identifying with Shakespearean characters and themes, the inmates learn to imitate; they learn how to perform successful models of humanity and subjecthood. And yet, these subjectivities are *performed*. The initial question these rehabilitative Shakespeares address—that of the social function of prisons—shifts terms. By the end of the media documentations of these projects, the very

¹⁴ The rehabilitative imperatives represented in both “Act V” and *Shakespeare Behind Bars* begin to take on a distinctively “method acting” mode of performing Shakespeare. While method acting, however, depends upon the initiation of “authentic” emotion and past lived experience in the present moment, “Act V” and *Shakespeare Behind Bars* suggest that projects of rehabilitation would have inmates evoke the past in order to reject it, and it is in this latter move, they projects seem to presume, that the authenticity of emotion is created.

function of rehabilitation comes into question: does rehabilitation reproduce inmates in the state ideal, or does it simply create smarter criminals, ones who can potentially play the part of the redeemed and repentant subject without having faithfully internalized social systems of value and propriety?¹⁵ Again, this mode of subjectivity—what I call throughout this dissertation *queer subjectivity*—emerges as an unintentional byproduct of the process of rehabilitation, one that ultimately troubles the very transformative goals of rehabilitation.

As I explained earlier, one of the goals of these projects involves the spectator. We are to learn of the torturous conditions of prison life and sympathize with the inmates who are made to exist within these conditions. Can we sympathize with an inmate if we believe that he has learned to “work the system” rather than having been redeemed? In the previous chapter, I argued that the particular mode of queer subjectivity that emerges as a result of the conflicting desires to use rehabilitation in specifically nationalistic imperatives doubles back on the rehabilitative project. In effect, the subjects I examine in the previous chapter learn strategies that, as I speculate, ultimately serve them as they navigate through systems of cultural power and social desires for improvement and hope for the future. A similar strategy arises in the queerly positioned subjects of prison rehabilitation. But in this particular setting, we must take into account contemporary fantasies about how a legitimate subject performs. Prison-specific rehabilitative

¹⁵ Two philosophers of law have recently staged a public debate on the performative demands of parole, and the likewise impossibility for parole boards to ever effectively evaluate parole as authentic or sincere. While *Shakespeare Behind Bars*, in particular, evokes this question without asking it explicitly, it nonetheless serves as a productive reminder that these rehabilitation projects, so steeped in ideological fantasies and anxieties of how identity and subjecthood should be *properly* performed, have specific referents outside of their systems of representation. On this debate, see: Steven Keith Tudor, “Why Should Remorse be a Mitigating Factor in Sentencing?” in *Criminal Law and Philosophy* (2008) 2:241-257; and Richard L. Lippke, “Response to Tudor: Remorse-based Sentence Reductions in Theory and Practice” in *Criminal Law and Philosophy* (2008) 2:259-268.

Shakespeares, I suggest, mark the limit of contemporary cultural fantasies that Shakespeare embodies a universal paradigm for utopian futurity.

Programmatically, rehabilitative Shakespeares document the uses of Shakespeare as an emergent technology of the self, a disciplinary model by which inappropriately positioned subjects may act on their own behalf (by acting Shakespeare) in order to move through social systems more successfully. But because rehabilitative Shakespeares are produced for public reception and consumption, they are also cultural performances. They are produced with the intended effect of communicating to the audience the possibility of both individual and social transformation. While disciplinary power, as Foucault argues, operates on the level of “the soul” in order to create docile bodies, rehabilitation must be made to register on the very bodies of the subjects as well, in order to cinematically perform the efficacy of rehabilitation as a cultural process.¹⁶ The parallel representations of psychical and material discipline come into conflict again and again in rehabilitative Shakespeares. Ultimately, the effect of this conflict troubles the very notion that rehabilitation can indeed liberate marginalized bodies from systems of domination in ways the ways rehabilitation intended—that is, in normative ways. Rehabilitation simply cannot signify the normative ends of its disciplinary project.

The double move of positioning prison as an inappropriate social space and the space wherein inmates come to appropriate more socially acceptable identities based on Shakespearean teachings gives way to a troubling move of displacement. Because the space of prison signifies both the non-normative point of resistance *and* the social context within which normative identity can be performed, it functions as a queer signifier. Is it

¹⁶ For a further examination of the work of cinematic adaptation as a cultural process, see: Thomas Cartelli and Katherine Rowe, *New Wave Shakespeare on Screen* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007).

not so much that prison cannot signify as *either* normativizing *or* non-normative. Rather prison oversignifies as both possibilities.¹⁷ The failure of rehabilitation to register the successful appropriation of normative identity as the successful endpoint of transformation or the effective dislocation of inmates from the non-normative social space of the prison marks these prison Shakespeare projects most clearly in the ways in which they represent prison identity within masculinist and heterosexual terms.

The epigraph of this chapter speaks to the ways in which early modern cultural imaginations link criminals to players, but also to figures of sexual perversion and excess. In his lyric poem “A Thiefe,” John Taylor equates thieves, actors, and whores on the level of performative expediency: all must perform strategically, hiding what they are from the law, if they are to continue existing as that which they are. But it is also this strategic ability to shade one’s identity that created public anxiety about the potential of actors, as thieves, to deceive the larger English society. Because prison rehabilitation links actors and inmates to naturalize Shakespeare’s presence in prison, prison sexuality represents the displaced term of identity in prison Shakespeares. While we wait in these projects for a sense of normative appropriation of redemption that never comes, we

¹⁷ As critical works on Shakespeare media adaptation emerge as a major area of study, scholars have tended to focus primarily on Hollywood box office blockbusters, which subsequently narrows critical understandings of Shakespeare’s role in the cultural process of adaptation to dominant market forms. As a result, recent scholarship has called for an ‘escape from Hollywood,’ and for scholars to reformulate the critical scope to include emergent genres. Such a move of otherly-generic inclusion would treat the iconicity of Shakespeare as diachronic collaborations between the preponderance of audio-visual appropriations saturating popular culture in whatever form, and the playtext. The prison Shakespeares I examine here answer this call while also explicitly critiquing one of the most prolific markets operating in the U.S. today: the prison industrial complex. See: Thomas Cartelli and Katherine Rowe, *New Wave Shakespeare on Screen* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007); Christy Desmet, “Introduction” in *Shakespeare and Appropriation*, eds. Christy Desmet and Robert Sawyer. London and New York: Routledge, 1999. 1-12; Courtney Lehmann and Lisa A. Starks, “Introduction: Images of the ‘Reel’: Shakespeare and the Art of Cinema” in *The Reel Shakespeare: Alternative Cinema and Theory* (London: Associated University Press, 2002) 9-24; and Sonia Massai, “Introduction: Defining Local Shakespeares.” *World Wide Shakespeares: Local Appropriations in Film and Performance*, ed. Sonia Massai (London and New York: Routledge, 2005) 3-14.

witness, instead, the discipline of prison sexuality into conservatively masculinist and heteronormative terms.

Conditioning Failure

Rehabilitation programmatically involves a double move of anachronistic construction. First, the programs establish normative goals in a future sense. In the case of prison Shakespeare programs, rehabilitative futurity is contingent upon redemption. Subjects work with Shakespearean playtexts in order to become better—that is, more self-implicating men. It is imagined that they learn by Shakespeare to take responsibilities for their crimes, and in the act of accepting responsibility, they will become more responsible social subjects. Rehabilitation also demands teleology, as it is a transformation toward a better future. Madhavi Menon explains: “Defined as the doctrine of ends or final causes, teleology depends on a sequence leading to an end that can retrospectively be seen as having had a beginning. Issues of time and consequence are paramount for such narratives.”¹⁸ This leads to the second move, which is specifically a belated one. For the normative to register, rehabilitation must belatedly construct a non-normative and originary point of resistance. Performances of rehabilitation, in other words, are caught in a fissured sense of future projection and pre-conditioned retrospection (that is, retrospection built upon a desire to see future possibilities). In rehabilitative Shakespeares that document the use of Shakespeare as a therapeutic tool in prison settings, it is the social space of prison itself that comes to occupy the non-normative point that inmates must resist. To understand the troubled and troubling

¹⁸ Madhavi Menon, “Spurning Teleology in *Venus and Adonis*” in *GLQ: Journal for Gay and Lesbian Studies* 11.4 (2005): 491-519, 492.

teleology of prison Shakespeares and its failures, it is first necessary to understand how the originary point of resistance comes to be cinematically articulated.¹⁹

Both artifacts establish the space of prison as a social impossibility. Prison comes to be encoded in audio-visual form as a space in which intersubjective relations are foreclosed by the very structures of institutional culture. This is most apparent in “Act V” through the figure of Jack Hitt, narrator of the episode and regular journalist correspondent for *This American Life*. In the sixty-minute narrative drama, Hitt documents the progress of about thirty inmates at the high-security Missouri Eastern Correctional Complex (MECC) as they rehearse and stage the final act of *Hamlet* as part of a rehabilitation program dubbed “The Hamlet Project.” Prison Performing Arts, a grassroots non-profit organization operating out of St. Louis, Missouri, sponsored “The Hamlet Program” under the guidance of Director Agnes Wilcox, who has worked with the inmates at MECC for five years.²⁰ Hitt spends a great portion of his initial recounting of the experience in discussing the preparations he was made to take by prison officials before he could meet with the company of convicted actors. He begins the episode:

The first thing they hand me as I pass through the thick iron doors is a tiny black box called “a screamer.” Pull the cord attached and a phalanx of armed guards will sweep from all points of the prison and try to rescue me. I keep it in my pocket as I enter a yard of more than 1,000 prisoners wandering around. Some of the guys are playing handball against the wall as I walk across. Most are friendly. A couple of the skinheads, their arms dense with spider tattoos, narrow their eyes as I pass.

¹⁹ As Michael Bristol argues, “Every staging of a Shakespeare play results from a dialogue between the historical moment of its creation and the contemporaneity of the *mise-en-scene*. At the same time, the thought of the author and of his community continues to resonate even in the most self-consciously modernizing interpretations” (13). See: *Big-Time Shakespeare* (New York and London: Routledge, 2005).

²⁰ For more information on Prison Performing Arts, see: <http://www.prisonartsstl.org/>.

While the prison guards explain to Hitt that the screamer is intended for his protection, he wonders how effective it actually is. The rate of time it would take to pull the screamer cord to set off its high pitched cry, compounded with the time it would take for guards to leave their posts and locate the source of the sound: odds, he explains, indicate it would be relative ineffective. At least, it would be ineffective in saving him from a vicious attack. This is not to say the equipment doesn't have its intended effect, however. Hitt is so unnerved by wearing the screamer, and the potential of danger it indicates, that he is initially unable to interact with the men without intense fear. Subsequently, he explains, he avoids eye contact and conversation with the men for his first few trips to MECC.

When I worked with Wilcox and the MECC inmates on the opening day of their 2006-07 season, I was also outfitted with the scream device that Hitt describes. However, because I am female and entering into an all-male, high-security prison, the prison guards explained, I would also have to be outfitted with additional precautions to ensure my safety. Unlike Hitt, I was not allowed to carry the screamer in my pocket. It was to remain in my left hand during the six-hour meeting, with the cord pre-extended into my right hand, to cut down on reaction time. The cord was to be held in my right hand underneath a handheld receiver, which was tuned into the nearest on-ground guard station directly opposite the learning annex in which the men rehearsed. I was also asked not to carry a pen, which MECC prison regulations allow, because writing devices could be used against me as a weapon. The final safety measure I was given came in the form of a verbal warning from several prison guards not get carried away by the inmates' stories. I had planned to attend the opening rehearsal to take notes on the workings of the rehabilitation program and to discuss with the men their experiences in working with

Shakespeare. The prison made these activities virtually impossible. In fact, in an attempt to ensure my safety, the screamer and walkie-talkie effectively immobilized me as well.

My observations here are not intended to wistfully disregard the potential for violence in prison, but rather to point toward the very specific effect that such a well-equipped regard for personal safety had, for both Hitt and myself. Namely, they made it impossible to interact with the inmates. While “Act V” documents Hitt’s experiences with the inmates at MECC, the episode is framed by the commentary of *This American Life* host Ira Glass, who explains that the inmates may have a unique understanding of *Hamlet*, and that we would do well to understand the ways they approach they play. He opens with a consideration of the relationship among the performance of identity, the place of (personal) history in subjectivity formation, and phenomenological knowledge—knowledge that can be regulated but not erased by institutional power. Glass begins the show by summarizing *Hamlet*:

Hamlet itself is sort of a weird play. The central character is in a situation very few of us are ever going to find ourselves in. His uncle killed his father and then married his mother in order to become the king....The main conflict of the play is this guy debating in long, complicated monologues whether or not he should kill somebody. What is there in that for most of us to relate to? Unless of course we happen to be murderers. And what would the play be like if it were actually performed by murderers and other violent criminals? What would they see that the rest of us do not? Well today on our program we answer that question and the answer is: a lot.

In his prologue, Glass follows a solipsistic model of knowledge, bearing with it the fantasy that violent offenders own an unmediated access to violent material by virtue of their lived experiences and the subjectivity that performances of violence and reparation are imagined to create.

In a very troubling sense, the episode presents the inmates as a type of other, a collective and symbolic entity who understands more radically and has the ability to access a less differentiated relation between the sign and signification. They are the others who understand Shakespeare's otherness most completely, liberated from the problematic mediation of cultural process that would obscure Shakespeare's meaning.²¹ Hitt attends the MECC rehearsals and final performance precisely to interview the men on the different ways in which they approach *Hamlet*. The narrative is framed as a learning experience for both Hitt and the listener: we become familiar with the sounds of prison, the affective responses that a relatable figure like Hitt has—and by extension, the listener might have—to the scene of the prison yard, and to the vernaculars of inmates in multiple interview segments. We also learn about *Hamlet*. As Hitt surmises, “These days when people say ‘Hamlet’ it’s usually just a metaphor, shorthand for somebody who’s afraid to act, who dithers and thinks too much. We almost forget just what action Hamlet was contemplating. These actors haven’t forgotten.” In Hitt’s estimation, his—and again, by extension, the listeners’—participation in the prison rehabilitation scene opens a space

²¹ In *Remaking Shakespeare*, Pascale Aebischer and Nigel Wheale argue that critics must rethink how issues of fidelity function in their critical works, or else the present becomes a stagnant construct: “Accepting today’s Shakespeares always implicitly asserts both their relation to and difference from their early modern pretexts means rejecting the value judgments that have haunted the form of performance criticism which seeks to establish degrees of ‘faithfulness’ to the Shakespearean original. It means accepting remade ‘Shakespeare’ as a modern performance or cultural text in its own right, looking not solely at the diachronic collaboration with the originating text, but, more importantly, at the context informing the modern version together with the cultural work in which it involves its audiences” (3). Similarly, Robert Shaughnessy cautions that a primary concern with fidelity to the Shakespearean playtext in readings of adaptations of Shakespearean works threatens to establish the field of Shakespeare media studies as a solely conservative regime in academia. He argues that “being ‘true to Shakespeare’ is as much about endorsing the conservative values with which his work has been traditionally associated—order, hierarchy, Christianity, nationalism, militarism, compulsory heterosexuality, and so on—as it is about preserving the letter of the ‘text’” (4). See: Pascale Aebischer and Nigel Wheale. “Introduction” in *Remaking Shakespeare: Performance Across Media, Genres and Culture*, eds. Pascale Aebischer, Edward J. Esche, and Nigel Wheale (New York: Palgrave, 2003) 1-17; and Robert Shaughnessy, “Introduction” in *Shakespeare on Film*, ed. Robert Shaughnessy (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1998) 1-17.

for reflection on the Shakespearean playtext; the inmate's personal histories and tales of the haunting return of past crimes allow for a return to a grounded and more contextualized reading of *Hamlet*, one untainted by the inertia of history that would reduce the playtext to a simplified reading of impotency. Hitt's vision here is a spectacular one: through the power of empathy and the mining of others' pasts and modes of subjugated knowledge, pristine knowledge might be possible; this might be the moment in which the real *Hamlet* is finally revealed. Who among us wouldn't want to know, once and for all, what Shakespeare was actually saying, or at least what he meant to say?

To position marginalized social bodies as those which may be mined for knowledge is a disturbing fantasy, to say the least.²² While I will theorize the cultural implications of this fantasy in more depth, what interests me here is the way in which the institution of prison is imagined to foreclose the possibility of ever achieving such fantastical knowledge. Because Hitt was so jarred by his initial experiences, he is forced to return to the prison for another attempt at interviewing the men. This return entails a six-month training course facilitated by the prison, whereby they may ensure that returning visitors internalize the regulations of the prison and learn techniques whereby they may safeguard themselves. This is a training program that, presumably, Hitt completed. I was less inclined. Instead, I worked with another prison, this time a medium-security subsidiary of MECC. While attending this correctional complex, which

²² For H.R. Coursen, such commodification threatens to distance popular culture from the original playtext, even as it pays homage to the playtext. In a particularly apocalyptic moment, Coursen offers a warning: "I predict that Shakespeare will become more and more the servant of mere commerce, if not condemned outright as heretical and banned from production, that is, unless accommodated to reinforcement of powers-that-be (read: scholars and/or national/American political agendas)" (23). See: H.R. Coursen, *Shakespeare Translated* (New York: Peter Lang, 2005).

is also involved in the Prison Performing Arts program, one of my safety devices, in this case, a “panic button,” accidentally went off while I was facilitating a workshop on the decidedly unromantic qualities of *Romeo and Juliet*. Subsequently, armed guards entered the learning annex to rescue me. Upon learning that it was a false alarm, the guards decided to end the workshop prematurely (after fifteen minutes of an intended three-hour workshop), and I was escorted from the prison.²³ While the intended unromantic message of *Romeo and Juliet*, I imagine, came across during the incident, I left, again, without having interviewed the inmates on their experiences in the Shakespeare-based rehabilitation program.

While “Act V,” and the experiences I shared, position prison as a space of intersubjective impossibility most palpably through the use of safety equipment, *Shakespeare Behind Bars* figures the material space of prison as an intersubjective impossibility between inmates. The critically acclaimed documentary film explores what it means to rehabilitate from the inmate’s perspective.²⁴ It explores the function that public and penal perception of rehabilitation as a cultural performance plays in the very efficacy of rehabilitation itself. The film markets itself to spectators as a revelatory trip into and around this prison production. Viewers embark on a year-long journey with the *Shakespeare Behind Bars* theatre troupe led by volunteer director Curt Tofteland whose innovative work with inmates at the Luther Lockett Correctional Complex (LLCC) began in the mid-1990s. As part of the program, inmates cast themselves in roles that most appropriately reflect their personal histories and transformative desires, or the kind of

²³ The premature ending of this workshop seemed oddly appropriate, given the playtext we were examining.

²⁴ As I discuss later in the chapter, however, the authenticity of the inmate perspective is always already mediated by the spectator’s understanding of the authenticity of the inmate subject.

people they are working toward becoming. Unique to this prison Shakespeare program, the all-male cast performs all of the roles, including the female characters, a practice that accounts for many moments of tension in the film.²⁵ The documentary weaves together two narratives—that of the inmates and their crimes, as well as *The Tempest*—as each convicted actor delves intimately into the characters they portray while confronting their personal histories. The documentary works to spin a spectacular story about the individual creative process and the power of art to heal and redeem individual as well as collective bodies.

While I will return to a discussion of how the playtext functions in the film, I want first to discuss the ways in which the social space of the prison emerges as a site of necessary resistance. For the social space of the prison will become both the non-normative space of abjection, as well as the queerly signifying disturbance of the possibility of an inmate to reject, on his own terms, this space. The film's opening sequence frames the inmate cast in cinematic semiotics of desolation and surveillance, semiotics that will return later in the film to trouble the question of whether Shakespeare can actually induce a transformative effect in the social institution of prison, and whether or not inmates can sincerely dislocate from their past crimes.

The documentary opens with several expository shots of a stark prison yard outfitted with patches of withering grass, dilapidated benches, ominously sprawling chain link fences topped with barbed wire, and a single guard tower, centrally located in the prison yard. The silence is painfully palpable, but it is eventually broken, that is, filled up, by sounds of Shakespearean verse. The film formulaically juxtaposes interview

²⁵ It is the unique form of casting that accounts, in larger part, no doubt, to the homoerotic and homophobic tensions in particular.

sequences of the inmates and shots of their final performance of *The Tempest* with similarly stark and threatening images. For these are the semiotics by which the film critiques the psychologically torturous conditions of prison life. Alone in the prison yard, we watch as three inmates huddle together. We may be conditioned at this point by popular prison films to expect the huddling of inmates to signify impending violence. But these inmates huddle so they can practice Shakespeare, in as much privacy from the larger prison yard that the yard can afford. Moving to a medium shot, the camera frames the inmates as they rehearse the revels speech:²⁶

Our revels now are ended. These our actors,
As I foretold you, were all spirits and
Are melted into air, into thin air:
And, like the baseless fabric of this vision,
The cloud-capp'd towers, the gorgeous palaces,
The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve
And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,
Leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff
As dreams are made on; and our little life
Is rounded with a sleep. (IV.i.148-58)

As the convicted actors work toward an interpretation of the speech, the guard tower signals a warning message to them that their actions appear suspicious. After one guard in the tower watches over the scene with binoculars, ultimately deciding that the inmates appear suspicious but not necessarily dangerous or in violation of prison regulation, the inmates continue their rehearsal. The sequence suggests that the “baseless fabric of this vision” depends upon perspective. The viewer understands that the inmates are rehearsing

²⁶ The cinematic motivation of this cut to medium shot effectively serves to bring the spectator into a more seemingly intimate perspective with the inmate subjects. Important to an understanding of cinematic editing here, however, this cut serves as a match on action with the beginning of Shakespearean recitation. The implication is that the language of Shakespeare can overcome the intersubjective distancing on which prison regulation is built.

one of Shakespeare's most famous speeches, but the prison system understands only that the inmates come dangerously close to violating the rule of the prison yard by segregating themselves from the larger population. Eventually the men are asked to disperse, and as they walk toward their housing barracks, one inmate offers a final interpretation of the speech: "it's almost like, how big can you dream?" And the rest returns to silence.

The opening sequence frames the perversity of prison agency that will dominate the remaining ninety minutes of the film. *Shakespeare Behind Bars* presents the inmates' collective dream as one of redemption. But redemption, the film suggests time and again, is an institutional indulgence, an act of tolerance that can be and indeed is withheld by the very institutions that would demand that inmates internalize the desire for redemption. As one inmate, Leonard, bluntly puts it in one of the most melodramatic sequences of the film, "What really speaks to me [in *The Tempest*] is the idea that that indulgence is actually one of the most remarkable things in the world, and that's to redeem someone.... That to me is the single greatest thing that I've desired since October of 1994, is to be redeemed. And that's why [the revels speech] speaks to me so much."

The program director Tofteland explains why *Shakespeare Behind Bars* chose to perform *The Tempest* during that particular season. "We've been on this journey of plays that have been leading us to this point of redemption and forgiveness—*Othello*, *Titus Andronicus*, *Hamlet*, *The Tempest*—because several of the key founding members are coming up to parole or serve out," he explains. "I decided that *The Tempest* might be an apt play to do as a farewell to some of the guys." Tofteland chose *The Tempest* for the men to perform because the message of redemption and forgiveness has a particular resonance as three of the founding members must present themselves within the next

twelve months to the parole board, who will decide whether the men will receive the chance to acculturate back into society or if they will receive what has become the LLCC standard three-to-eight-year deferment. For the men to receive parole, they must prove that they have taken responsibility for their past actions, that they have truly forgiven themselves in the present moment, and that they will continue to actively seek the forgiveness of society in the future.

The spectator is continually reminded that while redemption involves individual agency, this agency must register within the systems of signification established by the institution. The film ends with a message of impossibility. Of the two men who went before the parole board during the shooting of the film, neither receives parole. One inmate, Howard, joins his fellow cast mates after meeting with the parole board. The men are trying to figure out how to have a going-away celebration for Howard to honor his parole without violating prison regulations of fraternization. But the celebration never takes place. Howard returns to explain that the board denied his parole. The other men are clearly shocked and noticeably fearful, for no one questioned whether or not Howard would be granted parole. To their understanding, he had followed prison regulations well and excelled in his multiple rehabilitation programs. He breaks the news, “they gave me sixty months, five years. I don’t go back up for five years from now. I thought they were going to let me go, the way they were talking at first, but then they brought up a lot about my past history.” In one of the most shocking moments of the film, an inmate named Sammie is also denied parole. Throughout the film, Sammie unquestionably emerges as the “break out” star, an image of the ideal inmate. He is never late to his prison job in the computer center, which he also manages; he has even secured employment managing a

technology center when he leaves prison. He continually preaches to the other men in Shakespeare Behind Bars the need to take responsibility for their crimes while following prison regulations without deviation. The most senior member of the rehabilitation program, Sammie comes to embody the prime example of how to successfully navigate prison regulations. And yet he, too, is denied parole. In response, one of the inmates rhetorically asks his fellow cast members “What more is a man supposed to give? When is he forgiven?....We try to embrace society as best we can but it seems like they just want to eat us up.” What is a man who is caught within the power relations of prison expected to do?

Both films suggest an answer to this question. We watch as the men construct particularly queer spaces, or alternate place-making strategies in which they may carve out a space to act on their own behalf. More specifically, Shakespeare is the paradigm of cultural capital that allows for the creation of this alternative space. “Act V” presents the men’s work on *Hamlet* with particularly queer spatial terms. It is facilitated by the prison and facilitated by the Prison Performing Arts program. But within the institutionally sanctioned space the inmates are imagined as a sort of subaltern collective. We might think here of what José David Saldivar identifies as the “School of Calibán.” He explains, “The phrase suggests a group of engaged writers, scholars, and professors of literature who work under common political influence....The phrase also emblemizes not just the group’s shared subaltern subject positions, but the ‘schooling’ that their enrollment in such an institution provides.”²⁷ By exploring *Hamlet*, the men offer a unique take on the playtext for the public audience. But they are also imagined to defy prison norms by

²⁷ Saldivar, José David. *The Dialectics of Our America: Genealogy, Cultural Critique, and Literary History* (Duke University Press, 1991), 123.

acting according to prison regulations. One inmate, Big Hutch, explains that the prison yard is divided into particular groups. He analogies the prison yard to an ocean, in which you have guppies (what he identifies as inmates who have committed lesser crimes), sharks (basically, the murders), and the killer whales (a self-ascribed identity that Big Hutch adopts for himself). Big Hutch explains that these groups cannot meet in the prison yard. The prison itself ensures this. If a guppy is witnessed fraternizing with a killer whale, Hutch explains, both will be thrown into solitary confinement, since the guards will assume that their differential status on the prison yard presupposes an impending scene of violence. Rehearsing *Hamlet*, however, allows different groups of men to come together in the space of the theater, not only to defy prison class sects but also to analyze the ways in which the prison forces these sects.

The queer spatiality of *Shakespeare Behind Bars* takes a more individualized form. The use of the Shakespearean playtext demonstrates this most clearly. In the dual cinematic narrative, *The Tempest* becomes a subtext on the inmate actors who understand it as individual characters—an inciting pressure as important in the cinematic effects as the camera's solicitation of the inmates to record and repent their crimes. Just as the characters within *The Tempest* are individualized by the sufferings Prospero causes them, so, too, these inmate actors are driven through theatrical playing enactively to engage the tragedy that put them behind bars in the first place. This process, however, does not always run as smoothly as Prospero's design does in the Shakespearean playtext. As I will discuss in the following section, the queer space of the Shakespeare rehabilitation programs comes into conflict with the teleologies of rehabilitation. Rehabilitation demands teleologies: the sequencing of cause and effect events, from inappropriate to

more socially authorized. In order to demonstrate the men's teleological transformation, both "Act V" and *Shakespeare Behind Bars* represent the redeemed inmate as caught within a temporal loop, willingly haunted by their past in the present. And it is precisely through these multiple temporalities that we witness queer subjectivity emerge to trouble the rehabilitative narrative.

Queerly Repositioning the Other

The rehabilitative Shakespeares I examine in this chapter position prison as a space of social impossibility. The men in "Act V" construct an alternate space through Shakespeare in which they may explore the conditions of their imprisonment, but this belated construction of the non-normative fails to address the issue of redemption. This the normalizing goal of rehabilitation in *Shakespeare Behind Bars*, which is in turn made impossible by the structure of the institution of prison. Both films displace the system of evaluation by which an inmate can be redeemed from the regulations of prison and onto the implied figure of the spectator. The spectator, then, is situated in these projects in the position of power. We become the figures who are made to witness the ways in which the inmate subjects have dislocated from their pasts—that which they were—and have become more repentant. In this way, "Act V" and *Shakespeare Behind Bars* position the spectator as judge and student: we are made to learn of the ways in which prison positions inmates to fail, but also to bare witness to the ways in which they work toward remorse in the face of such failure. In the process, the films assume, the spectator, too,

will come to learn that prison is not a social space that sincerely attempts to affect rehabilitation.²⁸

I am most interested here in examining the queer subjectivity that emerges as a byproduct of the doubled and displacing move of shifting redemptive power from the social space of the prison to the implied figure of the spectator. It is with an understanding of the ways in which the spectator must authorize these projects as successful that we witness the queerness of rehabilitative prison subjectivity, and the agency it is imagined to produce, in its most troubled form. As I will argue, in order to occupy the role of both student and judge, the spectator is forced to understand rehabilitative prison subjects as simultaneously self-alienated and self-possessed, both altered and in the process of altering, strategically working on his own behalf. And it is this dual process of self-representation that doubles back on the efficacy of rehabilitation. The spectator must question whether or not the transformed and transforming subjects presented to us retain the possibility of unbecoming the redemptive subjects they are imagined to have already become.

The narratives of progress adopted by both “Act V” and *Shakespeare Behind Bars* operate on different temporal levels to register rehabilitative success to the spectator.²⁹

²⁸ Philip Auslander makes the argument that in the contemporary, multimedia-saturate moment, ontological differences between the “live” event and the virtual recording of the event (streaming live or not) no longer retain recognizable distinction. What’s more, he argues that the cultural place of the live event has receded into near oblivion. This may hold some truth, if we imagine, for instance, what witnessing a sporting event or music show as a large venue entails today: most often we watch the live performance on the jumbo screen that magnifies it so that spectators can feel close and more intimately apart of the event. However, prison Shakespeare remind us that in some social spaces, the live event still retains a fetishized understanding. Because we are repeatedly reminded that the inmates are just that, inmates, the film continually evokes and displaces the idea of a real-life crime that occurred in social space. This narrative looping accounts, at least in part, for the impossibility of the spectator to engage in the cinematic demand of *Shakespeare Behind Bars*. See: Philip Auslander, *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture* (New York and London: Routledge, 1999).

²⁹ Scholars of Shakespeare on film approach the multiple temporalities of today’s Shakespeare as endemic to the cultural process of adaptation—which I consider part of a broader conceptualization of the

First, the projects are structured by a sense of progressive time. This sense of progress becomes the mechanism by which the spectator may judge rehabilitative efficacy. For instance, the cinematic structure of *Shakespeare Behind Bars* serves to emphasize the notion of teleological transformation. It is divided into temporal segments, from September to May, the length of each Luther Lockett Shakespeare season. As each segment gives way to another, the spectator witnesses each inmate's progress of self-discovery and understanding. "Act V" is similarly structured, but by scenes of the final act of *Hamlet*. In the case of "Act V," then, a sense of teleological development follows the structure of the Shakespearean playtext. Regardless of the fact that the play ends in a tragic vision of numerous dead bodies, the recitations of each inmate actor sound more sophisticated toward the end of the act than the beginning. The audio representation of rhetorical skill operates in the same way that progressive seasons operate in *Shakespeare Behind Bars*: both serve to establish a teleology of betterment.

However, what we are imagined to learn as spectators is a new understanding of humanity. In her book *Shakespeare Inside*, Amy Scott-Douglass documents the three years she spent and continues to spend working with prison Shakespeare programs. On the potential of prison Shakespeare, Scott-Douglass writes: "Shakespeare programs can provide an intellectually stimulating environment and enriching community, a fraternity or sorority of friends who are there to offer support.... Shakespeare is a creative, social, and spiritual life force; a vital and necessary reminder that, no matter what, we are all human beings."³⁰ For Scott-Douglass, Shakespeare becomes potential itself: to humanize,

performance of rehabilitation itself. See: Deborah Cartmell, ed. *Interpreting Shakespeare on Screen* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), and Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation* (New York and London: Routledge, 2006).

³⁰ Amy Scott-Douglass, *Shakespeare Inside: The Bard Behind Bars* (Continuum, 2007), 129.

educate, and (re)create the subjectivity of both the inmate as well as those outside of prison. Included in the special issue of *PMLA*, Jonathan Shailor details his experience as facilitator in the of Muddy Flowers Theatre Troupe, a company of convicted actors in medium-maximum-security Racine Correctional Institution, that performs Shakespeare among other dramatists. Like Scott-Douglass, Shailor emphasizes the intersubjectivity-effects possible when witnessing a prison Shakespeare performance: “While Shakespeare’s language at first seems formidably complex and alien, through making it their own they find a new voice. Those of us who witness their performance can no longer see them as base.”³¹ Also included, Jean Trounstine discusses the ways in which she continued her work with incarcerated women to co-found the women’s branch of Changing Lives through Literature, an alternative-sentencing program for probationers.³² Trounstine’s *Shakespeare Behind Bars: The Power of Drama in a Women’s Prison*³³ reads like a memoir, a first-person reflection on the experiences of working with inmate populations, and the relationship between performing Shakespeare and individual and social change.

Programmatically, rehabilitation depends on difference and agency. It is one thing to represent the inmate actors within narrative structures of progress, but the inmates must also speak to the ways in which they have learned to unbecome that which they were. This process of unbecoming is as crucial to the performance of rehabilitation as linear progress. In other words, this process of unbecoming cannot register exclusively

³¹ Jonathan Shailor, “When Muddy Flowers Bloom: The Shakespeare Project at Racine Correctional Institution.” *PMLA* 124.3 (2008): 623-41. 641.

³² Jean Trounstine, “Beyond Prison Education.” *PMLA* 123.3 (2008): 674-77.

³³ Jean Trounstine, *Shakespeare Behind Bars: The Power of Drama in a Women’s Prison* (St. Martin’s, 2001).

within a linear temporal frame. Rehabilitative difference must be established as a dislocation from the past. As such, both “Act V” and *Shakespeare Behind Bars* rely on confessionals and personal testimonies to represent the ways in which inmates have unbecome that which they were. And it is through the confessional sequences that the spectator also learns most compellingly about the conditions of prison life and the ways in which individual are imagined to excel in the face of these conditions.

One of the major tenets of the Shakespeare Behind Bars program states that the inmates must work to “relate the universal human themes contained in Shakespeare’s works to themselves (their past experiences, their present situation and their future possibility), to other human beings and to society at-large.”³⁴ Shakespeare Behind Bars teaches that redemption is only possible when one works to allow the past to erupt into the present, to confront past horrors in the present and prepare to face them in the future. In this way, the documentary figures the subject-under-rehabilitation within queer temporal terms, in which past, present, and future coalesce. And the spectator learns about the conditions of prison life most palpably and most compellingly through the confessional sequences. We learn that, as the men rehearse *The Tempest*, each cast member reflects on his past in hope of representing his crime in the future moment without reproducing the crime.

The documentary features four cast members who share confessional asides with the camera and become encoded within the documentary form as temporally fissured, allowing themselves to exist with the past, present, and a hopeful future in the name of rehabilitation. The most prominently featured cast member, Sammie, speaks candidly

³⁴ As quoted from supplementary materials provided on the DVD.

about the physical and sexual abuse he experienced as a child. He shares, “All this here pain and anger and frustration that lived inside of me, I had no outlet so I just shut it out. But inside there’s all of this rage, this anger.” Sammy has served a total of twenty years behind bars; initially he was sentenced to eight years with the possibility of parole. In one of his many tear-laden confessionals, Sammie explains that he is in prison for killing his mistress, Carol, after she threatened to divulge the details of their affair to his wife. In a fit of rage, Sammie strangled Carol and left her body in a vacant motel room outside of town. “The hardest damned thing I’ve ever had to do is forgive myself,” Sammie explains. “Each year I go through this experience, it seems to get harder and harder. I really have to fight to see the goodness in me.” But Sammie is a good actor; in fact, several of his peers call him “Alpha Male” because his acting ability far surpasses most others. Simply allowing himself to be good at something—in his case, acting—has become Sammie’s primary mode of rehabilitation and continues to force him to work through the events of his past—and in particular, his past crime—and question why he harbors such self-resentment.

Another inmate prominently featured in *Shakespeare Behind Bars*, Hal, explains that performing *Tempest* allows him to work through what he refers to as a history of silence and resentment that dominated his life before prison. “Not talking is what got me here,” he explains. The very act of performing, of speaking lines and speaking about his past has been Hal’s primary mode of rehabilitation. Hal was elected to play Prospero in the production because, as he explains, the role demands confession. Prospero must divulge to Miranda the previously undisclosed details of their banishment and the secret of his identity, that he was Duke of Milan. Hal identifies with the sense of secrecy

surrounding Prospero. He was sent to prison for killing his wife. When she told him that she was pregnant with their second child, Hal explains that he felt trapped in a life that he never wanted. In an attempt to escape, he dropped a hairdryer into his wife's bathwater, killing her and their expected second child. Hal now identifies his rage with the fact that he felt forced to conceal his homosexual tendencies. In the documentary Hal speaks candidly of his sexual orientation—he now openly identifies as gay—but works to continually remember the rage that his past silence caused. His past silence and present candor become a productive tension that Hal embraces in his pursuit of a rehabilitated future.

The inmates of *Shakespeare Behind Bars* are represented within a queer temporal logic, haunted, but willingly so, by their pasts. Carla Freccero explains the temporal structure of uncertainty as queer temporality. She writes, “the willingness to be haunted is an ethical relation to the world, motivated by a concern not only for the past but also for the future, for those who live on in the borderlands without a home.”³⁵ Figured as an identity-less, border-crossing figure caught in the future-perfect, the haunted subject allows for a queered and queering occupation of temporal uncertainty, both within and without. I worked with the inmate of *Shakespeare Behind Bars* for approximately one month during their 2007-08 season, to specifically talk with them about the queer temporality in which the film figures them. Most figured themselves as willfully haunted by a sense of temporal and spatial decontextualization.

One inmate, Louie, explained that the process of rehabilitation forces a subject into a sort of temporal void that allows for self-reflection: “I guess you would say it's one singular moment. The past, present, future, it's all right there. It's like a black hole I

³⁵ Carla Freccero, *Queer/Early/Modern* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006), 75.

guess. You kind of have to think about where you came from and where you're going to go." In Louie's self-representation as a subject of rehabilitation, he figures himself as out of time, both caught and liberated between past, present, and future. He echoes the self-representation of Larry, who is beginning his second year in *Shakespeare Behind Bars*. For Larry, the past takes on a spectral significance that ominously drives him to aggressively figure his own personal history in the present moment. As Larry describes, "The problem is that, like some ghoul in a horror flick, it [the past] just keeps hanging around. You can't get rid of it. You know, that dead part of you just stays there and it stinks up the place. And it chases you everywhere you go. That's the past. For a long time I let that just kill me. I let that just drag me down. That ghoul kept pulling me down into the grave with it. And I finally had enough." For Larry, the past acts like a specter that continually haunts the present, and it is only at the moment in which one acknowledges the phantasmatic structure of temporality that he can work toward redemption and leading a socially-responsible lifestyle.

For Big G, who plays Caliban in the film's documented performance of *The Tempest*, queer temporality is figured as a simultaneously consensual and coercive Dickensian force of imprisonment and empowerment. "It's the chains, especially in our case, that bind us," he explained. "We are caught in time, forever linked with the crimes we have committed, so we always carry them with us. If you ever think they're gone, somehow they will raise their ugly head and say 'here we are. You can't escape us. We're the ghost of Christmas past.' You can't ever get away from that, not just as prisoners but any person." Big G dislocates the haunted temporality of rehabilitation as an egalitarian construct imposed on more than the prison population; rather, phantasmatic time becomes

a product of subjectivity formation more generally, belonging to everybody by virtue of existing in time and space. Thus, in both the self-representations and the documentary, the inmate-actor is represented as a palimpsest, at once an embodiment of past experiences, present situations, and future possibilities. As the inmate attempts to propel himself into an ideal future—a future, for instance, involving self-sufficiency and life outside of a prison—he must account for the ways in which past actions have led to a present situation that demands rehabilitation. Put another way, rehabilitation demands causality; it demands that the subject repetitively take stock of past experiences in order to identify how and why he or she has arrived at their present situation. The necessary coexistence of past and present in rehabilitated subjectivity promises the projection into an emotionally and intellectually independent future.

In the act of giving personal accounts of transformation, the inmates represent themselves as selves differentiated, self-possessed in a way that registers as self-alienated. The effects of this double move, however, are as troubling to the rehabilitative project as they are authorizing. Judith Butler's account of account-giving is helpful in understanding this paradox. In *Giving an Account of Oneself*, Butler explores the problem of appropriating a system of norms—how to square away the adoption of an Other's sense of morality as one's own in a way that registers intelligibly—as most clearly evident in the performance of personal testimony. Giving an account of oneself, she explains, is never just that, but rather is a means of demonstrating that the account is connected to something much bigger than oneself. It is the “something” in this formulation that points toward relationality. Specifically, to give an account of oneself is to give an account to another and in language that is not one's own. Butler writes:

An account of oneself is always given to another, whether conjured or existing, and this other establishes the scene of address as a more primary ethical relation than a reflexive effort to give an account of oneself. Moreover, the very terms by which we give an account, *by which we make ourselves intelligible* to ourselves and to others, are not of our own making. They are social in character and they establish social norms.³⁶

To give our account is to present ourselves to an other or others and to do so in an intelligible way, which means not only that the account must somehow be made coherent but that we as subjects must *cohere* in terms of the norms of intelligibility. To make ourselves intelligible means to conform to prior terms of intelligibility. Thus, the account precedes the subject within the terms that both precede and exceed our use of them. In one sense, this seems intuitive enough. An account of myself must have an addressee, even if only implied, and must be given using the discourses available to me.

In another sense, however, these facets of giving an account prove quite radical in the performance of prison rehabilitation. Though this claim may sound intuitive, as Butler acknowledges, it is also and problematically limited, in that it fails to account for the ways in which subjects are both restrained *and constituted* by systems of power. This leads Butler to deconstruct the very title of her book. She rehearses Foucault's understanding of subjects as existing through the adoption of subject positions, specific and legible identity positions, by which subjects are in turn constituted and reconstituted by prior discursive practices. Butler paraphrases Foucault's claim as follows" what "I" can be is quite literally and materially constrained in advance by a regime of truth that decides what will and will not be recognized as a form of being, as legible "I" in the first place. The "I," in other words, depends upon antecedent constraints placed on the self. And these constrains of constitution appear most visibly when the subject attempts itself

³⁶ Judith Butler, *Giving an Account of Oneself* (New York: Fordham University press, 2005), 21.

to offer a personal accounting for its being. In Butler's paraphrased evocation of Foucault, we see that she is concerned with questions of ontology, since, as she explains, the performance of account-giving broaches the question of being. This entails an increased consideration of "the other" (which Butler claims that Foucault neglects) to whom an account must be given, imagined or otherwise. But Butler and Foucault seem to agree with the notion that the reflexive relation between any challenge to norms, or what Foucault would call a "regime of truth," depends upon the establishment of identity positions from which subjects speak. Butler views this relation within extremely stark terms: "if I question the regime of truth, I question, too, the regime through which being, and my own ontological status, is allocated. Critique is not merely *of* a given social practice or a certain horizon of intelligibility within which practices and institutions appear, it also implies that I come into question for myself."³⁷ Which is to say: when one calls a set of norms into question, one always runs the risk of calling the self's stability into question as well.

But is this always a risk? Might we see this risk as a strategy built upon risking the self's very sense of stability? This possibility is the very foundational principle of rehabilitation—that which makes it an incredibly appealing paradigm of hope and futurity, as well as that which makes it a particularly troubled narrative in which the cultural imagination can invest. The spectator must understand the rehabilitative prison subject of rehabilitation as destabilized if we are to believe his personal account, and thus offer our power of redemption. We must understand that he retains the ability to act of his behalf, specifically to dislocate from that which he once was, in order to justify the offer

³⁷ Judith Butler, *Giving an Account of Oneself*, 23.

of redemption according to logics of the rehabilitation projects. This move of dislocating from the past becomes the basis on which rehabilitative reality is built.

Yet, the represented rehabilitation programs aims to teach inmates what is and is not acceptable in society. There is a disciplining effect produced in the performance of rehabilitation, one that propels the subject into a sense of queer subjectivity. The rehabilitative impulse behind these texts rests on the demand to mimic (or refuse to mimic, in some cases) subjectivities espoused in the Shakespearean playtext. As Homi Bhabha argues, “Mimicry is ... the sign of a double articulation; a complex strategy of reform, regulation and discipline, which ‘appropriates’ the Other as it visualizes power. Mimicry is also the sign of the inappropriate, however; a difference of recalcitrance which coheres the dominant strategic function.”³⁸ The very performance of rehabilitation demands that the subject-in-process adopts a queer subjectivity, somewhere between appropriate and appropriated. The linear temporal structure of the film serves to register to the spectator that inmates have indeed appropriated the need to unbecome the person who committed crimes. Through the emergence of this queer subjectivity, inmates are imagined to operate on their own behalf, with the aid of the Shakespearean playtext.

Coercions of Agency

There is a paradox of agency operating in the interview sequences of “Act V” and *Shakespeare Behind Bars*. “Act V” represents this most aggressively through the figure of Hitt, who continually asks the men about the details of their crimes. For Hitt, the social space of prison operates as an obstacle in his empathetic engagement with the inmates,

³⁸ Bhabha, Homi. “Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse.” *Modern Literary Theory: A Reader*. Eds. Philip Rice and Patricia Waugh (Arnold, 1989) 234-41.

but so, too, does the willful agency of the inmates. They repeatedly refuse to fully disclose the nature of their crimes, details of their pasts, or offer confessions. Hitt's narrative primarily follows a participatory mode of documentation, in which he shares with the company of convicted actors and his listeners alike the anxieties he feels upon entering a prison. However, history begins to haunt Hitt as much as it does the inmates, and threatens to undercut his documentary project. Nearing the close of the documentary, Hitt describes a gnawing curiosity about the inmates' crimes and the details of their personal histories. He reflects: "Although I found myself playing a constant guessing game about this [their crimes], they wouldn't discuss the past. 'That was then,' they said. 'This is now.' But I had to know." Hitt describes his horror when visiting the records depository and finally knowing the details of his new friends' crimes. Still haunted by that familiar sense of alienation, he decides to confront the inmates with his partial knowledge as an attempt to seek out the real truth, not what is listed in court transcripts. Again, Hitt receives little satisfaction when the men answer his confrontation and the desire to know the details of their crimes.

Because Hitt, along with the spectator, is positioned as the new Other, the entity which has the capability of evaluating rehabilitative efficacy because prisons cannot, the personal testimonials of the inmates are as much a product demanded by rehabilitation as much as they are of personal agency. In *The Body in Pain*, Elaine Scarry argues that the agency of personal testimony is always a displaced one. For Scarry, three features characterize modern disciplines of torture and serve to distinguish it from other forms of pain or interrogation:

First, pain is inflicted on a person in ever-intensifying ways. Second, that pain, continually amplified within the person's body, is also amplified in

the sense that it is objectified, made visible to those outside the person's body (thus rendering pain communicable in a way that is highly atypical). Third, the objectified pain is denied as pain and read as power, a translation made possible by the obsessive mediation of agency.

In situations of violence or oppression, she explains, language is always disciplined.

Modern torture has taken on a primarily rhetorical function, rather than a particularly material one. Tortured bodies tend to metaphorize violence away from the body and onto matters of agency. The assault of the body does not register within semantics of the body, but rather as points of rhetorical acts.

Like "Act V." *Shakespeare Behind Bars* aggressively maintains that rehabilitation does indeed produce willfully remorseful subjects, but it troubles its own construction of reality by posing it back to the viewing audience: can society accept the offer of redemption from an inmate? What if that inmate is a statutory sex offender? While the film primarily follows expository and observational modes of documentation, it briefly gives way to performative mode in the climactic moment in the filmic argument over the necessity of giving and receiving redemption in the larger narrative of human survival. During an interview sequence with Leonard, one of the long-time members of the group who is only featured briefly because he is in solitary confinement, the documentary relates the dramatic structure of *Tempest* directly to the lived experiences of the members of *Shakespeare Behind Bars*. In a sequence announced with the intertitle "Week Eighteen (January) The Hole (Solitary Confinement)" the camera opens with an extreme close up on Leonard's identification tag displayed in the small window of his solitary confinement cell. While maintaining a sense of unobtrusiveness commonly associated with observational mode documentary filmmaking, the mobile camera pulls back, still shooting through the window, as the spectator watches Leonard perform his daily routine:

he makes the bed (small cot), organizes reading materials, washes his hands, cleans the aluminum wash basin. As the camera observes Leonard's routine, the film presents his words in voiceover: "I've been rehearsing my lines and things. Blank walls. That's about all I can do. I've been going through all of *Tempest*, I've been doing all of my translations but that last speech by Prospero I've worked on memorizing and it really, really speaks to me. Unless you've really needed to be redeemed or shown some mercy, I don't know if you really, truly appreciate those last few lines that he said."

At this point the documentary briefly, and only at this moment, enters into performative mode. As the camera cuts to a close up of Leonard, a disembodied male voice asks him, "So, why are you here?" After taking a twenty-five second pause, Leonard confesses, "I sexually abused seven girls. That's the worst thing I've ever done." The camera continues its long take as Leonard contemplates his response in silence; yet, filling the cinematic silence the film plays the audio of another interview with Leonard in which he says, "I'm hoping to successfully complete the treatment program..."

This moment is particularly disconcerting, not only because the film deploys the confession of a pedophile to confront the spectator, but also because Leonard sits in silence while he appears to be made to speak for himself, without actually speaking in the cinematic present. Finishing his own sentence, the camera cuts to a close up of Leonard motivated by a match on narrative rather than a match on action, leaving his cinematically represented materiality fractured. The film returns to a physically and vocally unified representation of Leonard as completes his sentence: "...and then after that, to be paroled. So that in some way, being freely given a choice, that I could live honorably and do something to make amends....to redeem my life so that I am not

remembered for the very worst thing that I've done.” In this single sequence, *Shakespeare Behind Bars* moves almost mechanically between observational and participatory modes of documentation. The filmic flirtation with participatory mode in *Shakespeare Behind Bars* serves to denaturalize the larger argument on the relationship between performance and rehabilitation in the linear narrative until this point, focusing spectator attention on Leonard's confessional moment by troubling modal expectation and calling attention to the constructedness of the documentary form. For Scott-Douglass, Leonard's confessional sequence embodies the narrative climax of the film and performs its central argument on the necessity and difficulty of offering redemption. She makes the case that “[i]n a documentary that is structured around the theme of forgiveness and redemption, the film delivers its ultimate challenge by putting the message of forgiveness into the mouth of an inmate that may be the most difficult to forgive, a convicted pedophile.”³⁹

If in “Act V” the inmates at the Eastern Missouri Correctional Complex become a potential “school of Calibans,” *Shakespeare Behind Bars* transforms the filmic spectator into something of a potential “school of Mirandas.” In Act One, scene two of *The Tempest*, Miranda pleads with her father to end the illusory shipwreck he created. She appeals, “O, I have suffered/With those that I saw suffer: a brave vessel” (5-6). Miranda acknowledges the constructed reality of the shipwreck: “If by your art, my dearest father, you have/Put the wild waters in this roar, allay them” (1-2). Acknowledging that the constructed quality of the image has little consequence on the reality-effect the image produces, Miranda still suffers at the sight. Because the film spends little cinematic

³⁹ Scott-Douglass, 122.

energy exploring the lives of the inmates' victims and the details surrounding the affective consequences of crimes on those outside of bars, the affective economy circulates between the inmate and the spectator. By exclusively focusing on the experience of the inmates, the documentary adopts a mode of narration that relies upon a closed vantage point, presenting the inmates themselves as victims.

The construction of Leonard's confessional as well as Howard and Sammie's deferment asks the spectator to sympathize with the fractured subjectivity and the fissured cultural standing of the inmate subject. Yet, as Scott-Douglass points out, the sequence also asks for spectator empathy, to affectively relate to the remorseful figure of a statutory sex offender. Leonard's confession sequence offers a representation of the rehabilitative process and a reminder of the inability to (re)produce it. To produce the end point of rehabilitation is to embody remorse. Yet the problem is that remorse can only be embodied; it cannot be externalized in any objective form. The viewer cannot know if rehabilitation has "worked" for the men of "Act V" or *Shakespeare Behind Bars*. We are positioned as queerly alienated from knowledge of the inmate as he is of his self-knowledge. Rehabilitation is as subjective as its pursuits. And still there is the issue of mediation. After all, *Shakespeare Behind Bars* is a documentary film, a representation of a particular historico-social aspect of cultural, not a reproduction of reality.

Whether or not the audience viewer is willing to offer redemption to Leonard or any of the convicted actors in prison Shakespeare rehabilitation programs, the film opens an intersubjective space for questioning the relationship among subjectivity, knowledge, and truth of an unmediated real—a real encounter (first-hand or mediatized) with the inmate, a real sense of intersubjectivity, a real Shakespeare. And yet accessing the truth

of the real is precisely what is demanded by both the performance of rehabilitation and the very use of Shakespeare in those pursuits. Bryan Reynolds argues that some popular “truths” have a profound impact on people without also having much credibility in terms of an academically approved history or a readily substantiated historical reality.⁴⁰ In other words, if a particular culture believes in a “truth,” such as Shakespeare as the ultimate arbiter of cultural legitimacy or Shakespeare as a criminal, and its members live in accordance with that cultural fantasy, one could say that that cultural fantasy becomes—indeed constitutes—authority and legitimacy itself. In this respect, cultural fantasies become legitimate as they inform the lived experience of a society’s members. When the authority in question relates to unknowable subject matter—such as the author-figure of Shakespeare or whether or not a subject can become rehabilitated (with or without the Shakespearean playtext)—the possibility of that authority’s material substantiation may become diminished, but the same does not necessarily hold true for its cultural influence.

To be sure, Shakespeare comes to be constructed in the image of each inmate in the process of rehabilitation, however destabilized that image might be. The malleability of Shakespeare illuminates the fact that the cultural capital conferred upon him is necessarily both actual and imaginary; so is his lack of cultural capital. Thus, the transformative or authorizing power of the Bard is always both in and out of context. He represents the space in which the actual and the imaginary simultaneously collide and coalesce, a space in which the subjective meets everything that it is not. The oscillation between what is real and what is sensational and spectacular speaks to the texture of representation, and how cultural legitimization becomes authorized and de-authorized. *Shakespeare Behind Bars* asks the spectator to quest for an origin, to discover “the real,”

⁴⁰ Reynolds, *Becoming Criminal*

that which escapes the very imaginative fabric that weaves together these narratives of rehabilitation in prison, both its possibilities and limitations. We are asked to question whether the inmates really are repentant, as well as whether rehabilitation is possible. Likewise, the spectator must navigate his or her assumptions of what Shakespeare might signify. As critics—as well as spectators and cultural producers and consumers of the prison Shakespeare phenomenon—we would do well to question the real and imagined degree of cultural capital, if any, that follows not only the figure of Shakespeare, but also the culture figures in whose name Shakespeare iconicity is deployed.

Disciplining Homosociality

In a recent episode of *The Colbert Report*, a political parody of *The O'Reilly Factor*, Steven Colbert reports on a recently established rehabilitation program implemented by the state of Massachusetts, entitled Shakespeare & Co.⁴¹ Colbert hyperbolizes, “I’ve never been a fan of “rehab”—it’s just a fancy word for coddling. This Shakespeare program...is the worst kind of rehab—look at the guy they’re using as a role model. Shakespeare was a debtor and a blackguard. His plays are immoral and they’ll only encourage our at-risk youth to engage in lesbianism, homicide, regicide, fratricide, matricide, suicide, and cannibalism.” As is the tradition of the *Colbert Report*, Colbert snarkily rehearses what he imagines to be the reaction from conservative media. This particular episode, entitled “Bard, as in these kids should be barred away,” explores the current cultural phenomenon of Shakespeare therapy in institutionalized rehabilitation

⁴¹ Steven Colbert, “The Word, ‘Bard’: Teaching Kids Shakespeare will just make them more Violent [Farcical editorial on the Shakespeare and Co.’s *Macbeth* performance on 11 April 2006]. Episode 2051. *The Colbert Report*: Comedy Central.

programs and the seeming inappropriateness of using Shakespeare to rehabilitate inmates. However, when the figure of Shakespeare enters the debate on whether or not rehabilitation works, the discussion lapses into a laundry-listing of non-normative identities and performances: lesbianism, regicide, even cannibalism. Each of these perverse performances threatens to dismantle the very project of rehabilitation: to reestablish a subject into society and to help that subject internalize societal regulations on what performances are and are not acceptable in various contexts.

In this respect, Shakespeare becomes a double signifier. On the one hand, he marks the potential for social degeneration and the threat of non-normative cultural practices as contagions. Part of the efficacy of the rehabilitation program represented in *Shakespeare Behind Bars* depends upon the cultural positioning of Shakespeare as a criminal, an identity-position that helps to authorize the rehabilitation space by creating an empathetic connection between the inmate and the literature he studies. This, the film suggests, is historical accuracy. But so, too, is the cultural anxiety that stage players can incite non-normative erotic engagements on the part of the spectator.

Jean Howard has (in)famously asked, “how many people crossdressed in Renaissance England?”⁴² For Howard, the cross-dresser embodies a subversive or transgressive potential to call attention to cultural anxieties over an emerging sex-gender system. Certainly, cultural artifacts of the period suggest such anxieties. For instance, *Hic Mulier* speaks of the female crossdressers (or at least the imagination of it) on the streets

⁴² Jean E. Howard, “Crossdressing, The Theatre, and Gender Struggle in Early Modern England” in *Shakespeare Quarterly* 39. 4 (Winter 1988): 418-440, 418.

of London as “amazing mens mindes with their strange proportions.”⁴³ Similarly, Puritan anti-theatrical tracts, such as John Rainbold’s *Th’ Overthrow of Stage-Playes*, warns against “what inconvenience and danger of vncleannesse cleaueth to this practice.”⁴⁴

On one level, *Shakespeare Behind Bars* represents the convicted as a company of men that rejects a Foucaultian dislocation of power, willfully empowering themselves precisely through their classification and commodification as an all-male ensemble of “convicted criminals” by developing a collectivist epistemology based on their mutual bondage, censorship, and drive to defy the “social death” so often associated with incarceration. Yet there are telling moments that undercut the depiction of an empowered homosocial male space with the anxiety of homosexual contagion. It is precisely because normative redemption cannot signify stably in the performance of rehabilitation that the film offers the spectator as consolation. Normativity, by films ends, comes in the form of heteronormative sexuality. During the initial casting process, the company decided that one of the cast mates, Red, is to play Miranda. It makes sense to everyone that Hal should play Prospero, Big G should play Caliban, and DeMond should play Ferdinand. The role of Miranda is the last to be cast, and Red is the last inmate to be assigned a role. When asked about this casting choice, Red fumes, “They put the role on me. I rebelled against it because I said, ‘let me make the choice. Don’t make the choice for me,’ you know. But they made the choice for me because everybody else in a sense, it’s like the role didn’t fit them.” Red not only performs the only female role in *Tempest* but also embodies the only voice of dissent and disempowerment with the rehabilitation program. In prison, where

⁴³ Hic Mulier: Or, The Man-Woman: Being a Medicine to cure the Coltish Disease of the Staggers in the Masculine-Feminines of our Times. London, 1620. Sig. Br. Early English Books Online. Cambridge University Library. 13 May 2006.

⁴⁴ John Rainbold, *Th’ Overthrow of Stage-Playes*. London, 1599. Early English Books Online. Cambridge University Library. 25 March 2007, Sig. C3v.

the act of consent is always a highly mediated performance, *Shakespeare Behind Bars* works to help inmates develop decision-making, problem solving and creative thinking skills; Red, however, describes feeling as though his ability to make a decision, a crucial decision—to cast himself in a role, as is the practice of the rehabilitation program—is foreclosed. Of course, not all the men are assigned the role they most want; the difference with Red is that he *must* play a woman. During rehearsals the other men taunt Red for playing Miranda. One unidentified cast member tells Red, “Come on girl, we’ll play with you. We’ll wait for you.” While Red continues to rehearse, he is clearly affected by these taunts, as he anxiously looks down and stammers through his lines. And Tofteland never intervenes; after all, the men are encouraged to resolve conflicts in the rehearsal space on their own. Tofteland only intervenes if there is impending physical violence (which is never represented in the documentary). And though the men’s taunts sounds suspiciously close to threats of sexual violence, these taunts are understood as part of the rehabilitative atmosphere: the men must learn to communicate with one another without a figure of authority acting as mediator.

Toward the end of the season, however, Red affectively connects with his role as the ingénue. Despite himself, one day in rehearsal he realizes that, like Miranda, he was fifteen years old when he was told the truth of his father’s identity, discovering the father he had never known was white. The parallel between Miranda’s relationship with Prospero and Red’s relationship with his father opens a space of self-reflection for Red. In the rehearsal space, he discusses with his cast members the pain he felt in never knowing his father and in his mother’s refusal to answer questions about his father’s identity. Red’s affective connection with Miranda leads him to reconsider the company’s

casting choice as a coercive dynamic. Instead, Red describes his encounter with the figure of Miranda as an instance of fate in motion: “It’s hard to explain. This part here is just perfectly, truly for me... these virtues, and these feelings I’m having.” Red struggles to articulate his connection with the role of Miranda in front of the other men who at once support him and tease him for identifying with a young woman’s pain.

Though Red’s initial voice of dissent marks *Shakespeare Behind Bars* as a trace, dissipating as quickly as they are represented. For Red, conviction—his formal declaration that Miranda was indeed the perfect role for him to play—is a retrospective construction. In an interview sequence after the final performance, Red explains, “Miranda helped me to deal with some of the things inside of me that needed to be developed, that needed to come out. It just helped me to be able to understand how caring and loving this young lady is, coming from the situation that she came from and the tragedy that she’s seen within her own. It’s just that you can be able to forgive someone no matter what type of situation it is.” Miranda teaches a quality of forgiveness necessary for Red’s successful rehabilitation, and marks the act of “playing the woman’s part” as performance caught within the dialectic of coercion and consent. The film focuses on the end result of playing the woman’s role—a lesson in forgiveness and virtue—in a way that retrospectively deconstructs Red’s initial frustration and sense of powerlessness at being cast into a role he did not want.

When I met with the men of *Shakespeare Behind Bars*, I asked if they would elaborate on the anxiety over playing the woman’s part. Many avoided the question, explained that there was no anxiety, or passed on answering the question entirely. However, Hal was very candid on the topic. Hal explains that performing Shakespeare at

LLCC means finding an affective connection with one's role. The problem lies in the equation between performance and embodiment, and the demand of the rehabilitative project to fully embody one's role. Yet, the project of a male inmate embodying a female character reads as queer and dangerous within the prison walls. Hal explains, "Here you have to be macho. That's the convict law. And if you're seen as queer, you're seen as less. There are very distinct roles. There's punks and sissies and bitches. There's no room in the society that's here for a gay man....Playing a woman is seen as, you must then be a woman, if you can access that part of your persona."

It would appear that there is little room in society outside of prison for homosexual representation of Shakespeare either. While Shakespeare can be made in any image, both "Act V" and *Shakespeare Behind Bars* imply that there is a social limit to remaking Shakespeare, and that this limit is conditioned by what the implied spectator is willing to accept. Such a move implies that Shakespeare has become a particularly and troublingly conservative, heteronormative paradigm in the contemporary moment. But other screen Shakespeares, not necessarily produced with a rehabilitative aim, seem to suggest otherwise. This raises the question: has Shakespeare become a strictly heteronormatively disciplining force in the contemporary moment? This is this question I explore in the following chapter.

CHAPTER IV

DREAMING JULIET: THE IMPOSSIBLE CONJUNCTION BETWEEN SHAKESPEARE AND PORNOGRPAHY

In 2002, the Supreme Court struck down a supplementary statute to the Child Pornography Prevention Act of 1996. The provision targeted the production, distribution, and consumption of “virtual” child pornography, or images of young adults in sexually explicit situations who have the appearance of minors. The law extended beyond traditional federal notions of obscenity—material so inappropriate according to national standards that it cannot be rehabilitated to possess any possible sense of social value. Larger in scope, the provision applied to “any visual depiction [that] is, or appears to be, of a minor engaging in sexually explicit conduct.”¹ In his majority opinion, Justice Kennedy described the law as unconstitutional, in that its language is so broad it has the potential to censor some of the most canonical texts that may represent young people in sexual situations, but in ways that exhibit obvious artistic merit: “the statute prohibits the visual depiction of an idea—that of teenagers engaging in sexual activity—that is a fact of modern society and has been a theme in art and literature throughout the ages.”

Kennedy turned to Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet* to ground his point. He argued that Shakespeare’s Juliet is thirteen years old, and because of this, modern productions of *Romeo and Juliet* could theoretically fall within the parameters of virtual child pornography. Dissenting Chief Justice Rehnquist agreed that the law was

¹ Quotes taken from Sandra Greenhouse’s “‘Virtual’ Child Pornography Ban Overturned” in the *New York Times* (17 April 2002, A18). The law also made it a crime to advertise or promote material “in such a manner that conveys the impression” that it is real child pornography.

(potentially) constitutionally troublesome, but argued that a narrower reading rather than eradication should have been applied to the provision. He explains, “We should be loath to construe a statute as banning film portrayals of Shakespearean tragedies without some indication—from text or legislative history—that such a result was intended.”

In previous chapters, I have argued that Shakespeare acts with chillingly normative effects as a rehabilitation tool in urban youth and inmate communities. The queer subjectivity that a rehabilitated subject must adopt in the imperative to *perform Shakespeare* offers mediation on the ideologically-laden identity-effects that operate under the radar of the rehabilitative project as sanctioned by both Shakespeare iconicity and the Shakespeare playtext. Shakespeare becomes that which would coerce subjects into normative identities, but only insofar as the subjects consent to entering into the rehabilitative contract. In *The Hobart Shakespeareans* and *My Shakespeare*, the drive to produce properly nationalized subjects places systems of ethnic and cultural difference under erasure while producing an emergent socioeconomic middleclass. In *This American Life*'s “Act V” and *Shakespeare Behind Bars*, institutionally sanctioned programs designed to rehabilitate inmates into remorseful subjects who take accountability for their crime and who will resist a recidivistic return to prison, instill a doctrine of what it means to perform normative ideas of masculinity, to *act like a man*. In the claim, then, that Shakespeare is a transcendental signifier, it would seem that such transcendentalism comes with a heavy price, for there is a thin line between “acting out” through Shakespeare and falling in line.

However, these rehabilitative performances are as troubled as they are troubling. Rehabilitation serves to buttress the fantasy that normative identity positions can indeed

be appropriated. In order to register such fantasies, rehabilitation belatedly produces the non-normative as a point of resistance against which rehabilitative success can be measured. We can think of queer subjectivity as a mode of multiplicitous identification: a subject must identify with the proleptically constructed non-normative identity position, but strategically so and to effect: only to the degree that such an identification can register as rejected, in the past, othered. But, of course, the act of occupying a non-normative identity positions, even strategically, troubles the very logic that a subject can successfully dislocate from one identity position to another. Identification, then, becomes the unwieldy practice that the process of rehabilitation cannot fully subsume or control in its desire both to conceptualize and visually register transformative possibility.

In the case of the U.S. Supreme Court's rejection of a provision that would add further restrictions to arguably the most taboo mode of explicit sexual display, child pornography, Shakespeare enters into the debate as mediation on theory and practice. In theory, the Justices were in favor of banning virtual child pornography, of allowing the statute to operate as originally drafted; in practice, however, such restrictions threaten to censor Shakespeare. In the tension between theory and practice, Shakespeare's position as arbiter of cultural legitimacy is as much under threat as it is threatening. What does it mean to link pedophilic pornography and Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* on the level of representation? And what are the consequences in separating theory and practice in this respect by claiming that, in practice, Shakespeare and pornography represent oppositional positions in culture but that, in theory, they traffic in a similar mode of potentially dangerous representation? Because a majority of the Justices believe that there is an intrinsic relation between the two, Shakespeare becomes that which forces them to strike

down the provision, and thus opens the door to pornographic play with virtual representations of children in explicit sexual situations. Put another way, to save Shakespeare and reaffirm his cultural position, the Supreme Court had to refuse the restriction of virtual child porn.

This is an extremely perverse claim. The Supreme Court's decision implies that the maintenance of Shakespeare's position as the pinnacle of Western cultural legitimacy demands reiteration; but, in this necessary process of reiteration, they must necessarily legitimize a particular brand of pornography previously and legally defined as illegitimate. This is perhaps the most axiomatic demonstration of the ways in which the assertion of Shakespeare's cultural legitimacy can rebound as a perlocutionary act, producing consequences both unexpected and in many cases unacknowledged. Shakespeare remains at the heart of the Western canon: this is less an argument than an observation; but the Supreme Court's ruling demonstrates precisely how stating such an observation can cause unintended consequences.

Here I shift my discussion of rehabilitation on the level of genre. In my previous chapters, I focus on contemporary audio-visual documentary and its self-avowed ability to represent the "real" Shakespeare in the process of institutionally sanctioned rehabilitation. In this chapter, I examine pornography, a "trash genre" equally obsessed with the real.² Documentary theorist Bill Nicholas has noted the similarities between the

² In my deployment of the term *trash genre*, I evoke the work of media theorists like Philip Auslander and Rick Altman, who argue that all media genres are discarded or rejected to some degree. Genres emerge within a metonymic process that is always in conversation with and in opposition to more established modes of narrative. What is discarded today will likely catalyze genres tomorrow. Put another way, all media genres are queer hybrids, working with and resisting dominant modes of narrative in cultural imaginations. However, I want here to rethink this dynamic by separating the terms *trash* and *recycling*. While I agree that all media genres at some point involve recycling of previous forms, this is not to say certain genres are not "trashed" or relegated to obscure status in popular imaginations, usually because these genres are not made visible in popular culture or in critical treatments. And, as one person's trash in

genres of documentary and pornography, and indeed considers pornography one of many modes of documentary filmmaking: “pornography idealizes sexual relations (imbuing sex with both a documentary realism and a mythic idealism). Each offers its idealizations as moments of contemplation that comply to their own internal norms for rhythm, pace, and duration rather than to those of the surrounding narrative.”³ In other words, pornography and documentary film may involve different means of representation, but both work to imbue their means of representation with the effect of a direct, or as direct as possible, relation to reality. It is because of pornography’s obsession with the real that the genre represents the ultimate test of Shakespeare’s rehabilitative potential. While Shakespeare may occupy the acme of cultural legitimacy, pornography occupies a decidedly oppositional space. Pornography offers a fascinating examination of Shakespeare’s culturally transformative potential because it is one of the most paradoxically positioned genres in contemporary culture. It remains one of the highest grossing modes of contemporary film, and many cultural critics have discussed the ways in which pornography saturates contemporary media, to the point that avowedly un-pornographic materials in mainstream popular culture have adopted pornographic aesthetics.⁴

another’s treasure, the genres I classify here as *trash* will, no doubt, trouble my classification as the process of making and inhabiting genre continues through time and space. For the current moment I dub the texts I treat as representative of “trash genre,” or hybrid modes of narration that are neither made visible in contemporary theaters and media venues, and are rarely examined within the field. See: Philip Auslander, *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture* (New York and London: Routledge, 1999) and Rick Altman, *Film/Genre* (London: British Film Institute Publishing, 1999).

³ Bill Nichols, *Representing Reality: Issues and Concepts in Documentary* (Indiana University Press: Bloomington, 1991), 213.

⁴ For a discussion on the ways in which mainstream popular culture has adopted pornographic aesthetics, see: Kaarina Kikunen and Susanna Paasonen. “Porn Star as Brand: Pornification and the Intermedia Career of Rakel Liekki” in *The Velvet Light Trap* 59 (Spring 2007): 30-41; and Heather Butler, “What do you call a Lesbian with Long Fingernails? The Development of Lesbian and Dyke Pornography” in *Porn Studies*, ed. Linda Williams (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2004), 167-197.

Yet, pornography is critically positioned as a cultural limit case, a cultural artifact with little to say beyond the offensive self-announcement “I am porn.”⁵ I present pornography as the limit case in the examination of Shakespeare’s ability to cross boundaries, to blur culturally sanctioned lines of propriety and impropriety. In witnessing the ability of Shakespeare to cross generic boundaries and move into the realm of the pornographic feature, I suggest, we also witness an ideological mediation on what particular sexual identities cannot be crossed, either by Shakespeare *or* by pornographic features, without producing particularly spectacular cultural anxieties.⁶

⁵ Andrew Ross points out that in always declaring itself as pornography, pornography is not only what it says but also how it names itself. In other words, pornography is always metapornographic, always performatively self-announcing. In what follows, I take a cue from Ross. The ways Shakespeare pornographic films name themselves as “adult features,” “sometime Shakespeare adaptations,” and when they refuse nominations, present telling moments in how Shakespeare comes to be performed by marginalized subjects in the current historical juncture. See: “The Popularity of Pornography” in *No Respect: Intellectuals and Popular Culture* (New York and London: Routledge, 1989), 171-208.

⁶ It has become customary to offer as an epilogue to academic treatments of pornography. Somewhere near the beginning of the average scholastic text on porn comes a small explanation of the project that reads like an apologia. They all read differently, but somehow the same. For instance, from Linda Williams’s *Hardcore: Power, Pleasure, and the Frenzy of the Visible*: “[...] even though I know that the slightest admission that not every image of every film was absolutely disgusting to me may render my insights worthless to many women, I also know that not to admit some enjoyment is to perpetuate an equally insidious double standard [...]” (xvii). And from Denis Gile’s “Angel on Fire: Three Texts of Desire”: “Once the film ends, [the viewer of pornography] must return to the ‘real’ world. What is he to do outside the theater with his aroused libido? He can redirect it from the fantasy love object on the screen and to a real sexual partner who may or may not live up to the fantasy. He can once again repress his desire, or it can be sublimated into such tasks as writing this paper” (41). These little libidinal acknowledgments and scholastic qualifiers are set apart from the body of the text in the preface or introduction, and they function to declare the content of the tract itself: “Scholastic ruminations on the nature of pornography informed by acknowledgment of scholar’s own sexual drives appended. Please continue.”

I find this trend disheartening, but necessary, if only because the apologetic trend of these projects demonstrates that academic work on pornography must formulaically confront skepticism of intellectual legitimacy from inside the field. Let me offer this: in this chapter I do not engage in questions of the ethical or moral quality of pornography as a genre. I distance myself from these debates here because it seems whenever this topic is posed, there is no way out of it. Judith Butler’s work on pornography has demonstrated as much. Rather, I analyze pornography here based on how pornography represents itself as a genre *and* as a marginalized genre inappropriately read by dominant society. As in my previous chapters, I am little concerned with the truth of the many ideological claims evoked either implicitly or explicitly by rehabilitative Shakespeares or the cultural process of rehabilitation. Instead, I continue my work of analyzing the discursive conditions within which such truth claims may be posed. See: Judith Butler, *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative* (New York and London: Routledge, 1997); Denis Gile, “Angel on Fire: Three Texts of Desire” in *The Velvet Light Trap*, 16 (Fall 1976): 41-45; and Linda Williams, *Hard Core: Power, Pleasure, and the “Frenzy of the Visible”* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989).

Pornography and documentary relate on a mutually paradoxical relation to the real and what it means to represent reality as a documented event independent of the camera's presence. Pornography remains firmly anchored in the "real world," not least in the way the genre strives to make desired objects visible and achievable. It is obsessed with the real—with demonstrating the empirical reality of arousal and orgasm, even to the point of overdetermining these performances until they resemble no one's real life.⁷ Indeed, its "realistic" portrayal of sexual display or sex acts is pornography's central problem, both in terms of how it manages its own systems of representation as well as how it manages itself within legal restrictions.⁸ In legal contexts, visual images are more liable to be found pornographic for this reason, and anti-porn activism is no more committed than pornography itself to the idea that porn has real effects. For both pro- and anti-porn activists, as Judith Butler notes, "the real is positioned both before and after its representation: and representation becomes a moment of the reproduction and consolidation of the real."⁹ The realism of pornography is, however, always under strain. Despite this emphasis on the real, pornography tends toward the elimination of external or social reality. The real on which pornography relies is a claim about bodily presence, but this realism is still evaluated by affect: Do you believe the sex act actually happened? And did it get you off, or at least, did it get you going?

When it comes to the conjunction between Shakespeare and pornography, these questions mutate into something like: Are there really Shakespeare porn films? But are they really *Shakespeare* porn films? The notion of Shakespeare pornography might

⁷ Williams, Linda. *Hard Core*

⁸ Hunt, Lynn. "Obscenity and the Origins of Modernity, 1500-1800" in *Feminism and Pornography*, ed. Drucilla Cornell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) 355-80, 363.

⁹ Butler, Judith. "The Force of Fantasy: Feminism, Mapplethorpe, and Discursive Excess" in *Feminism and Pornography*, ed. Drucilla Cornell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) 487-508, 488.

sounds as novel as it does absurd. To be sure, though, these films do exist, and in prolific numbers. Pornographic adaptations of Shakespearean playtexts are as abounding as other subgenres of both pornography and Shakespeare adaptations. To cite a few: *Shakespeare In and Out* (dir. Peter Sushitari, 1999) is shot in “mockumentary” mode and follows aspiring Shakespearean actor Richard Longfellow as he works in the porn business but just until he gets his big break on the real stage, while *Live Nude Shakespeare* (dir. Michael D. Fox and Dale Evans, 1997) sets Shakespearean verse to strip tease and in the process points up particularly bawdy double entendres. *Shakespeare Revealed* (dir. Ren Savant, 2001), *Romeo and Juliet* and *Romeo and Juliet II* (dir. Paul Thomas, 1997 and 1998) document how rehearsing Shakespeare can act as a sexual contagion for the actors and spectators. Others adapt the playtexts to address specific modes of erotics: *West Side* (dir. Ren Savant, 2000) rewrites *Romeo and Juliet* and *West Side Story* (dir. Jerome Robbins, 1961) as a hardcore interracial sexual affair; *Romeo and Julian* (dir. Sam Abdul, 1993) references *Romeo and Juliet* to create a musical pornographic feature about two West Hollywood gay male lovers who experiment with polyamory and grapple with problems of infidelity; *A Midsummer Night’s Cream* (dir. Stuart Canterbury, 2000) imagines the green world as an erotic play space in which the fairies explore their lesbian desires, Titania realizes her affinity for bestiality, and a transgender Puck revels in self-love; *A Midsummer Night’s Bondage* (dir. Art Crow, 1993) images that the tensions between Titania and Oberon can be remedied by introducing the queen to the intricacies and pleasures of BDSM¹⁰ rope play; and *Taming of the Screw* (dir. Jim Powers, 1997) operates within a blatantly misogynistic imaginary that stages Peter and Kate’s

¹⁰ For clarification, I use “BDSM” as a complex acronym derived from the terms bondage and discipline (B&D, B/D, or BD), dominance and submission (D&S, D/S, or DS), sadism and masochism (S&M, S/M, or SM).

relationship in consensual sadomasochistic terms: he forces her to have sex with two of his male friends to break her will, and with two women so that she can learn to be a better lover, but because Kate has entered into an S/M contract with Peter, the viewer can only assume that she desires and enjoys the abusive treatment.

As the titles suggest, these films most often flaunt in their taglines that as *Shakespeare* pornography, they are merely calling upon Shakespeare as a pretext for depicting explicit sexual display. For instance, from *A Midsummer Night's Cream*: "What (Horny) Fools these Mortals Be." *Live Nude Shakespeare* ponders: "To Bare or not to Bare." Others purport to have little to do with Shakespeare beyond titular reference. *Shakespeare In and Out* markets itself as "The *Spinal Tap* of the Porn Industry," which plays up its parodic quality without any direct reference to Shakespeare.¹¹ *The Secret Sex Lives of Romeo and Juliet* (dir. Bethel Buckalew, 1969) offers in its tagline an advertisement of its acclaim: "Winner Best Erotic Film Cannes Film Festival."

Yet there remains a select group of pornographic adaptations that market themselves as rehabilitations of Shakespeare, direct engagements with either the playtext or Shakespeare's iconicity in a way that offers an historical intervention in the reception of the classics. In this particular context, rehabilitation takes the performative form of dislocating a subject—namely, the subject of Shakespeare's reception in the contemporary moment—from non-normative understandings—those that would understand Shakespeare as an emblematic figure of conservative cultural values.

Rehabilitation operates on the level of the spectator. We become the would-be docile

¹¹ My understanding of the parodic and the use of humor in pornography is heavily indebted to the work of Constance Penley and Laura Kipnis. See: Penley, "Crackers and Wackers: The White Trashing of Porn" in *White Trash: Race and Class in America*, eds. Matt Wray and Annalee Newitz (New York: Routledge, 1997) 89-112; and Kipnis, "(Male) Desire and (Female) Disgust: Reading Hustler" in *Cultural Studies*, eds. Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson, and Paula Treichler (New York: Routledge, 1992) 373-91.

subjects of this disciplinary mechanism. And the “normalizing” goal toward which these projects work demands of us that we internalize the inherent perversity not only of the Shakespeare playtexts, but more to the point, the ways in which Shakespeare’s cultural capital can and is refashioned in incredibly perverse ways—ways that destabilize the very notion that Shakespeare can indeed embody conservative values. The pornographic mode of rehabilitation in these films, then, is incredibly perverse, not in the least because they invert traditional understandings of normativity and non-normativity as related to conservative and liberal ideologies, respectfully.

In this chapter, I argue that select pornographic adaptations deploy Shakespeare as a figure of cultural legitimacy to rehabilitate their cinematic project, that is, to give their screen traffic the seeming appearance of being something more than explicit sexual images moving through celluloid and strung together with a tenuous or nonexistent narrative. For instance, in its tagline *Shakespeare Revealed* suggests that as a film it offers: “The classic laid bare.” *Tromeo and Juliet* (dir. Lloyd Kaufmann, 1998) crowns itself as playing fast and loose with historical accuracy: “Body Piercing. Kinky Sex. Dismemberment. The Things that Made Shakespeare Great!” Both films propose to strip Shakespeare of restrictive cultural conventions and return the playtexts to an original meaning, to reinstall his greatness. Of course, this is a perverse notion in of itself. Shakespeare functions as a paradigm of rehabilitation, not only in pornographic adaptations but in rehabilitative Shakespeares more generally, precisely because the signifier *Shakespeare* is imagined to occupy the acme of legitimate cultural authority. These films propose to reinstall his greatness by refashioning it in a particularly countercultural tone. The implication here is that Shakespeare has been made particularly

conservative in his contemporary image, an image that the films briefly suggest (and only in their taglines) as an attempt to unsuccessfully suture over the sexual perversity of the early modern period. The rehabilitative performance is also imagined to cut both ways. Perhaps porn legend Nina Hartley describes Shakespeare's transformative potential on pornography most succinctly. In an interview on her experiences working on *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Hartley makes the claim, "By adding Shakespeare to anything you automatically class it up."¹²

Can Shakespeare actually rehabilitate pornography, that is, "class it up" and out of the cultural position of bad taste spectacle? And can pornography actually say something meaningful about Shakespeare? Though slightly different questions, both intersect at the nodal point of spectator reception and the problem of history. The rehabilitative project that these films purport to enact exists on the level of appearance only. While filmic taglines like those of *Shakespeare Revealed* and *Tromeo and Juliet* propose that the films rehabilitate Shakespeare in some significant—or at least signifiable—way, neither film offers an engagement with the Shakespearean playtext that registers as particularly faithful or sincere. Rather, they parody their engagements by refusing to reference Shakespeare beyond a recycling of culturally conservative understandings of his playtexts. Parody, of course, *is* a mode of engagement, but one with a particularly ideological agenda, a desire to engage with ideology as its primary object of engagement. Popular parody of Shakespeare often coexists with the notion that Shakespeare has emerged in the contemporary moment as an aesthetic touchstone or ethical resource, and as such the object of parody is not so much Shakespeare as a historical figure or the

¹² As quoted in Douglass Lanier's *Shakespeare and Modern Popular Culture* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 43.

intricacies of playtexts themselves, but rather the ideologically restrictive systems of cultural value in which Shakespeare circulates as a historical figure and as the author of such intricacies.¹³ For instance, in both films the figures of Romeo and Juliet are condensed to the cliché notions in which they operate in contemporary mythology: the star-crossed lovers who ascend to cultural imagination as the arbiters of heterosexually normative romantic love. These films evoke Shakespeare and offer a tongue-in-cheek promise toward rehabilitative aim, to ultimately stage the claim that Shakespeare as a signifier has been subsumed within particularly conservative and heteronormative ideologies.

They stage the conjunction between Shakespeare and pornography, both as a refusal and an impossibility. In Richard Burt's analysis of Shakespeare pornography, he notes that the conjunction between the two forms inevitably results in failure: "For the pornographic to signify in relation to Shakespeare one would have to be able to construct a love scene, say between Romeo and Juliet, as specifically Shakespearean sex. I can see no way this could be done. While it is possible to 'porn' Shakespeare, it would appear that porn cannot be 'Shakespeareed.'" ¹⁴ It would seem, then, that ultimately Shakespeare has little to say to pornography, while pornography refuses to say anything about Shakespeare. The films I examine follow this logic, but to effect. Burt's conclusion registers a rather tired critical understanding of pornography as having nothing really to say. Zizek epitomizes this stance. He describes pornography as that which always goes

¹³ For more on popular Shakespeare parody, see Lanier's *Shakespeare and Modern Popular Culture*, esp. chs. 1 and 4, and Thomas Cartelli and Katherine Rowe's *New Wave Shakespeare on Screen* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007), esp. chs. 2 and 5.

¹⁴ Burt, Richard. "Deep Inside William Shakespeare: Pornographic Film and Video 'Classics' and the Castrated Gaze" in *Unspeakable Shakespeare* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998) 77-125, 121.

too far, and in the process “it misses what remains concealed in the ‘normal,’ nonpornographic love scene.” He writes:¹⁵

The unattainable/forbidden object approached but never reached by the ‘normal’ love story—the sex act—exists only as concealed, indicated, ‘faked.’ As soon as we ‘show it,’ its charm is dispelled, we have ‘gone too far.’ Instead of the sublime Thing, we are stuck with vulgar, groaning fornication. The consequence is that harmony, congruence between the filmic narrative (the unfolding story) and the immediate display of the sexual act, is structurally impossible: if we choose one, we necessarily lose the other. In other words, if we want to have a love story that ‘takes,’ that moves us, we must not ‘go all the way’ and ‘show it all’ (the details of the sex act), because as soon as we ‘show it all,’ the story is no longer ‘taken seriously’ and starts to function as only a pretext for introducing acts of copulation... The fantasy ideal of a perfect work of pornography would be precisely to preserve this impossible harmony, the balance between narration and explicit depiction of the sexual act, i.e. to avoid the necessary *vel* that condemns us to lose one of the two poles.¹⁶

For Žižek, the failure of porn lies in its dependence upon simulacra rather than seduction. Pornography “shows it all,” “real sex,” and for that very reason produces the mere simulacrum of sexuality, while the process of seduction consists entirely in the play of appearances, hints and promises, that is, textually seductive effects. It is notable that when discussing the ways in which pornography “goes too far,” Žižek’s language lapses into a system of euphemisms that would substitute mild or vague terms—“normal,” “love scene,” “gone too far,” “faked,” “show it”—for the harsh, blunt and sometimes offensive quality of the pornographic image. In this respect, his language performs what he argues: that pornography has no narrative, and thus cannot produce discourse because it doesn’t say anything. It only shows. While pornography traditionally has no or little narrative, this should not be confused with the claim that it has no teleology. Indeed, as Žižek’s

¹⁵ Žižek, Slavoj. “Pornography, Nostalgia, Montage: A Triad of the Gaze” in *Looking Awry: An Introduction to Jacques Lacan Through Popular Culture* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991) 107-22, 110.

¹⁶ *ibid.*

claim references, the problem with pornography is that it has multiple teleologies. It depicts multiple sex acts that achieve multiple climaxes, one after another.

But what might it mean for a pornographic film to stage its refusal to produce discourse on a subject, specifically a subject like Shakespeare who is considered as having produced some of the most culturally valued and recognizable narratives? To stage an impossibility is to construct that impossibility, and in the process of construction, establish possibility as a threat, one that continually haunts from the inside. To stage the impossible, then, is to open the door to the return of possibility. It is to insist on impossible possibilities as inevitable returns. The impossible may prove its own possibility against the subject's desire. In staging the impossible relation between Shakespeare and porn, these films go to great lengths to cordon off the language of the Shakespearean playtext from the visual semiotics associated with soft- and hardcore pornographic imagery. Ultimately, the staged impossibility of Shakespeare's rehabilitative influence on pornography becomes failed enterprise. Regardless of the pornographic will to irreverence, as I will argue, Shakespeare ultimately *does* function as a defiantly rehabilitative force in the representation of explicit sexuality and the forms that sexuality takes. It would seem that even when a culturally marginalized genre like pornography refuses to faithfully adopt Shakespeare as a rehabilitative tool, the rehabilitation takes place regardless, with or without authorization.

As a means into the transformative potential in the conjunction between Shakespeare and pornography, I limit my conversation on pornographic Shakespeares to adaptations of *Romeo and Juliet*. In what follows I trace the ways in which these adaptations stage the conjunction between Shakespeare and pornography as radically

disparate genres that are too opposed in cultural imaginations of legitimacy to co-exist in a hybrid form. I also call attention to the ways in which this staging of impossibility rebounds as a rehabilitative project.

Richard Burt has noted the adult film industry's intense attraction to *Romeo and Juliet* in particular, which has spawned its own pornographic commercial following.¹⁷ While these X-rated adaptations are prolific, I am most interested in the ways in which the pornographic imagination comes into conflict with the playtext's place in contemporary mythology. Jonathan Goldberg has brilliantly argued that in suspending systems of historical inevitability, there opens a possibility of reading what he calls "the history that will be," or the potential to disrupt teleological narrative that draw distinct and unyielding lines of development from the past to the present, as well as from the present to the future.¹⁸ There exists the possibility, in other words, of representing the myth of Romeo and Juliet without specifically situating history and cultural myth as inalienable. *Romeo and Juliet* is a story that popular culture, from Hollywood blockbuster to amateur porn, cannot resist telling. These stories are transformed in their reiterations from anecdote to archetype, from entertainment to myth. In the process of reiteration, as Goldberg suggests, the terms of historical inevitability can also transform. Pornographic retellings faithfully traffic in the myth of Romeo and Juliet as both romantic lovers and culturally defiant. They become mythologized figures who are faithful to one another but also whose rebellion is most pointedly directed against what Shakespeare is made to represent in the pornographic imaginations of these films: authority, propriety, age, and

¹⁷ Burt, *Unspeakable ShXXXspeares*, 89-91.

¹⁸ Jonathan Goldberg, "The History that will Be" in *Premodern Sexualities*, eds. Louise Fradenberg and Carla Freccero (New York and London: Routledge, 1996) 1-21.

respect for tradition. The latter explicitly caters to pornographic storylines, while the former seems to pose a threat to the pornographic economy.

The rehabilitative tensions of conjoining Shakespeare and pornography are most apparent in the figure of Juliet and the ways in which her sexuality comes to be encoded in the pornographic imagination. From cinematic open to close, her sexuality moves from what I consider here “perversely pornographic lesbianism”—ultimately disavowed girl-on-girl sex represented as preparatory for heteronormative love—to what is perhaps the most perverse mode of sexuality in a pornographic film: heteronormative sexuality in its most “vanilla”—or straightened out and decidedly non-kinky—and romantic representation. What I’m suggesting, then, is that Shakespeare becomes the unimaginable beard under which pornography traffics in perverse play. It represents a mode of performing Shakespeare in order to shock and tantalize the spectator; but ultimately, and in the process of representing Shakespeare as hopelessly conservative, the films offer the spectator a mode of pornography that cannot close the deal. The films I examine evoke Shakespeare as a figure that authorizes heteronormativity, but in evoking such teleological modes of sexuality, the films cannot escape the normative loop they wish to dismiss.¹⁹

¹⁹ For the sake of space, I have confined my argument specifically to pornographic revisions of *Romeo and Juliet*, but this should not suggest that pornographic handlings of other Shakespearean playtexts do not follow a similar logic. Though this is not necessarily a totalizing logic, other notable pornographic rehabilitations likewise produce perversely heteronormative teleologies, particularly displaced on female characters whose self-determination often thwarts easy understanding of successful performances of marriage or feminine duty. In this chapter I reference other films that work within a similar logic as *Shakespeare Revealed* and *Tromeo and Juliet*, but at the moment, they remain traces. As of yet, there is no critical work on the queerness of the heteronormativity operating in pornographic Shakespeares, but three scholars have worked to understand the larger systems of heteronormative logic operating within this subgenre more generally. See: Richard Burt’s *Unspeakable ShXXXspeares*, esp. ch. 2; Douglass Lanier’s *Shakespeare and Modern Popular*, ch. 4; and Courtney Lehmann’s “Out Damned Scot: Dislocating Macbeth in Transnational Film and Media Culture” in *Shakespeare, the Movie II: Popularizing the Plays on Film, TV, and DVD*, eds. Lynda E. Boose and Richard Burt (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), 231-51. I maintain that pornographic adaptations represent a relatively unexamined and productive site

Setting the Stage of Impossibility

Here I present two pornographic adaptations of *Romeo and Juliet* that I consider emblematic of the rehabilitative tensions in the larger tradition of rewriting the playtext into a sexually explicit vernacular. The first, *Shakespeare Revealed*, is a hardcore adaptation that follows a fictional cast of amateur actors as they work to produce a legitimate staging of *Romeo and Juliet* in modern dress. Like many adaptations that dramatize the rehearsal process of a Shakespearean playtext, the actors' lives begin to resemble those of their characters.²⁰ Primarily, the film's Juliet figure (conveniently enough named Julie) whose sexual proclivities transform from what one would expect in hardcore pornography—multiple partners, multiple positions, multiple orgasms—to a sexuality more in line with cultural understandings of Juliet as the sign of monogamous heterosexual union. The second pornographic Shakespeare, *Tromeo and Juliet*, is a decidedly parodic adaptation written in the fantastical vernacular of post-apocalyptic Manhattan punk subculture. Like Julie in *Shakespeare Revealed*, Juliet's sexuality becomes a point of contention in the adaptive project.

While the films differ in their mode of engagement with the Shakespearean playtext—one is a backstage adaptation and the other a vernacularization—both mark their cinematic engagements and disengagements in their treatment of the Juliet figure.

The Juliet comes to represent the anxiety of performing within two prescribed

wherein we might explore the ways in which heteronormativity desires produce queer logics as unintended byproducts.

²⁰ In the term “back stage adaptations,” I refer to film adaptations of Shakespeare's works like: *To Be or Not to Be* (dir. Ernst Lubitsch, 1942), *Children of Paradise* (dir. Marcel Carne, 1945), *Double Life* (dir. George Cukor, 1947), *Shakespeare Wallah!* (dir. James Ivory, 1965), *Throne of Blood* (dir. Douglas Hickox, 1973), and *Get Over It* (dir. Tommy O'Haver, 2001), to note only a few of these films. More specifically, pornographic films that adopt a “back stage” mode of adaptation include the films I have previously described: *Shakespeare In and Out*, *Live Nude Shakespeare*, and *Romeo and Juliet I and II*.

discourses, Shakespearean filmic tradition and pornographic film convention. What emerges from the ambivalent cinematic projects is a Juliet whose sexuality becomes an anxiety for the other characters as well as herself. For both films create a dreaming Juliet, an overly passionate young woman haunted by nightmares in which her sexuality threatens to become uncontrollable. The impossibility of mediating Shakespeare and pornography and the threats involved in such mediation condense in Juliet's dream sequences.

Shakespeare Revealed takes a radically conservative stance in the film's opening sequence by unequivocally positioning Shakespeare and porn as mutually exclusive terms. Both the narrative conflict and climax rest on the cast's ability to produce a successful performance of Shakespeare on stage, but hardcore sex continually undercuts these pursuits. The film opens with a close up of Julie who offers a sober recitation of the balcony speech, which goes surprisingly well until she is distracted by offstage sucking and slurping sounds. When she realizes that her castmates are having sex against the wall stage right, she breaks character and waits in frustration for the two to finish their vulgar scene, absolutely refusing to continue the serious work of Shakespeare in the presence of such unprofessional carnality. Julie wants to be a legitimate actress. At this point, the film lapses into pornographic mode. No longer discernibly Shakespeare-related, the film becomes hardcore sexual fantasy, including close up shots of various modes of penetration, multiple and frequent sexual positioning and repositioning, and, of course, the quintessential "money shot" (visible ejaculation, frequently on the body of the woman). When the hardcore sex scene ends, Julie attempts to resume her recitation. In yet another moment of deferral, an offstage voice demands that she take a break to regain

her composure. A confused Julie wonders why she is accused of losing composure, since she refused to perform during or participate in the sex scene, until she realizes she is standing naked on stage. With a scream of horror—which sounds curiously similar to a moan of ecstasy—she wakes to find the entire sequence was a dream.²¹

Julie's nightmares recur throughout the film. In one sequence, she cuts short her performance as six cast members are so turned on by her recitation of and dedication to Shakespeare that they collectively tag-team her. In another, she breaks character when she realizes that in addition to delivering a beautiful recitation she is also inadvertently riding the actor playing Romeo. These recurring dreams weave in and out of the filmic narrative to structure the hardcore sex scenes. They effectively blur the lines between the tenuous storyline of the cast's rehearsal sequences and Julie's anxious fantasies about Shakespeare's power to sway the wayward subject. Her nightmares of the mutual incompatibility between Shakespeare and pornography coalesce with her dream of becoming a legitimate actress.

Through the dreaming Juliet figure, the film establishes an easy hierarchy of cultural legitimacy. For aspiring young Julie, porn represents illegitimacy and that which would impede her ascension to professional success, while Shakespeare comes to represent the idealization of cultural transformation. Shakespeare belongs upstage and behind the proscenium; representations of explicit, hardcore sex belong offstage, in the wings, out of the way. Shakespeare represents the structure of social apotheosis, the climax of legitimacy, while pornography remains firmly set at the base level of cultural

²¹ Perhaps unsurprising, pornographic adaptations of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* also use dream sequences to structure sex scenes, and particularly all-female ones. For instance, *A Midsummer Night's Cream* opens with a soft fade in on a lesbian fairy grotto, where Titania teaches her train in the ways of self-love. The next shot fades out to an image of a transgender puck masturbating the now disappeared fairies, which offers the impression that the lesbian circle jerk was an onanistic transgender fantasy.

performance and spectacle. It is the destructive opposition to all that “doing Shakespeare” promises. By refusing to allow Shakespeare and porn to share the same space of theatrical spectacle, the film positions Shakespeare as a sublime object of desire, that which is repeatedly approached but never quite got at. The hardcore sex merely gets in the way of Julie’s dreams of becoming a legitimate actress, and the pornographic content merely defers the Shakespearean content.

And yet, the impossible conjunction between Shakespeare and pornography exists as a dream project, or more precisely a recurring nightmare. What does it mean to stage Shakespeare’s position of cultural legitimacy as a horrific dream? To stage the very impossibility upon which the film begins? Julie’s dream that dogged dedication to Shakespeare can become a mode of legitimization is representative of the programmatic impulses in the larger body of rehabilitative Shakespeares. Yet in the pornographic world of *Shakespeare Revealed*, this dream of legitimization becomes a haunting enterprise, a nightmarish trap. The question then becomes: how is it that for Julie a dream of legitimacy slides so easily into a nightmare of sexual impropriety? While it would offer little insight to put the character of Julie “on the couch,” it is important to note how her dreams function in the film. In *Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud describes what he calls “dreams of convenience”: “I am a good sleeper and not accustomed to be woken by any physical need. I can succeed in appeasing my thirst by *dreaming* that I am drinking, then I need not wake up in order to quench it. This, then, is a dream of convenience. Dreaming has taken the place of action, as it often does elsewhere in life.”²² In the case of dreams of convenience, discourses of psychological wish and motive are irrelevant; instead, Freud’s

²² Sigmund Freud, *Interpretation of Dreams*, trans. and ed. James Strachey (New York: Avon Books, 1998), 157.

discussion centers on the *effects* of the dream, how it function in the performance of everyday life: it allows one to continue dreaming. The dream of convenience functions as virtual satisfaction enacted through a surrogated, virtual performance.²³ In *Shakespeare Revealed*, Julie's dreams offer a convenient structure of substitution, displacing the Shakespearean pornographic sex for the *fantasy* of Shakespearean pornographic sex.

Like any other surrogate, however, Julie's dream fails to displace the latent dream content. In order to exclude Shakespeare from the explicit sexuality of the pornographic feature, the film must necessarily bring the two together. While the dream sequences position Shakespeare and pornography at odds, in the very act of staging their opposition the film must allow both the Shakespearean and the pornographic content to share cinematic space. While they are kept at bay on the theatrical stage, Shakespeare and porn must mutually occupy the cinematic focus before their differences can be established. In this way, then, the positioning of the difference between Shakespeare and pornography is as constructed as it is convenient for the parodic cinematic project. The performance of positioning the difference between Shakespeare and pornography becomes a failed project, one that the film flaunts in its very use of dream sequences as that which would cordon off boundaries of legitimacy. In order to cinematically represent Shakespeare and pornography as mutually exclusive cultural signifiers, the film must represent the two in conjunction before it can establish their differences, thus undermining their differences

²³ In my use of the term "surrogation," I take a cue from Paul Roach work on the relation between history, memory, and cultural performance. He describes surrogation as the process of substitution that is made as "actual or perceived vacancies occur in the network of relations that constitutes the social fabric" of a culture (2). This process is manifested through effigies, rites and rituals, and everyday practices, as well as theatre. "The key to understanding how performances worked within a culture, recognizing that a fixed and unified culture exists only as a convenient but dangerous fiction, is to illuminate the process of surrogation as it operated between the participating cultures" (5). See: *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996). For an example of the ways in which this term has been productive in opening discussion on contemporary Shakespeare, see Cartelli and Rowe's *New Wave Shakespeare on Screen*, esp. ch. 2.

on the level of legitimacy. If the conjunction between Shakespeare and pornography is a project of impossibility, then, it is a project of *staged* impossibility, which doubles back on itself.

While *Shakespeare Revealed* produces a staged disappearance of Shakespeare, *Tromeo and Juliet* parodies what it would mean to dismantle the hierarchy of legitimacy between pornography and Shakespeare entirely. The film plays upon the cultural anxiety that conjoining Shakespeare and pornography will erase social boundaries to dire effects. Douglas Lanier has noted the way in which the film blatantly spoofs Baz Luhrmann's *William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet* (which was released the previous year), and in the process of parody marks its refusal to signify within the economy of the popular Shakespeare film adaptation tradition.²⁴ But it also markets itself as a softcore feature that refuses to circulate within the pornographic tradition. Operating as a sort of pornographic anti-porn, the film represents explicit sexual content but only after recursively saturating its Manhattan cityscape with the threat of incest.

The film deploys the threat of incest to undermine its position both as Shakespeare adaptation and pornographic feature. In the film's opening sequence, the Tybalt figure, Sammy, tries to persuade his sister—with rhetoric and drugs—to have sex with him. He gropes her breasts while preemptively retorting her apprehension: “Heck, you, know, the way the world is now, we’ve got gang bangers, we’ve got perverts, we’ve got anorexia. Everything’s in style. If we just add a little incest into the mix, pretty soon the world will be like one great big hug.” Sammy fails to seduce his sister, and the incest taboo remains a threat until we meet Juliet. Her father, Cappy Capulet, repeatedly threatens to rape her, and it is suggested that he already has. During one of her “time

²⁴ Lanier, *Shakespeare and Modern Popular Culture*, 101.

outs,” Cappy drives home his lesson that Juliet should be a dutiful daughter and obey him by dressing her in pink leather wrist and ankle shackles, with a matching pillbox hat. The next shot cuts to a sweat drenched Cappy in his underwear and a dejected looking Juliet, which offers the fair assumption that Cappy has just raped his daughter. And in the most grotesque realization of the incest threat in the film, Juliet realizes only after she falls in love and has sex with Tromeo that they are brother and sister. While incest pornography may have its own cult following, the threat is hardly sexy in this film; instead, incest is positioned as a consequence of social deterioration, and this deterioration itself has consequences: at film’s end Tromeo and Juliet have given birth to three monstrous progeny. In this observation, I don’t mean to imply that the notion of social deterioration is not particularly sexy; queer theory as a field of critical examination itself suggest otherwise. Rather, to consider incest sexy in this film, we must also take with it heterosexual reproduction, which, as I mention earlier, is explicitly marked as the monstrous, but nonetheless final scene of the film.

In its recursive return to the threat of father-daughter and brother-sister incest, *Tromeo and Juliet* overdetermines cultural anxieties of what might happen when structures of legitimacy and illegitimacy collide, when the regulations of high and low, good taste and bad taste, and other binaries of cultural propriety are suspended.²⁵ To bring Shakespeare into a pornographic realm is to lose all that *Shakespeare* is imagined to signify: the foundations of humanity and civilization as we know it. In Michel Foucault’s

²⁵ Margaret Jane Kidnie refers to *Tromeo and Juliet* as “a vehicle for the articulation of distinctly end-of-the-century social anxieties” (112), and argues that the film reveals the historical and cultural determination of the “essentialist category of true love” (119). See: “The Way the World is Now: Love in the Troma Zone” in *Shakespeare, Film, and Fin de Siecle*, ed. Mark Thornton Burnett (St. Martin’s Press, 2000) 102-20.

formulation, incest “occupies a central place in western culture” in that “it is constantly being solicited and refused; it is an object of obsession and attraction, a dreadful secret and indispensable pivot.”²⁶ In *Totem and Taboo*, Freud describes the incest taboo as a foundational aspect of civilization because it governs the appetites, delays gratification of desire, allowing the “primal horde” to emerge from a competitive and murderous existence to one in which fraternal identification and restraint order the social community. It is important to note the ways in which Freud’s narrative of social regulation is prior in the sense that he constructs the process from prehistoric times through successive stages of social organization: from the “primal horde” to the return of patriarchy in familial and political organization. He must explain the stages of human history by construing a prior stage, as well as subsequent ones, in order to put together a coherent narrative, a causal explanation on the essential “truth” of the present time. To dismantle the incest taboo in the present time—or at least in the cinematic world of *Tromeo and Juliet*—is to deconstruct the originating premise: that the foundation of civilization needs the incest taboo. By first erasing cultural taxonomies of propriety and performance—like the mixing of Shakespeare and porn—the film takes the threat to its most extreme vision: that “everything’s in style.” Incest operates as a sardonic warning in *Tromeo and Juliet*: this is what happens when Shakespeare is made to perform pornography.

While *Tromeo and Juliet* constructs the conjunction between Shakespeare and pornography as a social crisis in the form of an erosion of the incest taboo, it is nowhere as horrifying as it is in representations of Juliet’s sexual experiences. The film condenses

²⁶ Foucault, *History of Sexuality. Volume One: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York, Vintage, 1990), 108-9.

the threat of social deterioration in the figure of Juliet. During the day, the dreamy young woman fantasizes of a life free from her father's control, one in which lines of sexual propriety are respected and publicly acknowledged; at night she becomes trapped in reminders of the pornographic cosmos in which she is scripted. In one dream sequence, she gives birth to rats that claw their way out of her belly. In another, she seductively approaches a rather Fabio-looking would-be lover, but recoils in horror when she discovers that his penis is actually a snarling serpent ready to devour her.

The film clearly represents Juliet as the female sexual hysteric who conflates her fear of the phallus with a fear of the penis, and the anxiety that she will be consumed and subsumed in the pornographic economy that surrounds her; it doesn't take Freud to see that. But here Lacan is helpful. He has famously argued that neither men nor women have the phallus because all subjectivity is constituted by lack upon entering the system of language. The alignment of phallus with penis veils lack in the male, a veiling which is facilitated by the organizing principle of kinship known as the Name-of-the-Father, that which equates the father with the Law of Kinship and so exempts the male from the "castration" instated by the Law of Language. In other words, the structuring language does not inherently accord lack to women and plentitude to men, but rather it comes to participate in ideologies of sexual difference through the equations of phallus with desire, and penis with phallus. As Lacan puts it: "[W]hen the Name-of-the-Father organizes the rules determining marriage, reproduction, lineality, abode, and inheritance, the Law of Kinship Structure exists in a contradictory relationship to the Law of Language" (42). The dominant fiction hides this disparity between "castrated" masculinity by equating the penis with the phallus, and in the process conflates the actual and symbolic father. Judith

Butler explains, “In Lacan...sexual difference is not a simple binary that retains the metaphysics of substance as its foundation. The masculine ‘subject’ is a fictive construction produced by the law that prohibits incest and forces an infinite displacement of a heterosexualizing desire.”²⁷

In the grotesque space of *Tromeo and Juliet*, psychoanalytic theories of sexuality are as parodied as Shakespeare and pornography. This film traffics in overdetermined visual literalizations, so it is perhaps unsurprising, but nonetheless grotesque, that the film deploys father-daughter incest to frame its metapornographic moments of parody. When Juliet wakes screaming after her nightmares, her father enters her room in both an excited and disciplinary mode. Misrecognizing her screams of horror as moans of ecstasy, he chides her, “How many times have I told you not to wake me with your screams? If you wake me with another of your screaming orgasms, young lady, it’s the time out room again.” After Juliet wakes in terror after her penis/serpent dream, her father incorrectly surmises, “You horny little girl. Probably dreaming of getting fucked in the ass, hmm?...You and those little punk rock friends, with juices coming out of every orifice in your body.” Having already been not-so-subtly conflated with the symbolic father, Cappy demands after his chiding that Juliet name herself aloud before he leaves her bedroom as “Daddy’s little Crenshaw melon.”

The paternal threat only ends when Tromeo and Juliet collectively and literally kill the pornographic father. Following the perverse logic of the film, the mode of sacrifice they choose is particularly Shakespearean—but not in the sense that they kill him according to Shakespearean plot. Rather, Juliet bashes her father’s face in with her sardonically enormous copy of the *Yale Complete Shakespeare*. The Shakespearean tome,

²⁷ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 37.

then, ushers the pornographic father of the law into the tomb. In the process, the film likewise bashes the spectator over the head with the notion that Shakespeare may disappear on the level of plot but he continually reappears as a symbolic remainder, one that the film uses toward violent ends.

Cappy occupies the clichéd position of the porn spectator, in that he cannot properly read the climax of feminine desire, and thus lapses by default to the fantasy that the female subject in the pornographic project must be experiencing pleasure.

Representing the female body has long been a point of contention in film studies, and pornography is little exception. However, in porn, the female body becomes a primary point of contention between the real and the simulacrum. Linda Williams has famously argued that one of the central contradictions of pornography is its “inability to make the invisible pleasure of woman manifestly visible and quantifiable.”²⁸ The crisis of the real becomes a particularly gendered crux, and the displacement of the real by the simulacra presupposes the inability of the female body to signify sexual pleasure. Elsewhere in the film, female sexuality becomes the insatiable and uncontrollable erotic mode. For instance, Tromeo’s former love object, Rosie, repeatedly switches out male lovers, whose subtle dismemberment marks the film as a joke on the critique of female sexuality as a male anxiety. At the Capulet ball, she parades around a young man who is missing his middle finger, in a semiotic wink to the paranoid fantasy of the *vagina dentata*, the sexually insatiable woman who depletes men of their sexual resources. The film calls attention to itself as porn—in this way becoming metaporn—and, in so doing, deflates the fantasy that signifiers of real sex should be taken as the real performance. And yet, as I will discuss, this move likewise makes it particularly impotent as a pornographic film.

²⁸ Williams, 56-7.

Pornographic Lesbianism

I made the point earlier that pornography is traditionally read by critics as having no narrative, and is subsequently considered unable to produce discourse. Porn scholars like Linda Williams have troubled this claim, arguing that whether or not pornography offers a recognizable narrative has little bearing on modes of spectator pleasure to be had. In *Hard Core: Power, Pleasure, and the "Frenzy of the Visible,"* she draws a connection between pornographic films and other Hollywood genres, primarily the musical.²⁹ Musicals use moments of affective excess—song and dance numbers motivated by an exuberant and uncontrollable emotion—to engage the spectator in ways that exceed cinematic narrative. In other words, evaluating pornography on the grounds of its narrative structure forecloses an understanding of how pornography operates on the level of spectator reception.

In traditional handlings of pornography, the spectacular and the narrative are positioned as mutually exclusive modes of receptive engagement and cinematic structure. The assumption is that the (most often already tenuous) plot of the film stops at the spectacle of sex, a move that *Shakespeare Revealed* overdetermines in its opening scene. The unmotivated visual excess of the spectacle of explicit sex acts overpowers the linearity of meaningful acts that narrative is meant to organize. What's more, the spectacular undermining of narrative is supported by the very materiality of cinematic production. Blocking changes, as do camera angles, sound, and often times lighting design, while the film focuses its cinematic energies on the choreography of highly visual sexualized bodies. Sex acts, in other words, are understood as compromising the holistic

²⁹ Williams, *Hard Core*, 123-138.

contextual reality of the film. Pornographic sex acts as a semiotic marker of the trauma of the failure of narrative, a trauma that pornography memorializes to spectator affect. Without narrative, the spectator engages with the film on the most affective, that is, carnal level.

Pornographic rehabilitative Shakespeares, however, trouble easy delineations between spectacle and narrative, and their presupposed mutual exclusion. In both *Shakespeare Revealed* and *Tromeo and Juliet*, there is a recognizable (and recognizably tenuous) narrative, one borrowed from the most boiled down pulp fictions of what *Romeo and Juliet* is about: boy meets girl, boy and girl fall in love, boy and girl defy societal regulations to be together. (In these films, like in most other references to *Romeo and Juliet* in contemporary culture, forget the lovers' suicidal end.³⁰)

While this structure offers a cursory narrative, the films deploy the Shakespeare narrative not so much as a pretext for the display of explicit sex acts, but as yet another display of irreverence and explicitness. Neither the narrative nor the sex acts stand in a pretextual relationship, but both serve as a mode of spectacle. Both the irreverent handling of Shakespeare as well as the sexual explicitness becomes a means of attracting the spectator. For better or worse, these films are far dirtier than Williams would have it, and more structurally complex than Žižek would recognize. They are far more concerned with spectacle than with mediating spectacle with narrative pleasure; Shakespeare pornography produces pleasure by both withholding and going too far. Thus, an understanding of their narrative structures offers little purchase here. As Diana Fuss has argued, “the idea that porn has no narrative or aesthetic pleasure beyond mere ‘getting

³⁰ The vernacular pornographic adaptation *West Side* is the only self-identified pornographic reworking of a *Romeo and Juliet* that incorporates Juliet's suicide.

off” has suggested the wrong criteria for evaluation.”³¹ Instead, an exploration of how the narrative becomes a spectacular attraction for the spectator offers an understanding of how Shakespeare becomes an unexpected rehabilitative force against the pornographic will to treat the playtext with irreverence.

If the staged disappearance of Shakespeare as a narrative drive becomes a means of attraction for the spectator, then reading these films as examples of “cinema of attractions” offers a means of exploring how the tenuous narrative structure operates in the films. In his concept of the cinema of attractions, Tom Gunning relates the development of cinema to forces other than storytelling, such as new experiences of space and time in modernity, and an emerging modern visual culture.³² He describes the cinema of attractions as one of display rather than storytelling. Attractions function more as exhibitions than voyeuristic projects, as they explicitly engage the spectator’s sense of wonder. They also have a different sense of time: rather than building upon a linear temporal pattern, they work to display and remove series of images, replacing what has been seen in the past with something new and not directly related. Gunning explains that, “Rather than a development which links the past with the present in such a way as to define a specific anticipation of the future [as an unfolding linear narrative does], the attraction seems limited to sudden bursts of presence.”³³ As such, attractions are characteristically brief and do not develop expectations based upon patterning. The suspense of attraction is not how but *when* it will occur: “The act of display on which the

³¹ Diana Fuss, “Visualizing Safe Sex: When Pedagogy and Pornography Collide” in *Inside/Out: Lesbian Theories, Gay Theories* (New York: Routledge, 1991) 373-386, 378.

³² Tom Gunning, *D.W. Griffith and the Origins of American Film: The Early Years at Biograph* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1991).

³³ *Ibid.*, 6.

cinema of attractions is founded presents itself as a temporal irruption rather than a temporal development.”³⁴

Shakespeare Revealed and *Tromeo and Juliet* operate similarly to Gunning’s understanding of cinema of attractions in that they call upon moments of Shakespearean narrative to engage and disengage the spectator on the level of Shakespeare. But there is an importance difference in their operation. In the cinema of attractions, present images are understood as replacing past ones, and thus engaging the spectator in an aggressively present manner. In the pornographic adaptation I examine, however, the past irrupts into the present. And while there is no discernibly linear temporal structure, there is a distinct and, more to the point, excessively troubling teleology in play.

The playtext comes in as a previously authorized text, an anxiety of influence to some degree, but in a way that patterns the film’s parody rather than organizing its narrative. Certainly, in *Shakespeare Revealed* and *Tromeo and Juliet*, the sexual display is anything but a short burst. Indeed, there are perhaps more predictable pornographic conventions motivating the lingering camera, like “money shots” (close up shots of usually male ejaculation) and “meat shots” (close-ups of the penis thrusting in and out). This patterning is not the same as declaring a narrative development. While lingering shots, meat shots, and money shots are a distinctive pattern in pornography, they have little to nothing to do with the Shakespearean narrative. The films also deploy a cursory version of the playtext structure to open and close the film, in order to represent themselves as decidedly *unShakespearean*—that is, in parodying the ways in which Shakespeare has come to represent heteronormative, romantic love in the present moment.

³⁴ Ibid., 7.

The films call upon the myth of *Romeo and Juliet* in their patterning of sex acts. Again, they pattern the filmic project without producing a discernable narrative; rather the film uses the clichéd understandings of *Romeo and Juliet* as a paradigm for heterosexual love in a way that creates a distinct teleology, from first meeting to heterosexual consummation. There are only two narrative moments these films follow: first, both Romeo and Juliet are sexually unsatisfied before they meet; and second, they fall in love. The two points of meeting and falling in love work like the lingering sex scenes. Instead of “money shots” or “meat shots” we might think of them as “plot shots,” moments of the playtext that irrupt in a way that creates conditioned spectator affect. What lies at the heart of Shakespeare pornographic features is a queer dialectic whereby the attraction that is still based upon the exhibitionist display of the body and taboo subject is both extended and patterned, but with a pattern of curiosity, shock, arousal, display, and satisfaction rather than one within a diegetic framework. Pornographic rehabilitative Shakespeare promise of rehabilitation is intensely if not queerly contradictory. It is torn apart at its very center by conflicting impulses that shatter even its strongest illusions of meaningful cohesion and allusions to meaningful commentary, as well as efficacious resistance or irreverence. For in claiming that Shakespeare is made to represent heterosexual love, the film must represent specifically Shakespeare heterosexual love. But such representation cannot be taken as previously naturalized. Rather, the “plot shots” of *Romeo and Juliet* operate as narrative interruptions to the multiple teleologies of pornography. Heteronormative Shakespeare becomes a representable “event” framed as a proleptic flash-forward, an anticipation that never quite

registers as a successful teleology precisely because it can never quite signify as a stable past moment.

These films, true to pornographic convention, are films that string together one explicit display after another, with plot points acting as bookends in the pornographic play on the playtext. However, in the stringing together, the very progression of organizing the sex acts, there emerges a distinctive teleology in both films. Juliet's sex acts are softcore and lesbian in the beginning of the film, and move toward decidedly monogamous heteronormative love, which ends both adult features. Each film ends with the Juliet figure defying the structuring forces around her in the pursuit of true love. While the relationship is not always consummated, it is nonetheless monogamous and heteronormative romantic love. And it is this romantically normative move that ends the sexual acts organizing the features. Everything before Romeo and Juliet's faithful coupling is fair game: vowed abstinence, incest, masturbation, same-sex flirtation. But the programmatic sexual act that opens these films is lesbianism. To mark the Juliets' sexual dissatisfaction before meeting her Romeo, both films depict the would-be heteronormative lover as involved in what the spectator can only imagine to be a long-term lesbian relationship with the films' Nurse figures. What is troubling however, is that both films rewrite true love not only as heterosexual sex but also as dependent upon the rejection of same-sex female sexuality.

In *Shakespeare Revealed*, Julie's nightmarish visions of hardcore Shakespearean sex are as programmatic as what follows: softcore lesbian sex. After each nightmare she wakes to the comforting arms of her roommate who plays the Nurse in the amateur production. The roommate's attempts to assuage Julie's terror initially takes on a

maternal semiotic. For instance, in one scene she brushes the frightened woman's hair. In another, she cradles Julie in her arms; and in a third, the roommate spoons Julie until she falls back to sleep. But what begins as a seemingly innocuous attempt at maternal comfort turns into the tease of lesbian sex. While the roommate brushes Julie's hair, for instance, the camera pans down to reveal that she is not wearing panties, and the camera cuts away as Julie moans with the delicate yet surprisingly erotic sensation of having her hair brushed. Perhaps it goes without saying that while the Nurse caresses Julie back to sleep, both women are, we are to assume, naked under the covers. The viewer recognizes movements of the women's hands beneath the covers, tantalizingly blocked from view, but the camera cuts away before the scene moves from anything other than highly suggestive. And while cradling Julie, the tender strokes of the topless roommate move from Julie's temple to her breasts, eventually to resemble softcore nipple play. Again, the camera cuts away from these scenes prematurely, leaving the representation of lesbian sexual activity as something more suggested than suggestive. These lesbian-lite scenes are as numerous as they are (barely) softcore; but unlike the film's parodic promise to present "The classic laid bare" by staging the impossibility of representing what Shakespearean sex looks like, it presents the lesbian sex scenes as (sometimes literally) undercover.

There are two disparate but interrelated effects of failed representation at play here. First, the film stages its (failed) refusal to conjoin Shakespeare and pornography, only to repeatedly represent the two in sexually explicit conjunction; second, the film represents lesbian sex in the pornographic cosmos as that which is merely nodded at, that which is ultimately evoked but placed out of the frame. This suggests that Shakespeare

lends rather easily to the pornographic cinematic imagination, but in a way that acts as an alibi under which heteronormative ideologies of the insignifiability of lesbian sexuality as a discrete, or identifiable mode of practice.

Julie's nightmare sequences end—and along with them, the hardcore sex—after she falls in love with the actor who plays Romeo in the amateur production. She ends her sexual affairs with her roommate, the Nurse. Instead, she finds love in the arms of the actor who plays her Romeo on and off stage. Their relationship is written in the semiotics of modern romantic love. For instance, after rehearsals the amateur Romeo greets Julie with a bouquet of roses. And she greets him in return with a loving embrace, rather than, say, a lap dance or blowjob. Romantic and monogamous courtship supplants her previously softcore lesbian desire.

While *Tromeo and Juliet* extends bad taste to every element of its satirical remaking of popular Shakespeare and pornographic Shakespeare, the film's assault on tastefulness is nowhere more apparent than in the systems of sexuality that circulate within the film, especially its representation of same-sex female sexuality. Critics have noted in the film that neither Romeo nor Juliet is particularly chaste in a way that satisfies cultural demands of the young lover as primers on heteronormative love.³⁵ In one scene, Tromeo flips through a stack of Shakespeare computer porn, perusing CD-ROM titles like "Merchant of Penis," "Et Tu Blow Job," and "Much Ado About Humping," to settle on "As You Lick It." The film represents Shakespearean sex as both a virtual and masturbatory fantasy, the unrealistic possibility. It also establishes early on that Juliet has had a long-term sexual relationship with Ness, the Nurse figure. While Juliet sits in her room trying to ignore the sounds of her father beating her mother downstairs, Ness

³⁵ Lanier, *Shakespeare and Modern Popular Culture*, 101; and Burt, *Unspeakable ShaXXXspeares*, 78.

sexually comforts her young ward. Sitting astride Juliet, Ness offers tender kisses until the dejected Juliet responds in turn, and the scene quickly moves to heavy petting and nipple play. The lesbian sex scene ends with Juliet and Ness in side-by-side position, face-to-face with eye contact locked, as they simultaneously stimulate each other to synchronized orgasm.

The film intersplices shots of Tromeo's masturbation scenes with Juliet and Ness's sex scene, which serves to analogize lesbian sex with the virtual Shakespeare sex and masturbatory practices of Tromeo. Cinematic editing represents the two as similar practices. Both become modes of non-sex, sex without reproductive threat, distanced from the sex that will be once Juliet and Tromeo finally meet in star-crossed fashion. Both become a virtual surrogate sexual act for romantic heterosexuality. The film goes to great lengths to represent the young lovers as virginal by positioning their early sex against their prenuptial sex. For instance, Tromeo chooses the "romantic love" option on his CD-ROM pornography rather than the other two available fantasies: pedophilia and coprophilia (fetish for fecal matter). In his sexual fantasy, marital fidelity must be promised before sexual intercourse. He vows marriage between his masturbatory groans and before he waves his computer cursor over the onscreen virtual woman's breasts. The film also positions lesbian sex as equally masturbatory by virtue of its distance from the love contract. Juliet briefly interrupts her sex scene with Ness by offering the confession, "When you touch me, I dream about men." Far from turning the scene into a parody of lesbian bed death, however, Juliet's confession of heterosexual desire proves the ultimate kink Ness needs to finish the sex scene with satisfaction. In the vast archive of sexual possibilities in *Tromeo and Juliet*, it is Juliet's sex acts that cannot signify on their own

terms, as the stably non-normative point of pasthood. Unlike Tromeo, Juliet engages in screen sex with someone other than herself, but in order for the film to maintain her figuration as the virtuous young woman, the lesbian sex scene is derided as both masturbatory and preparatory. During sex with Ness, Juliet thinks about men, and when she finally has sex with Tromeo, she is well prepared thanks to her lesbian nursemaid. In *Tromeo and Juliet*, after Juliet finds Romeo, she ends her sexual relationship with Ness, who watches the two having sex with a tear in her eye to mark her broken heart.

The act of placing lesbianism under erasure metacritically resonates with Shakespeare in a way that the films don't address, nor do I believe they recognize. Impossible, unthinkable, made invisible: the descriptive qualifiers that prescribe the unintelligibility of conjoining Shakespeare and pornography echo those used in early modern studies more generally in accounts of how female-female sexuality has been traditionally read. Some scholars of premodern gender and sexuality have argued that the term "lesbian" represents a perverse anachronism, one that works to suture over historical difference. As the argument goes: "lesbian" is a particularly modern neologism born in the drive to create taxonomies of erotic identity, and thus stands as an imposition on the historical text which could possibly occlude the nuances between different historical understanding of sex, erotics, and sexuality, and the relation between early modern representation and practice more generally. Most often such scholarly exclusions look to Foucault's claim in *History of Sexuality* that *scientia sexualis* begins a particularly modern, and specifically eighteenth-century, practice. Thus, for scholars looking for lesbians—or perhaps finding them in unexpected places—this poses a double problem.

First, *lesbian* invokes a translation issue, and *invisibility* introduces a problem in a representational crisis. How does one find that which is not there?

In her important work *The Renaissance of Lesbianism*, Valerie Traub addresses this two-fold problem by indexing what she calls a “renaissance of representation” that “contravene[s] the standard critical orthodoxy . . . regarding the invisibility of lesbianism in Western Europe prior to modernity.”³⁶ Traub explores the roles of women in the construction of sexual knowledge to make the claim that “the ways that social agents appropriated and deployed prior rhetorics . . . has been thus far an under-appreciated aspect of how the past was able to be queer,” and that the history of sexuality involves temporal crossings and identifications as well as ruptures and breaks.³⁷ (360). In her earlier article, Traub notes of the “(in)significance” of lesbian desire that female-female sexuality “only *became* oppositional when perceived as a threat to the reproductive designs of heterosexual marriage.”³⁸ Attempts to place lesbian sexual practices under erasure signify as a particularly threatened patriarchal practice, the response to an infringement on heteronormative ideological.

This helps us to understand more clearly that the failed lesbian love reflects back on the ways in which *Shakespeare Revealed* handles the figures both of Shakespeare and the spectator. In the same move, the film parodies porn conventions and the amazing cultural contortions that must mediate the positioning of Romeo and Juliet as heteronormative lovers. The effect is relatively simple and likewise incredibly troubling to the film’s cinematic project: in order to make the claim that Shakespeare cannot

³⁶ Valerie Traub, *The Renaissance of Lesbianism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 7, 3.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 360.

³⁸ Valerie Traub, “The (In)Significance of ‘Lesbian’ Desire in Early Modern England” in *Erotic Politics: Desire on the Renaissance Stage* (New York and London: Routledge, 1992), 150-169, 164.

represent lesbian sex, the film must likewise suture over lesbian sex as insignificant. In doing so, however, this film doesn't perform anything particularly new. The inability to represent lesbian sexuality in Shakespeare registers instead as the pornographic refusal to do so. Shakespeare's textuality becomes a displaced straw man, in other words, through which the film reproduces a relatively standard pornographic tradition of the disappearing lesbian.

Heather Butler has noted the popular pornographic convention, from softcore to hardcore, of deploying lesbian sexuality as a primer for heterosexual sex scenes. Exploring the figure of the lesbian with long fingernails in mainstream (read: heterosexual) pornography, she argues: "In the hetero cosmos, the lesbian does not exist as a discrete being, and lesbian sexuality seems to serve as a comical substitute, with her sex tools merely serving as a reference to the heterosexual counterpart. The 'lesbian,' as she is typically represented in heterosexual pornography, is most often used as a warm-up for sex between a man and a woman."³⁹ The film deploys the often-cited figure of female sexuality in pornography as the problematic component, the figure of spectral anxiety in the erotic economy. Typically the pornographic "lesbian" is conflated as "one of the boys" or a surrogate male figure whose long fingernails or dildos metonymically stands in for the penetrative organ of choice for her counterpart, the heterosexual, virile male.

While the same-sex female sexual displays in *Shakespeare Revealed* and *Tromeo and Juliet* act as preparatory to the heteronormative unions, they are decidedly not precursors to heterosexual sex. Lesbian sex precedes heteronormative love—romantic love between a man and a woman—rather than acting as a catalyst for heterosexual sex.

³⁹ Heather Butler, "What do you call a Lesbian with Long Fingernails? The Development of Lesbian and Dyke Pornography," 168.

The Romeo figure never watches the lesbian spectacle for sexual arousal. Even when a Romeo figure does encounter same-sex female sexual display, his reaction is one of disinterest. This is most evident in Ren Savant's recent adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet*, a full-length adult feature entitled *West Side* (2000), which in many ways becomes the sequel to his earlier *Shakespeare Revealed*.⁴⁰ Disgusted by her parental guardians' regular BDSM parties, Jules shares her frustration with her two best friends who collectively stand in for the Nurse figure. To comfort their friend, the two women playfully hold Jules down and strip her bare, as one bites her nipples and the other sucks her clitoris. Laughs and moans follow as the three-way progresses from soft- to hardcore. The Romeo figure, Ray, walks in on the scene to talk with his new love, and upon seeing her in an all-female three-way he shows neither shock nor excitement. When Jules notices Ray in the doorway, she simply leaves the bed and the two lovers get to the work of reciting the balcony scene in contemporary language. Pornographic lesbianism fails to function as a warm up for the Romeo and Juliet figures' sexual escapades, nor does it signify shame, disgust, or transgression in any way that can be understood as sexy. It simply does not signify according to pornographic tradition.

In pornographic *Romeo and Juliet* adaptations, Juliet and the Nurse programmatically fuck each other in ways that the films will not register as sexually enticing for Romeo. Less of a preparatory performance for heterosexual sex ("Practice makes perfect"), sex between woman registers as perversely naturalized ("That's just what girls do"). What makes lesbianism particularly pornographic in these films is not

⁴⁰ Ren Savant adapts *Romeo and Juliet* in *West Side* and *Shakespeare Revealed* by using a similar cast: infamous male porn lead Wilde Oscar plays the Shakespearean authority (in both films his authority is marked by the fact that he has a British accent). He is the father figure in *West Side* and the director in *Shakespeare Revealed*. Michael J. Cox plays Romeo in *Shakespeare Revealed* and the unidentified gimp at the Capulet fetish party in *West Side*. And Dillon Day plays the Tybalt figure in both films.

that it is simply contextualized within the pornographic genre. Rather, it is excessive of the pornographic projects. While the representation of lesbian sex in pornographic adaptations of *Romeo and Juliet* resembles what Heather Butler describes as pornographic lesbianism, it is important to note the perverse ends it serves. I consider the sexual relationships between the Juliet and Nurse figures *perverse* pornographic because it serves to end the films in a queerly normative tone, which is to say, a normative end that can never be realized.

In their refusal to operate by the rehabilitative guidelines establish in their taglines, *Shakespeare Revealed* and *Tromeo and Juliet* operate in an utterly clichéd mode of stringing together explicit sex acts with a narrative that is such a reduction of the Shakespearean playtext structure that it becomes almost unrecognizable. In the very move of irreverently effacing the playtext, however, the films operate within the very rehabilitative logic they attempt to reject. Both Juliet figures move from dissatisfaction with lesbian sex to monogamous and heteronormative union with their Romeos. By ending the film with the primary signifier of *Romeo and Juliet* in the contemporary imagination—heteronormative romance—the film forces the spectator to retrospectively reflect on the pornographic play that has come earlier. But because each film programmatically deploys a lesbian sex scene between Juliet and her Nurse, the films create a teleology, beginning with queerness and ending with heterosexuality.

The teleological drive toward heteronormative sex retrospectively highlights the function of both the lesbian sex acts as well as the heterosexual ones. In pornographic adaptations of Shakespeare that position Shakespeare within heteronormative terms, Shakespeare emerges as normative but only to the point of perversity. By the end of

Shakespeare Revealed and *Tromeo and Juliet*, Shakespeare is straight to the point of warping. And we are left to wonder, what sort of porn is this? In comparison to the previous “meat shots” and “money shots,” the “plot shots” rehabilitate these films into unrecognizable pornography, pornography which ends with monogamy, romance, and heteronormative love. In *Shakespeare Revealed*, the spectator is to assume that Julie and her Romeo have yet to have sex, but are “taking it slow,” for they have both learned from previous experience that rushing sex can ruin a relationship. In *West Side*, the lovers consummate their love, which is catalyzed when they realized their mutual distain for kinky sex. They revel in their transgressive “vanilla” lifestyle, in their normativity, which becomes the queer mode of sexuality in the adult feature. *Tromeo and Juliet* ends on a somewhat more interesting tone. Since Tromeo and Juliet are brother and sister, their relationship is certainly non-normative; yet the final scene shows the two settled down in suburbia with three children, as Shakespeare watches on the scene with a smile and laugh of approval. The perversity of pornographic lesbianism, then, lies in its function as the mode of sexuality that leads to normative ends, representations of sexual unions that are perhaps the most perverse displays of erotics that a pornographic film can display. Is there anything more perverse than a pornography that ends in unconsummated love or pledged monogamy?

While the representation of lesbian sex in pornographic adaptations of *Romeo and Juliet* resembles what Heather Butler describes as pornographic lesbianism, it is important to note the perverse ends it serves. I consider the sexual relationships between the Juliet and Nurse figures *perversely* pornographic because it serves to end the films in a queerly normative tone. Both films end as romantic comedies. The previous chaos and

confusion, moments of mistaken identity, and potential sexual digressions, are wrapped up in a heteronormative bow. But they certainly are not wrapped up neatly or completely in any stretch of the imagination. Much like Shakespeare's romantic comedies, the endings are never quite as exciting as the moments of chaos and confusion. As the screen fades to black in *Shakespeare Revealed*, the camera lingers briefly on the cast of actors as they take their final curtain call after having, it is suggested, successfully performed their updated version of *Romeo and Juliet* before a live theater audience. Just before the frame fades to black, we see in the corners of the frame the first rows of the foldout chairs standing in for the theater audience. The seats are empty. Like the imagined theater audience, the spectator cannot authorize the filmic project as a successful one.

Rehabilitative Desires

Linda Williams argues that modes of moving image pornography, especially those that traffic in hardcore conventions that would place the confessions of real sex acts in the cinematic forefront in what she calls the "frenzy of the visible,"⁴¹ enact what Foucault has called *scientia sexualis*, scientific or ordered discourses that develop procedures for telling the truths of sex, truths that are geared to a form of knowledge-power found in the confession. Foucault describes modern culture as proliferate with discourse that would purport to reveal the truth of sex, wrestle from it a confessional answer as that which it is. Along with the incitement to sexuality contained in the modern age's proliferating discourses on the subject of sexuality comes an increasing tendency to

⁴¹ Here Williams is working off Jean-Louis Comolli's term "machines of the visible" to destabilize Foucault's distinction between *scientia sexualis* and *ars erotica*. She explains, "Discourses of sexuality elaborated in the modern age reach a kind of crescendo in what film historian Jean-Louis Comolli has called 'machines of the Visible'...a cinematic hard core emerges more from this *scientia sexualis* an its construction of new forms of body knowledge than from ancient traditions of erotic art" (35-6).

identify and address many different specialized sexual practices. In the process of identification and address, there follows the implantation within the truth of sex certain perversions, acts that within the power structure of knowledge and pleasure fall decidedly without the scope of sexual truth. Yet this revealing is also a mode of production; power operates in regard to sex not simply by forbidding desire or refusing to recognize it, but by putting into circulation a whole mechanism by which “true” discourses of sex are continually produced, which in turn continue to produce the subject.

In this dialectic between production of discourses and the reproduction of the sexual subject, representations of sexual subjects come to reflect upon their construction and the systems of power that would purport to stabilize the truths of sexuality. The question in the conjunction between Shakespeare and pornography, then, becomes: what is the truth of Shakespeare sex, sex represented as specifically Shakespearean, sex demanded and unwillingly represented by an engagement, however irreverent, with the playtext? In *Shakespeare Revealed* and *Tromeo and Juliet*, the truth of Shakespeare sex is that it is perversely normative and depends upon the retrospective classification of same-sex female sexuality as insignificant. Which is the more perverse move, rewriting *Romeo and Juliet* into a pornographic vernacular, or the ways in which the playtext has been reduced to culturally sanctioned narratives of heteronormative love? Put another way: Which is the more troubling cultural process, pornification—the ways in which mainstream culture has become increasingly represented within pornographic aesthetics⁴²—or the process and compulsions of literary inheritance? The unwilling and unacknowledged rehabilitative project in these pornographic Shakespeares highlights the

⁴² For a discussion of the contemporary process of “pornification,” see Kaarina Nikunen and Susanna Paasonen.

perverse relationship between the process of becoming, the adoption—however unfaithful—of normative identities.

With these normative identities inevitably come anxieties of futurity. This is most clear in a more typical example of rehabilitative Shakespeare: a documentary television drama entitled *My Bare Lady* (Fox Reality, 2007). In the short-lived, four-episode reality drama, television producers and theater directors hold an open cattle call for female porn stars who wish to leave their pornographic pasts behind them in hopes of becoming legitimate actresses. The program directors select four relatively well-know porn stars and fly them to London to study serious acting, which unsurprisingly consists primarily of Shakespeare. In the final episode, the women perform in a variety show on London's West End, and, as a reward, the most advanced porn star is selected to recite the balcony speech, which is positioned as the ultimate test of legitimate female acting. Thus, the Pygmalion project positions Shakespeare as the generator of cultural legitimacy, and Juliet as the pinnacle of female propriety. But for the porn stars it's a hard road, one involving tears, tantrums, and the occasional girl-on-girl pillow fight. By the show's end, the women meet with minor setbacks and mild success; though the variety show attracts a huge audience, eager to see the women as porn stars rather than legitimate Shakespearean actresses. Perhaps most detrimental to the program's project, there is no clear sense of whether or not the women plan to leave their pornographic pasts for good.

I offer *My Bare Lady* as a rehabilitative Shakespeare that, like *Shakespeare Revealed* and *Tromeo and Juliet*, poses the provocative question: can Shakespeare rehabilitate pornography? Is the Shakespearean playtext sexy enough to seduce the porn star from a career of sex work? *My Bare Lady* represents the contested interplay between

terms of authority within which rehabilitative Shakespeares circulate more largely. It exploits the contemporary belief that Shakespeare and porn are conflicting discourses, and in the space of such conflict, rehabilitation is possible. Such a move depends upon two presuppositions: first, that Shakespeare and pornography are indeed mutually exclusive discourses; and second, that Shakespeare acts as a transitional discourse that can cross into the pornographic without losing categorical integrity and legitimacy. For rehabilitative subjectivity is a process caught between opposing discourses. The act of disowning one discourse, say a lifestyle that includes recording your sexuality on celluloid, for another, say a lifestyle in which your sexuality is kept under the covers, becomes a project of disavowal. Through the rehabilitative imperative comes the demand that a subject must perform a causal transformation built upon the fantasy of turning from and to discourses, leaving one for the other. The causal narrative is found in the act of turning, the performance of choice.

As a cultural performance, rehabilitation is a never-ending process of reiteration. To perform rehabilitation one must always be turning, must always be establishing and re-establishing the teleological markers of the causality of transformation. The subject, in the desire to perform his or her rehabilitation—which is the same as saying that the subject is demanded to perform the self-efficacy and self-authorization of his or her rehabilitation in a way that meaningfully signifies—must continually circulate within this topsy-turvy roundabout. The subject must always come to be represented as the intersubject in the future perfect: the subject who will no longer be caught between discourses, who will no longer signify the site of linguistic conflict and contestation. By virtue of rehabilitation's performative structure, then, the subject is always caught

between discourses, and will always come to be represented within the future perfect, always already the subject in the process of establishing the causal teleology demanded by rehabilitative transformation. To take *My Bare Lady* as an example, the would-be legitimate actress will always have been a porn star who will always work to become a legitimate Shakespearean actress. Regardless of the number of West End performances she lists on her headshot, she will always be represented within a process of rehabilitative becoming.

Yet in the season finale of *My Bare Lady* (entitled “Another Opening”), the program undercuts the celebration of the women’s success with what we might think of as the rehabilitative hangover: the dulling discomfort that comes from excessive indulgence in belief that Shakespeare is a transcendental signifier, and the anxiety over the direction that his influence might take. In a particularly un-pornographic concern, the program poses the question of what happens the morning after. The women perform a successful variety show and do some justice to the Shakespeare playtext, but after a night of celebration, what then? Will the women return to pornography, or will they pursue legitimate (read as non-pornographic) performances? (Presumably viewers want to know what happens next because *My Bare Lady 2* is currently in post-production.) In the previous chapters I have outlined the cultural fantasies that underwrite the proposition that Shakespeare can rehabilitate marginalized subjects, those subjects who exist within a queer positionality to structures of authority and legitimacy, and the anxieties such progress narratives perform over the futurity of the subject of rehabilitation. If Shakespearean theater owns a transformative power, then the directionality of such transformation becomes a central concern in the rehabilitative imperative.

Pornographic adaptations of *Romeo and Juliet* push the process of identifying by Shakespeare to its most perverse limits. The teleological progression of lesbianism to heteronormative sexuality in the representation of the Juliet figure demonstrates that, against its will, pornography is indeed susceptible to Shakespeare's rehabilitative powers. What does it mean that Shakespeare rehabilitates the pornographic imagination seemingly against its will, and defies its attempts at irreverence? One must wonder, then, about the issue of agency in successful rehabilitation. For subjects marginalized in systems of cultural representations, like immigrant youth communities and inmates, when Shakespeare is presented as a rehabilitative tool, was it possible that he was a tool unwanted, undesired, not asked for but put on them in the first place, a tool that rehabilitative subject learn to love out of necessity? These porn adaptations both trouble their positioning of Shakespeare as the pinnacle of cultural legitimacy and the ways in which his legitimacy is bestowed upon—which begins to sound suspiciously similar to *forced upon*—wayward subjects.

And yet pornography is decidedly absent in considerations of how Shakespeare's position as cultural authority comes to be represented in audiovisual artifacts in the contemporary moment. The pejorative treatment of Shakespeare pornography is at least in part a result of two simple observations of texts like *Shakespeare Revealed* and *Tromeo and Juliet*. First, they are utterly vulgar in general and their representations of female sexuality are incredibly troubled in particular. Simply put: these are bad films, not bad because they are pornography but because they are relatively boring pornographic films. Second, they don't seem to have much to say about the Shakespeare playtext. They

represent Shakespeare as “turned out” in the most literal and unapologetic means possible.

Let me be as explicit here as the films I treat in this chapter: pornography, indeed, has nothing to say about the playtext; but it speaks volumes on how the playtext is received and transmitted in the contemporary moment and the ideological imperatives that maintain Shakespeare’s position as a standard of cultural legitimacy. The films produce a series of character-effects that revolve around the figure of the dreaming Juliet. She can occupy the position of heteronormative and romantic lover only if at least one of two ideologically charged reductions precedes the claim. Either the bawdy interactions with her Nurse are edited out of the playtext more generally, or we decide more specifically that bawdy interaction between women are not necessarily sexually charged but are alternately either innocuous or serve a heteronormative teleology. Like any other either/or structure, one is left with only the possibility of making an incriminating choice: either reduce the playtext or rehearse tired reductions of queer sexuality to an indiscrete or insignificant performance.

Romeo and Juliet obsessively questions what it means to act within prescribed and pre-authorized narratives and literary histories in its obsessive return to the metaphor of performing “by the book.”⁴³ Thus, *Romeo and Juliet* offers a complex historical examination of the tensions between agency (particularly sexual) and prescription. For all the complexities of the playtext, however, *Romeo and Juliet* has also entered the point of cultural legend to the point that is repeatedly reduced to cultural clichés of youthful rebellion, loyalty, fidelity, and romantic love. “Romeo” has become a pejorative form for

⁴³ In his chapter on *Romeo and Juliet* in *Shakespearean Metadrama* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1971), James Calderwood was perhaps the first critic to point out that this play contains an unusual number of references to books.

a gigolo, seducer, man-whore of unreliable disposition. But what of “Juliet”? In her analysis of popular adaptations of the playtext, Phillipa Hawker notes that Juliet has nearly vanished in the cultural imaginary. She observes:

The figures of Romeo and Juliet are already inscribed into contemporary high and popular culture, in contexts ranging from *West Side Story* to Ashton’s ballet, from Bugs Bunny cartoons to the Everclear song on the film’s [Luhrmann’s *William Shakespeare’s Romeo + Juliet*] soundtrack. How many countless times has the balcony scene been the subject of parody and homage? How many overt references are there in popular song to the figure of Romeo? (And, for that matter, isn’t it interesting how the word has acquired a pejorative, dismissive meaning: a ‘Romeo’ is a gigolo, a Latin lover of unreliable disposition. Juliet, however, has disappeared from view, remembered by little more than the bridal accessory known as the Juliet cap).⁴⁴

If “Romeo” can signify a gigolo in the contemporary moment, could Shakespeare remain culturally valuable as a rehabilitative tool if “Juliet” became shorthand for slut or lesbian or bi-curious fetishist? The pornographic films answer this for us: no, this would have absolutely no impact whatsoever, but to take the chance is to misrecognize how Shakespeare’s Juliet functions in the contemporary moment. The question then doubles back on the spectator. Why is it impossible to have a lesbian Juliet without also inevitably including heteronormative teleology? The very performance of rehabilitation suggests an answer. Shakespeare cannot occupy the position of normativity without the use of multiple supplements. And in the process of supplementing Shakespeare, rehabilitation inevitably (though without the authorizations of the rehabilitative projects) represents Shakespeare as inherently exceeding the normative ends to which he is made to perform.

⁴⁴ Phillipa Hawker, “DiCaprio, DiCaprio, Wherefore art Thou, DiCaprio?” in *Meanjin* (March 1997): 6-15, 9.

CHAPTER V

REHABILITATING THE CLASSROOM: PEDAGOGY AND THE PROBLEM OF HISTORY

Rehabilitative Shakespeares produce uncanny effects, both in their programmatically and politically troubling utopian concept of what it means to appropriately perform subjecthood, and in terms of the reception effects they produce. They familiarize the spectator with Shakespearean agency in places where we least expect to find it, like inner-city community projects, elementary afterschool programs, prison learning annexes, and even pornographic film. As I will argue in this chapter, they also work to *defamiliarize* the ways in which Shakespeare is used in the space we are most inclined to imaginatively situate his works, namely in the literature classroom. While the reach of rehabilitative Shakespeares is as socio-contextually vast as it is diverse, the terms of its conceptual intervention remain constant. Rehabilitative Shakespeares work to educate social bodies. Rehabilitation is a performative process that intends to create specific products, namely the (re)production of knowledgeable subjects who inhabit prescribed identity positions authorized by ideologies of social success and futurity.

In their methodological relation between social futurity and education, rehabilitative Shakespeares echo the long-held cultural aphorism, “knowledge is power.” Education is propped up as that which may be leveraged by divergent marginalized communities to combat modes of cultural deprivation and foster social inclusion. In

previous chapters I have argued that rehabilitative Shakespeares assert the analogical principle that knowledge of Shakespeare produces self-knowledge, a formula that neatly encapsulates their investments in the belief that dramatic mimesis can effect real psychological and social change. As subjects learn Shakespeare, they are also imagined to gain self-knowledge of the ways in which they engage with the social and to better understand the socio-cultural systems in which they are situated *as subjects*.

Understanding conditions the possibility for upward mobility, or so it is claimed. To this end, facilitators work with subjects to look up the meanings of unfamiliar words and to teach basic reading skills so that subjects may understand anachronisms in the playtexts and come to terms with Shakespearean themes that bridge early modern and contemporary historical moments. Facilitators also historically situate the playtexts in the early modern period by informing subjects about cultural dynamics like early modern associations of actors with criminals, anti-theatrical prejudices that led to the closing of the theaters, and the early modern theatrical convention of using all male actors—modes of historical contextualization many of us who teach Shakespeare also use in our own educational programs.

Perhaps one of the most troubling implications of rehabilitative Shakespeares is that they dramatize not only utopian fantasies of what it means to be a good person, but that they operate all too similarly to our own performances. It is my contention here that the a priori presumption that knowledge initiates a performative, and thus potentially transformative, effect effaces the distinction between these cultural artifacts and the educational processes that many of us support in the Shakespeare classroom. Do we not educate our students with the hope that they alter in some way, that they will understand

social or aesthetic systems differently, more clearly, in ways we imagine as better, and perhaps necessary, for successful social survival? As educational facilitators and course designers, we structure our process of educating students with particular goals in mind, whether we want them to understand what the university demands of them (as may be the case in courses geared toward first-year college students), or conventions used in academic settings and specific disciplines to structure an effective argument (as tends to be the case in courses that count toward major or minor requirements). Perhaps one of our goals is to teach students discourses that people who study literature use to talk about literature; some of us may want to teach students a “hermeneutics of suspicion,” or persuade them to understand the necessity of questioning cultural “truths,” how those truths are produced, and how they can develop critical thinking skills they may take with them beyond the college years. Toward these ends, we structure our syllabi by subdividing them into units which, taken together, illustrate a development of thought we believe most appropriate for students to achieve. We offer information on Shakespeare’s works, from vocabulary and analytical reading techniques, to important dates and the names of historical or literary figures evoked in his works. Ideally this informational basis will offer our students the capacity to perform the development of their thought. We demand that students perform various tasks, from attendance and participation, to presentations and writing assignments, and we evaluate them based on these performances. And the act of evaluation affords us the opportunity to offer feedback on how students might improve in the future.

Foucault reminds us that the social spaces in which we find Shakespeare, like prisons and schools, are not so disparate when we consider the mechanisms of discipline

and social reproduction that both institutions employ; he writes, “The prison is like a rather disciplined barracks, a strict school, a dark workshop, but not qualitatively different.”¹ Both education and imprisonment work to correctly train individual subjects in mass, and in the process both become localized institutions of power that produce culture by reproducing individuality through communal morality and ethics. In “Discourse on Language,” he writes, “Education may well be, as of right, the instrument whereby every individual, in a society like our own, can gain access to any kind of discourse.”² However, power is internally contradictory, always that which creates and also subjugates; he elaborates: “But we well know that in its distribution, in what it permits and what it prevents, it follows well-trodden battle-lines of social conflict. Every educational system is a political means of maintaining or of modifying the appropriation of discourse, with the knowledge and powers it carries with it.”³

The process by which education is received and transmitted becomes the point at which the disciplining function of rehabilitation intersects with the discipline of Shakespeare studies and its function in the social institution of the university. In other words, our performances in the classroom follow the structural demands of the rehabilitative projects I have examined throughout this project. We educate to rehabilitate: we teach student-subjects about Shakespeare, and in the process we also teach our students to internalize modes of performing their role as student. And we use the mechanisms of evaluation, ideally, to create more knowledgeable subjects. These mechanisms allows us to exercise our power of judgment in a way that disciplines

¹ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 233.

² Foucault, “Discourse on Language,” in *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon, 1972) 215-37. 227.

³ Ibid.

students to understand, which is to say internalize, systems of normalization—how a successful student/subject behaves. But as I have demonstrated throughout this project, rehabilitation is a performative process, and as such doubles back on itself in the conceptual space of its reiterative quality. Rather than producing properly disciplined subjects—subjects who inhabit normative identity positions—rehabilitation, as I argue, instills in the subject a *queer subjectivity*, or sense of self that never quite fully inhabits a normative identity position precisely because that sense of self is performative.

To frame education as a performance of rehabilitation is to call attention to the disciplining functions we reproduce in the process of teaching our student-subjects appropriate methods whereby they might successfully navigate the academic institution. It is to question the ideological systems that structure the enduring understanding we hope students will take with them once they have graduated. The audiovisual artifacts I explore here suggest that it's time for us to take a pedagogical pause to question the effects of our performances. In this chapter I examine a collection of rehabilitative Shakespeares concerned with critiquing the systems of education within which Shakespeare is taught today.

In Search of Shakespeare (dir. David Wallace, 2003), *Shakespeare's Happy Endings* (dir. Stephen, Leslie, 2005), *William Shakespeare: A Life of Drama* (A&E Biography, 1996), *The Shakespeare Mystery* (dir. Kevin Sim, 1989): the titles of these documentary projects transparently suggest their cinematic concerns. These are unapologetically revisionist media biographies of Shakespeare. Taken together, they suggest that his life and works have become dangerously reified in the present because of dominant cultural understanding of history as built upon systems of alterity; the

implication here is that historical alterity ascribes to Shakespeare an identity of otherness that forecloses the possibility of affective relating to his works today. While biographical criticism has fallen somewhat out of vogue since Foucault's theorization of the "author-function" as always working at a remove from the reality of the writer,⁴ the desire for historical authenticity remains a dominant component in critical discourses in the twenty-first century, famously illustrated by Stephen Greenblatt's "desire to speak with the dead."⁵ These documentaries also desire to speak with the dead. In fact, they flaunt this desire by calling attention to their performance of history-telling as a fantastical and contingent construct built upon affect rather than event, identificatory sameness rather than temporal difference, or what Carla Freccero calls "queer historiography."⁶ More important to their multimedia projects, they work to understand what produces this desire to speak with Shakespeare across historical lines and the identity-effects that such conversations may, however inadvertently, produce in the student-subject. While all rehabilitative Shakespeares document educational projects, this specific collection is produced primarily for classroom consumption. Most are accompanied by lesson plans designed for instructors to supplement in-class viewing and listening. They are divided into thirty- to fifty-minute segments to fall within the time frames that structure the classroom experience. And they are intended not only to, in the words of Sir Philip Sidney, "teach and delight," but also to offer educators a model of teaching the history of Shakespeare. Their primary desire is to reestablish the pleasure of engaging with Shakespeare that we seem to have lost. The website for *In Search of Shakespeare*, for

⁴ Foucault, "What is an Author" in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interview*, ed. Donald F. Bouchard (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1977), 113-38.

⁵ Stephen Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations: The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 1.

⁶ Carla Freccero, *Queer/Early Modern* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006).

instance, offers a section for educators that outlines ways to “teach Shakespeare without the drowsiness.”⁷ To paraphrase Foucault, the creation of knowledge, which is always bound within systems of delineating truth and organizing proper acts of truth telling, produces pleasure.⁸ The lesson plans that accompany *In Search of Shakespeare* suggest that the consumption of received systems of knowledge, in this case the historical alterity of Shakespeare, creates apathy, or what we might think of as the reduction of pleasure. It is the drowsiness of historical difference, its ability to lull students into a dazed and numbed state, which becomes the point against which these bio-projects resist. And within this resistance, the film suggests, lies the pedagogical pleasure.

In their belief that the pleasure of education depends upon a resistance to received systems of history, this collection of rehabilitative educational Shakespeares echoes the very historical discourse that they work to understand and make understandable. Like these artifacts, early modern theatrical and anti-theatrical debates were concerned with the types of education that dramatic mimesis performs, and the forms that such education might take outside of the theatrical space. For instance, in *The Defence of Poesy* (1595), Sir Philip Sidney counters popular early modern anti-theatrical sentiments that condemn public theater as an imitative art that leads to social depravity.⁹ Stephen Gosson epitomizes this stance in his polemic *Playes Confuted in Five Actions* (1582), which argues, “Playes are no Images of trueth, because sometime they handle such thinges as never were, sometime they runne upon truethes, but make them seeme longer, or shorter,

⁷ see: <http://www.pbs.org/shakespeare/>

⁸ Foucault argues that modern society has come to desire the act of knowing desire: “We have at least invented a different kind of pleasure: pleasure in the truth of pleasure, the pleasure of knowing that truth, of discovering and exposing it, the fascination of seeing it and telling it, of captivating and capturing others by it, of confiding it in secret, of luring it out in the open—the specific pleasure of the true discourse on pleasure.” See *History of Sexuality. Volume One. An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage, 1990), 71.

⁹ Philip Sidney, *The Defence of Poesie* (London: James Roberts, 1595).

or greater, or lesse then they were, according as the Poet blowes them up with his quill.”¹⁰ Because theater alters history for entertainment purposes by stretching, condensing, or altogether fictionalizing “actual” events, the argument goes, theatrical representation is a corruption of truth. More damning, Gosson argues that the theater teaches the spectator to engage in other forms of corruption, most notably apostasy. For Sidney, history acts less as a problem in the design of theatrical representation than it does to anti-theatricalist understandings of the social work that theatrical representation performs. The crux of his *Defence* lies not in its resistance to critiques of theater as imitative, but rather in his retort that theatrical representation performs the most efficient means of educating mass communities on cultural imperatives precisely because it resists easy delineation of history as constructed on actuality, factuality, or inevitability. He explains that “right Poets....be they which most properly do imitate to teach and delight; and to imitate, borrow nothing of what is, hath been, or shall be; but range only, reined with learned discretion, into the divine consideration of what may be, and should be” (sig.C2r-v).¹¹

As Jonathan Goldberg has argued, when the question of the future is at stake, the “history that will be” is momentarily arrested or taken out of a linear temporal structure of inevitability, and is subsequently opened up to an endless number of potential

¹⁰ Gosson, *Playes Confuted in Five Actions* (London: Imprinted for Thomas Gosson, 1582), sig.D5r-v. Gosson dedicated his later tract, *Teares of the Muses* (1591), to Sidney. Scholars have suggested that Gosson’s works directly inspired Sidney’s retorts in the *Defense*. See: Jean E. Howard, *The Stage and Social Struggle in Early Modern England* (New York and London: Routledge, 1993) 42; and Arthur F. Kinney, *Markets of Bawdrie: The Dramatic Criticism of Stephen Gosson* (Salzburg: University of Salzburg Press, 1974) 44.

¹¹ Sidney’s aphorism “teach and delight” also works within a historicized discourse of the cultural work of education. The phrase evokes Horace’s *Ars Poetica* and works within an Aristotelian model of mimesis.

interpretations and outcomes.¹² What Goldberg describes here as the queering of history finds affinity with Sidney's understanding of the relation between history and the educational power of theater. For Sidney, the break between historical alterity and representation imbues poesy—and by extension here, drama—with a potentially transformative pedagogical power. “Right poets”—those who would understand and perform through their poetry the transformative potential of their craft—work within fantastical imperatives of futurity, notions of how life might be if only the spectator could learn to interpret theatrical spectacle as possibility rather than historical event, that which might be rather than that which has indeed happened before. The distance between representing what is and what should be, then, offers a more palatable mode of social education. Poesy “is the food for the tenderest of stomachs” (sig.Ev), he writes, and it teaches the spectator how to embody virtuous action and behavior, how to perform proper subjecthood. The distance opens a space of mediation in which the spectator may question what transformations are necessary for such possibility to be realized.

The revisionist biographies I examine here document the pleasures of resisting dominant modes of historical alterity and the identificatory possibilities that emerge in the performance of resisting difference. But they also document the political implications of working to identify across historical boundaries, implications worth attending to as we evaluate the pedagogical models they offer. I take *In Search of Shakespeare* as my primary point of analysis, as it most aggressively articulates the gratification and danger of identifying across historical boundaries. In its search for the pleasures of historical sameness, what emerges is what I call here a mode of “excitable pedagogy,” or the

¹² Johnathan Goldberg, “The History That Will Be” in *Premodern Sexualities*, eds. Louise Fradenburg and Carla Freccero (New York and London: Routledge, 1996), 1-22.

performance of educational method and practice that exceeds the deliberate effects that instruction intends. For *In Search of Shakespeare* intends to remind us of the pleasure that can be found in historical aporia, those moments in which we cannot know the past but we can revel in our state of not-knowing and the identificatory possibilities it opens. But in framing its search within decidedly presentist terms, it carries with it, rather uncritically, the baggage of cultural imperative, or current ideologies of what identification *should* look like. Time and again, when the film confronts moments of unknowability it sutures over the perversity of its own project by representing Shakespeare as hopelessly “straightened out,” made palatable for classroom and cultural consumption. What emerges by the project’s end is an image of Shakespeare as unyieldingly heterosexual and paternal, the father figure of the contemporary moment, an identity with which we are all encouraged to identify.

In Search of Shakespeare offers a metacritical opportunity for us to rethink the ways we teach Shakespeare, how we position him in history, and how this may in turn serve to authorize and deauthorize identity positions in the present which our students inhabit. Might we identify at times with either the historical methodology proposed in this film, or the desires that drive this methodology? Might it mirror back to us an image, however fractured or incomplete, of our professional selves and the personal desires by which that self is constituted? And if so, how possibly do we image it is to transform ourselves by resisting the mimetic images on screen that dramatize how the life and work of Shakespeare should be taught?

The Problem with History

Linda Charnes has argued that the signifier *Shakespeare* has experienced a radical displacement over the past two decades, at least in part because of the expansive adaptational uses his name has been made to authorize. She notes that the cultural function of *Shakespeare* today “has become a general equivalent, a medium of exchange, pure (that is, so saturated with itself as to signify nothing but ‘itself’) ideological value available to authorize whatever ‘structures of feelings’ are being promoted....Shakespeare the playwright is superceded by Shakespeare the paradigm.”¹³ Certainly the larger body of rehabilitative Shakespeares supports Charnes’s claim. But it also dramatizes the social consequences of our modern mode of Bardolatry. The BBC spoof-documentary *Shakespeare’s Happy Endings*, part of the “Shakespeare Re-Told” series, hyperbolically responds to what Charnes describes as Shakespeare’s function today. The film concludes with a scene in which Professor Simon Starkman (Patrick Barlow) welcomes Shakespeare to a celebration of his works. At this celebration, Shakespeare will be bestowed with the title “the man of the millennium,” for his works offer the contemporary moment a living legacy unsurpassed by another other writer. Appropriately enough, the celebration is to take place at Holy Trinity Church; however, the two arrive to find the church closed. Presumably, the vicar has forgotten about the celebration, as have all the guests. In a foreboding vision of anti-Bardolatry, the film demonstrates that the contemporary moment has reduced Shakespeare to the image of an embarrassingly unsophisticated and confused relic of the past. The dramatist is left unable to make a connection with his renowned place of nativity or to take his place at the head of the table as man of the millennium. Ultimately, history is the party crasher

¹³ Linda Charnes, *Notorious Identity: Materializing the Subject in Shakespeare* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 155.

that ruins the celebration. The stakes of positioning history and historical figures within a system of difference and otherness, it is suggested, foreclose an affective connection with the past in the present. Structured along the lines of alterity, history in this formulation becomes a project of forgetting and misrecognition that threatens to erase our affective connection to the past, which is shaped by and in turn shapes the contemporary moment.

As rehabilitative Shakespeares remind us, rather painfully at times, Shakespeare has indeed become a medium of ideological exchange, an overloaded signifier; however, this should not imply that, as a signifier, *Shakespeare* easily or even effectively contains all possible significations associated with his name and the cultural myths revolving around it. Juliet's rhetorical question "What's in a name?" becomes almost laughable when we consider the ways in which the name of her author authorizes precisely because of his name. What's in a name, then? Everything, and too much. It is because the name has been made to accommodate any number of ideological imperatives being promoted by various institutions that *Shakespeare* as a signifier subverts localized ideological value systems. For instance, because Shakespeare is imagined to make pornography more socially acceptable, this troubles our ability to imagine that he is an appropriate resource for children. Can we easily hold in mind the conflicting idea that Shakespeare can help keep kids out of prison, while also aiding prisons in disciplining inmates? Of course we can, and we do; this is the receptive demand that rehabilitative Shakespeares place on the spectator. And conflicting performances of Shakespeare situate him comfortably in the space of their transformative projects by evoking his place in history. Shakespeare works on some level in prisons because, as program facilitators remind us, actors were linked with criminals in early modern imaginations, as we see in the coney-catching pamphlets

of Robert Green.¹⁴ Shakespeare also works on some level in pornography because the numerous puns in his works allows for perverse play, a possibility that pornographic adaptations of Shakespeare take to mean that early modern understandings of sexuality and deviance were more polymorphous and experimental than today's.

Rehabilitative Shakespeares may indeed treat *Shakespeare* as a medium for conflicting ideological exchange, but they displace the conflicts of their ideological projects onto historical difference. This suggests, then, that “Shakespeare, the paradigm” fails to supersede “Shakespeare, the playwright.” Christy Desmet and Robert Sawyer have astutely noted that the performance of “Bardolatry necessarily produces ‘bardography,’” or what they explain as “the assertion of Shakespeare’s continuing presence in English, North American, European, and finally, world culture as a story, a narrative governed by the trope of hyperbole but conditioned by a rhetorical concession of its own limitation.”¹⁵ Shakespeare’s place in history becomes the displaced point of ideological conflict and limitation, that which supplements rather than supplants Shakespearean instrumentality in the contemporary moment. Like any supplement, historical difference becomes both arbitrary and essential to the rehabilitative projects; and as supplements tend to do, as Derrida reminds us, historical difference contains an ambiguity that ensures what it is supplementing—in this case, Shakespearean ideologies, in whatever forms they might take—can always be interpreted in different ways: as arbitrary or essential. In rehabilitation, history is a problem precisely because it can be interpreted in different ways, for power cannot properly discipline if it is received by

¹⁴ For an analysis of Green’s coney-catching pamphlets and how they are evoked in prison Shakespeare, see chapter three.

¹⁵ Christy Desmet and Robert Sawyer, “Introduction” in *Harold Bloom’s Shakespeare*, eds. Christy Desmet and Robert Sawyer (London: Palgrave, 2002), 1-16 (5-6).

subjects as arbitrary. And yet history understood as different, other, and as a temporal space of mystery cannot essentially or adequately account for the ways in which the present moment subjects and is subjected by its desires to identify with Shakespeare.

William Shakespeare: A Life in Drama (1996), part of A&E's Biography series, suggests that demystifying the early modern period not only renews and reminds us of the pleasures of identifying with Shakespeare, but that this demystification is necessary for our sense of selves as social beings. The biography is produced both as a narrative audio program and as an historical documentary film, presumably to accommodate the resources of different classroom spaces and teaching styles. And both open with the same structure: a spectacularly grandiose claim by narrator Charles Glass interspliced with audio-bites from *Macbeth*. "William Shakespeare is without a doubt the greatest playwright the English language has ever known," Glass begins. "His plays, poetry, his every word have become the very essence of our culture. Shakespeare lives on today through the words of his plays. 400 years later his genius has never been surpassed." This claim may be grandiose but it is hardly new. In fact, it's formulaically asserted in all rehabilitative Shakespeare. But the proof Glass offers to support the claim, which comes in the form of Macbeth's lament on the loss of Lady Macbeth, implicitly signals what the project poses as the stakes of leaving unquestioned historical difference, while undercutting these stakes at the same time. A voiceover recites:

She should have died hereafter;
There would have been a time for such a word.
To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day
To the last syllable of recorded time,
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!
Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player

That struts and frets his hour upon the stage
And then is heard no more: it is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing. (V.v.17-28)

Back to Glass: “Shakespeare’s writing shows an extraordinary level of insight into the human experience, our innermost thoughts. Yet his own life remains an enigma shrouded in the mysteries and complexities of Elizabethan England.”

The stylization of juxtaposing Macbeth’s soliloquy with the claim of the complexities of historical difference poses the primary problem with an understanding of what Shakespeare signifies in the contemporary moment as one contingent on ways in which we understand our relation to the past. What is at stake here is, in the words of Macbeth, is “tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow.” If Shakespeare retains a special relation to the understanding of the human experience, then understanding the socio-cultural influences that drove Shakespeare might offer us today a similar sense of understanding, a more direct access to Shakespeare’s brilliance. First, however, the complexities surrounding the differentiated time “Elizabethan England” must be worked through, analogized to events in the present in a familiar tone. Otherwise, like Macbeth, we post-moderns might slip into a fatalistic belief that history is a meaningless and impotent narrative. For it could be that the mysterious truth-effects constructed around Shakespeare might just prove nothing more than tales “Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,/Signifying nothing.” Fortunately the film and audio narrative offer numerous interview sequences with scholars like Stanley Wells, Andrew Gurr, J.R. Mulryne, Mark Honan and former Artistic Director for the Globe Theater Adrian Noble to make the early modern pleasurable and thus meaningful again.

The PBS mini-series *In Search of Shakespeare* (dir. David Wallace, 2003) takes a different approach to the problem of historical difference by attempting to demystify Shakespeare's life and times in a way that resists placing the pedagogue in the position of expert. The introductory sequence of the documentary defines the stylistics and programmatic investments of the larger series, an epic bio-project spanning four episodes in as many hours. As the camera opens on a panoramic cityscape of modern day London, a narrative voiceover announces, "Like all stories from history, this is a search for ghosts, a quest for the people who made us who we are, and for one man in particular." While standing center stage at the rebuilt Globe Theater, historian and television personality Michael Wood explains, "William Shakespeare is the most famous writer of all time, and yet his life is still shrouded in mystery, so much so that a vast web of conspiracy theories has grown up over whether he even wrote his own plays or not. This is an historical detective story, an Elizabethan whodunit, searching for the life of William Shakespeare of Stratford-upon-Avon set against the turbulent times in which he lived." Abruptly, the credits roll. The following sequence features flash images of the Grafton and Chandos portraits thought to represent Shakespeare, and an inverted image of the Rainbow Portrait of Queen Elizabeth I, as though reflected back to the viewer. These flashing images combine to form the authorial stamp of Shakespeare, indelibly marked in red wax and impressed on the screen to doubly authorize the documentary venture.

On one hand, "Shakespeare's" seal marks the film's distance from other Shakespeare bio-projects, like PBS's *Much Ado About Something* (PBS, 2001), *Frontline: The Shakespeare Mystery* (PBS, 1989), and journalist Mark Anderson's

streaming narrative radio segments “Shakespeare upon Ipod” (2006-07),¹⁶ which explore the possibility that Shakespeare’s works were actually written by Christopher Marlowe, Francis Bacon, Edward de Vere, and other possible candidates. *In Search of Shakespeare*, like all other rehabilitative Shakespeares, desires an egalitarian version of the Bard, one who speaks to mass audiences, without the intervention of scholars, researchers, or even archival documents. Wood suggests that pedagogues have effaced Shakespeare’s authorship in order to make reading “Shakespeare” exciting for students, and in the process have propagated the conspiracy theories surrounding Shakespearean authorship.

According to this stance, we as a field are culpable, though perhaps some, like Jeffrey Masten and Leah Marcus, more than others. In putting to rest these tiring and tireless debates on Shakespeare’s authorship, the film also registers its disavowal of the collaborative process of early modern authorship and modern editorial processes. Jeffrey Masten has argued that present critical formulations, along with well-established editorial and bibliographic traditions, situate early modern dramatic texts within a regime of the single author that is, properly speaking, more appropriate to the post-Enlightenment world than to sixteenth- and early-seventeenth-century Europe.¹⁷ Masten maintains that a dominant strategy of dramatic authorship in Shakespeare’s England was collaboration, and the obsession with establishing authorship among plays that were collaboratively produced risks imposing an ahistorical modern understanding of the singularity of the author onto plays that were not produced within this regime of knowledge. Leah S.

¹⁶ “Shakespeare Upon Ipod” follows Anderson’s argument in *‘Shakespeare’ By Another Name: The Life of Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford, the Man Who Was Shakespeare* (New York: Gotham, 2005) that de Vere wrote the plays we attribute today to “Shakespeare.” For audio samplings, see: <http://www.shakespearebyanothername.com>.

¹⁷ Jeffrey Masten, *Textual Intercourse: Collaboration, Authorship, and Sexualities in Renaissance Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

Marcus has likewise troubled our understandings of what we might think of as the reality of the Shakespearean playtext and the persona it creates.¹⁸ She reveals that the degree to which we come to know Shakespeare through modern editions is always already a supplemented knowledge, one filtered through eighteenth-century and Victorian editorial practices and the sensibilities on which those practices are built. Ultimately, the persona of Shakespeare we understand from the playtexts reflects a collaborative process of making Shakespeare, one constructed and therefore (if not necessarily) open to question and speculation.¹⁹

On the other hand, the film's use of a technological simulacrum of Shakespeare's authorial stamp rather than a material recreation of it marks the documentary's handling of the subject of history. The stamp marks historiography as a creative enterprise and the act of searching for origins as always already mediated by technologies of knowledge in the present. Immediately following the opening credits, the film documents Wood as he excitedly marches along a woody lane somewhere in England. Part of his search for Shakespeare includes a journey through the English countryside, a methodology he tirelessly repeats throughout the film. Along the way he has an apparently unscripted encounter. A curious young boy emerges from an RV parked along the road to ask Wood where he is going, to which Wood replies, "We're walking up the ancient road. It's one of the oldest roads of England." The boy is left clearly confused as Wood marches on his

¹⁸ Leah S. Marcus, *Unediting the Renaissance: Shakespeare, Marlowe, Milton* (New York: Routledge, 1997).

¹⁹ Several other scholars, of course, are implicated in what Wood considers the academic conspiracy of questioning Shakespearean authorship. For discussions on the importance of the printed text, for instance, in creating the authorial persona of Shakespeare, see: Douglas A. Brooks, *From Playhouse to Printing House: Drama and Authorship in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); David Scott-Kastan, *Shakespeare and the Book* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), and *Shakespeare After Theory* (New York: Routledge, 1999); and Leah Marcus, *Puzzling Shakespeare: Local Readings and Its Discontents* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), ch. 1.

symbolic path up the long and winding road as it reaches forward toward history—a road that also doubles as a local vacation spot. This sequence sets the cinematic tone of the remaining four hours to come: we are always unmistakably in the here-and-now. Wood brings us along with him on what becomes our shared educational and historical journey; but this search for Shakespeare is aggressively grounded in the present, to which the ancient road and flash images attest. These material artifacts may derive from the past, but the film clearly reminds us that they have an identity in the present. The ancient road evokes a real-life Shakespearean “green world,” a modern day the Forest of Arden, but it does not pretend to be, or even represent, them. Nor does Wood pretend to represent an academic or pedagogue in the traditional sense. Unlike the tweed-clad figures of Wells and Gurr in *William Shakespeare: A Life in Drama*, Wood, who regularly dons a very hip black leather jacket, discovers history along with us, makes meaning of the past along with his spectator.

The series will end with Shakespeare being described as “a man whose works are a bridge between the world we have lost and the world we have become,” a formulation that succinctly encapsulates the series’ own handling of history as a process of seeking out and discovering bridging moments between the past and the present. The notable absence of reenactment footage or fictive dramatization sequences in Wood’s *Search* further underscores the presentist view of history to which the film ascribes. Perhaps the most well known Shakespeare biopic, *Shakespeare in Love* (dir. John Madden, 1998), offers us glimpses of dashing Joseph Fiennes as Shakespeare, whose Romantically ink-stained fingers toil over blank pages in the hope of working through writer’s block. Fresh off the heels of *Rocky Horror Picture Show* (dir. Jim Sharman, 1975), Tim Curry plays a

sexually experimental Shakespeare in *The Life of Shakespeare* (aka *William Shakespeare*, dirs. Mark Cullingham and Robert Knights, 1978), and offers us an image of the Bard whose sexual proclivities nearly parallel those of the sweet transvestite Dr. Frank-N-Furter, also played by Curry. *In Search of Shakespeare* also refrains from the use of still shots of Renaissance woodcuts or images of the First Folio Droeshout portrait of Shakespeare, which are regularly represented in the film version of *William Shakespeare: A Life in Drama*. Standing in for the ubiquitous use of reenactment footage and dramatization, *In Search of Shakespeare* calls upon the theatrical professionals of the Royal Shakespeare Company to perform notable scenes for live audiences. Early in the first episode, Wood emphasizes the early modern tradition of using only male actors. At one point, he follows a troupe of schoolboy actors from Shakespeare's alma mater the King Edward VI School as they perform *Ralph Roister Doister*. If the spectator needs reminding that the actorly presence initiates the historical journey in the here and now, he or she need simply look as far as the RSC female actresses for such assurance.

The assumption driving Wood's *Search* is one of historiographic methodology: if genealogy traces the descent of current practices, it can also turn into an investigation and analysis of their mutation and their processes of becoming. The mode of historiography performed by the film and the figure of Wood finds affinity with emergent attempts to rethink the relation between the past and present in premodern studies. The film's quest for the ghost of Shakespeare is always oriented in the present moment, and in this way performs a mode of what Carla Freccero has called *hauntology*, or the study of the discursive processes that create and shape conditions of what Derrida calls *spectrality*, or what Freccero describes as "a non-living present in the living present" that is no longer

with us but somehow continually and hauntingly appears.²⁰ As Freccero writes, “Thinking historicity through haunting thus combines both the seeming objectivity of events and the subjectivity of their affective afterlife.”²¹ It’s worth questioning what we’re finding as we follow Wood, for he is undeniably a man on his own personal search. From *In Search of the Dark Ages* (1981) and *In Search of the Trojan War* (1985), to *Domesday: A Search for the Roots of England* (1988) and *Legacy: A Search for the Origins of Civilization* (1992), Wood, like a modern day Odysseus, longs for *nostos*, a homecoming, a sublime return to the past in the present moment. We learn that Wood has been searching for Shakespeare for over twenty years, which marks this particular project as the culmination of all his televisual journeys, the pinnacle homecoming of all his searches combined. As Feste claims in *Twelfth Night*: “Journeys end in lovers meeting,/Every wise man's son doth know” (II.iii.44-5). This journey is no exception. It is one propelled by the force of affect rather than the authenticity of historical event; this search is a project of love, a longing to be inhabited from within by the ghost of forgotten Shakespeare, to remember that however Shakespeare is positioned today will (re)write his past and thus history to come.

The film’s reliance on systems of historical sameness rather than what it considers normative ideologies of historical difference places stress on the ways in which *history* operates in the cinematic imagination, and how such an operation affects the process of rehabilitating Shakespeare. Wood’s longing to identify with and by Shakespeare, his desires to find bridging moments between the past and the present—what Carolyn

²⁰ Freccero, 70.

²¹ Freccero, 76.

Dinshaw would call the “queer touch” of history²²—functions somewhat like homo-love, that is, the desire for similitude, likeness, resemblance. In their polemical article “Queering History,” Jonathan Goldberg and Madhavi Menon set forth a methodological call to action for those who would consider the relationship among history, desire, and identity:

We must never presume to know in advance how questions of sexuality will intersect with or run aslant the prevailing forms of sociality marked by gender or status or the relation of such questions to the objects of a more literary investigation, whether tied to the traditional objects of literary study or a broader sense of the discursive. Equally, we need to question the premise of a historicism that privileges difference over similarity, recognizing that it is the peculiarity of our current historical moment that such a privileging takes place at all.²³

Here the figure of the historian likens to Sidney’s “right Poet.” In Goldberg and Menon’s formulation, an ethico-politically concerned engagement with history would debunk it as the discourse of fact or actuality and instead treat the subject of history more as an access point to multiplicity, possibility, and indeterminacy. This model of queer historiography, which Goldberg and Menon also call “unhistoricism,” would engender a process of queering history into “homo-history”: “Instead of being the history of homos,” they explain, “this history would be invested in suspending determinate sexual and chronological differences while expanding the possibilities of the nonhetero, with all its connotations of sameness, similarity, proximity, and anachronism.”²⁴ An attention to the ways in which the past lives on and through the present offers a moment to consider erotic investments always already operating in the construction of the past, and the

²² Carolyn Dinshaw, *Getting Medieval: Sexualities and Communities, Pre-Modern and Postmodern* (Durham, Duke University Press, 1999).

²³ Jonathan Goldberg and Madhavi Menon, “Queering History,” in *PMLA* (120.5, Oct. 2005), 1608-1617 (1609).

²⁴ *Ibid.*

systems of meaning that the present sutures onto those historical constructions. For as they note, the teleological, cause-and-effect conception of time that informs historicist difference also underwrites institutionalized action and political agendas that marginalize contemporary communities based on their distance from the hetero- (as opposed to homo-), and thus normative, lifestyles.

In each of these queer theories of temporality and historicity, the indeterminacy of the term *queer* works as a utilitarian tool. Here are a few (understandably qualified) definitions of *queer* and *queerness* as they operate in such theories: If Freccero's *Queer/Early/Modern* "can be said to have a position on *queer*, it would be to urge resistance to its hypostatization, reification, into normal status as designating an entity, and identity, a thing, and to allow it to continue its outlaw work as a verb and sometimes an adjective;"²⁵ Quoting Foucault, Judith Halberstam makes the claim, "If we try to think about queerness as an outcome of strange temporalities, imaginative life schedules, and eccentric economies, we detach queerness from sexual identity and come closer to understanding Foucault's comment in 'Friendship as a Way of Life' that 'homosexuality threatens people as a "way of life" rather than as a way of having sex;"²⁶ and in Lee Edelman's *No Future*, "the queer comes to figure the bar to every realization of futurity, the resistance, internal to the social, to every social structure....queerness can never define an identity; it can only ever disturb one."²⁷ It is precisely the indeterminacy of *queer* as an identificatory category and the imperative within queer theories of history to resist the reification of the term to systems of identification that imbues the term with

²⁵ Freccero, 5.

²⁶ Judith Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place* (New York: New York University Press, 2005), 1.

²⁷ Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2004), 17.

utility. The queer operation of *queer*, in other words, enables such shifts in its strategies of subversion. In part, the usefulness of the term lies in its relational dynamic. For Carolyn Dinshaw, exploring the operation of history within a queer theoretical framework would potentially “collaps[e] time through affective contact,”²⁸ because “[q]ueerness articulates not a determinate thing but a relation to existent structures of power.”²⁹ Similarly, for David Halperin, “[q]ueer is by definition whatever is at odds with the normal, the legitimate, the dominant. . . . [I]t demarcates not a positivity but a positionality vis-à-vis the normative.”³⁰

The historicist project of *In Search of Shakespeare* registers as distinctly *homo* in its desire, propelled by Wood’s longing to identify with and by Shakespeare, to resist conventional investments in temporal difference. Yet, as I will argue, the very drive toward what operates as a queer historicism unyieldingly returns to the reification of normative identity, or the very normativity that Wood’s queering of early modern history would resist. Such a move necessitates the questioning of the relationship between the indeterminacy of queer and the normative and nonnormative relations that such negativity produces, with or against Wood’s consent.

The Father of an Age

In his reading of *In Search*, Richard Dutton argues that throughout the film there are two distinct Michael Woods: the educator and the television entertainer. To supplement the film, PBS released a scholarly book in which Wood offers more historical

²⁸ Dinshaw et al, “Theorizing Queer Temporalities: A Roundtable Discussion,” in *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* (13, 2007), 177-95 (178).

²⁹ Dinshaw, “Chaucer’s Queer Touches/A Queer Touches Chaucer,” in *Exemplaria* (7.1, 1995), 75-92 (77).

³⁰ David Halperin, *Saint Foucault: Towards a Gay Hagiography* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 62.

detail and archival information to support some of the claims he makes in the film. Bridging the book and film projects, Dutton finds, is a lamentable contemporary need to render Shakespeare as the brilliant poet of the masses whose life is imagined to parallel those lived out in the contemporary moment. Of the film's treatment of history, Dutton argues: "This is a stylization that has little place for historical reconstruction or pastiche....No, this is not history by fictional or technological reconstruction. Nor does it have any truck with postmodern musings about the medium and the message, or the complicities of representation. It stands by the idea of actuality, of empirical knowable truth."³¹ Dutton is right to note the film's reliance on documented visits to archival libraries and interviews with scholars in the field of Shakespeare studies. Certainly the film (almost embarrassingly) fetishizes the academic archive and the archivable document. These moments are so few and far between in the four-hour project that they become incredibly conspicuous. When Woods comes face-to-face with the record of Shakespeare's christening, for instance, he barely manages to giggle aloud, "This is it! This is the document itself!" When putting on the protective gloves before handling Shakespeare's will, it looks as though he might keel over in ecstasy. To read these moments of archive-combing bliss as indicative of the film's treatment of history is to underestimate the entertainment and educational value of the moments in which Wood works through the limits of the archive, those moments of undocumented event and impossible knowledge.

To be fair, much of the over-the-top fetishism seems to come from Wood's inexhaustible excitement, which he relays onto archival documentation as well as

³¹ Richard Dutton, "If I'm Right': Michael Wood's *In Search of Shakespeare*" in *Screening Shakespeare in the Twenty-First Century*, eds. Mark Thornton Burnett and Ramona Wray (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), 13-30 (16).

moments in which the archive fails to produce any sense of historical authenticity. When exploring Shakespeare's marriage license, for instance, Wood explains, "as with so many Shakespeare documents, there's a twist." The film discusses the registration of the name Anne Whatley, not Anne Hathaway, on the marriage license. In excited horror, Wood wonders aloud, "Could Shakespeare really have promised himself to two different women?" He refuses to answer the question definitely, instead speculating that what might sound like a sexy mystery could have simply been the error performed by an overworked clerk. Unlike *The Life of William Shakespeare* and *A Waste of Shame* (dir John McKay, 2005), *In Search* refuses to claim that Whatley was Shakespeare's true love, or that he couldn't have loved a simple farmer's daughter like Hathaway. This doesn't impede Wood from debunking his previous claim that "Whatley" might simply be a clerical error. As the segment ends he begins to fantasize aloud about a young pregnant woman (Whatley) turned away just before her wedding day, another and older woman fighting for her man (Hathaway), and how pitiable the situation must have been for all involved, Shakespeare included. His speculation rivals the plots of historical romance novels, recently resituated in the contemporary imagination with Philippa Gregory's Tudor series, which includes *The Other Boleyn Girl* (2001), *The Virgin's Lover* (2004), and *The Constant Princess* (2005), to name a few. Woods repeatedly works against the problem of calling upon the archive to make a system of Shakespearean truth. The excavation and examination of historical documentation fails to act as the privileged or even primary means of extracting truth. What Foucault would call "the pleasure of analysis" is not half as exciting as the pleasure of impossible speculation.³² Wood performs the role of fetishistic archive-comber who achieves an exorbitant sense of

³² Foucault, *History of Sexuality*.

jouissance at the touch of history, the feel of undocumented Shakespeare, and his own hyperbolic fantasies that suture over the inadequacies of historical narrative.

The moments of avowed indeterminacy, while acting as the aphrodisiac that drives Wood further on his search, lead to hauntingly normative orientations of Shakespeare's positionality for the contemporary moment. If the film traces Wood's fantasies of who Shakespeare was, based upon a contemporary understanding of what he signifies today, the image is anything but the liberatory cry that some queer historians would presume. What emerges in Wood's *Search* is a Shakespeare done straight, an image of the Bard as the ultimate patriarch. While examining archival materials that document a figure known as "Shakes-shaft" in Lancashire during Shakespeare's lost years, Wood refrains from drawing an easy metonymic line between the two. He acknowledges that we will never know whether or not Shakespeare spent the lost years farming or tutoring, as has been argued by scholars for decades. Yet avowal acts as a disavowal. Concluding the second episode, Wood definitively declares:

whether William was Shakeshafte or not, Lancashire is an important part of the story. But it can't be the whole story. Like any young man, I'd guess he did several jobs to earn money. But remember, the trail always leads back to Warwickshire. Back in Stratford-upon-Avon Shakespeare has a family to support, and he's always loyal to the family.

Adopting a mode of what Judith Halberstam has called "perverse presentism"—"an application of what we do not know in the present to what we cannot know in the past"³³—leads seamlessly here to the representation of Shakespeare as the ultimate family man. He may have indulged in youthful boyish trysts and tried out different jobs in search of self-discovery, but he always remained loyal to his family once he was married and had children. As a faithful and familial man, he knew there comes a time in

³³ Judith Halberstam, *Female Masculinity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998), 53.

every man's life to put away childish things. A patriarch with a sense of responsibility, then, Shakespeare is made contemporary through an Oedipal evocation of the dutiful father. Wood's capitulation to Shakespeare as the ideal father recapitulates contemporary cultural imperatives of paternity, how a father should act. And his recapitalization positions Wood as a sort of modern Oedipus figure himself, one who works to resist the prescribed narratives of the history that will be—in this case how history should be taught and performed—while also embodying this prescribed narrative.

The most troublingly inconclusive conclusion pushed by the documentary concerns Shakespeare's non-dramatic works. Wood presents Shakespeare as a man of both expediency and defiance, asserting: "For him the goal of poetry is not to glorify God but to earn a living. He's got a wife and children in Stratford, and his duty is to support them." With the plagues and the closing of the theaters in 1593, Wood summarizes, Shakespeare was forced to make a living however he could. Thus necessity and a sense of patriarchal obligation explain why he wrote his first published work, the epyllion *Venus and Adonis*. Writing the poem, we are to believe, allowed Shakespeare to indulge in nostalgia for his lost school days and his love of Ovid which was tragically cut short because of financial hardship, while also offering Shakespeare the proactivity of ensuring that his family never had to endure the financial suffering he did as a child. At least one quarter of the first segment details Shakespeare's experience at school as a young boy and how Ovid's *Metamorphosis* was surely his favorite book; tragically, the film supposes, Shakespeare was pulled from school by his father at an early age because the family fell upon financial difficulties. As Wood surmises in his coolly authoritative fashion, "his father took him out of school early. At the age of fourteen he found himself

cut off from the chance of higher education and the chances of going to university.” This is in fact considerably more than we know or might guess. Archival documents suggest that John Shakespeare did fall on hard times, and that Shakespeare did not attend university; however, Wood’s fantasy of Shakespeare as the self-taught street scholar who never completed his grammar school humanist curriculum cannot be supported by these archival documents. In fact, it is to play into the hands of Baconians, Marlovians, and Oxfordians who support the theory that Shakespeare’s works were penned by someone else precisely because Shakespeare, the historical figure, never completed university.

Framing Shakespeare’s act of writing *Venus and Adonis* in terms of expediency and familial duty likewise casts his non-dramatic works in de-eroticized terms. If Shakespeare’s narrative poem about the Goddess of Love and her unyielding and violent pursuit of a young boy can be cast in purely practical economic grounds, it is hardly surprising—though no doubt shocking—that *In Search of Shakespeare* treats the homoerotics of the sonnets in a similar fashion. It is striking how often Wood moves from the assertion that we cannot know who Shakespeare was as an historical figure, to a claim of Shakespeare’s sense of paternal obligation. Wood offers a narrative voiceover to explain the film’s treatment of the Sonnets: “Are the Sonnets autobiographical? There’s still a furious debate, but I think they are.” Wood is in good company with this belief.³⁴ He continues, “And in some of them, Shakespeare lets us share in his deepest feelings of love and loss: the death of his own child.” Wood’s exploration of the mystery of Shakespeare’s marriage license may result in a fantastical love triangle, but the erotic structure is strikingly absent when *In Search of Shakespeare* confronts the content of the

³⁴ This stance is perhaps nowhere as aggressively argued as in Jonathan Bate’s *The Genius of Shakespeare* (London: Picador, 1997) and *Soul of the Age: A Biography of the Mind of William Shakespeare* (New York: Random House, 2009).

sonnets. A narrative voice recites Sonnet 33 to compel the spectator into the possibility that the sonnets were written as a lament of a grieving father:

Even so my sun one early morn did shine
With all triumphant splendor on my brow;
But out, alack! he was but one hour mine;
The region cloud hath mask'd him from me now.
Yet him for this my love no whit disdaineth;
Suns of the world may stain when heaven's sun staineth.

Again in narrative voiceover, Wood makes the grandiose claim: “If that’s not written from the heart, it’s hard to imagine what is. And if it’s not really about his own son then words surely have no meaning. William’s sonnets are about his love for the boy, but they’re also about a father’s grief for his dead child.” Hamnet’s death becomes the primary spring of inspiration from which Shakespeare’s poetry followed. This declaration works against contemporary criticism, which would position Southampton as the young boy in the early Sonnets.³⁵ Wood’s work is more in line, though certainly not referential, with Katherine Duncan-Jones’s preface to the Arden edition of the sonnets, which reconsiders other likely candidates, such as William Herbert, the third Earl of Pembroke, in the desire to work against a homophobic reading tradition: “And as for the compromising or ‘disgraceful’ elements of the sonnets: their homoeroticism is here confronted positively, and is newly conceptualized within the powerfully ‘homosocial’ world of James I’s court. The case for their association with Southampton largely collapses, but the case for their connection with William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke,

³⁵ For Bate, for instance, and in all italics to typographically strengthen the claim: “*All candidates for the fair youth with the exception of Southampton’s depend on things not known to exist; it is not necessary to postulate any of these things as existing, since the origin of the sonnets can be explained with things we do know to exist*” (47). See *Genius of Shakespeare*.

becomes newly plausible.”³⁶ Most grandiose, however, is the implication that signification fails completely if we question whether or not the young boy of the sonnets is Hamnet. This, of course, means that we must abject a consideration of the sonnets as homoerotic, which we are also and stealthy asked to do in the presentist use of female actresses in the RSC reenactments of the playtexts.

The problem of history in Wood’s *Search* involves systems of differentiation that foreclose our ability to understand ourselves in the present and acknowledge the ways in which history constructs the present as much as it is constructed by it. This dramatization of the rehabilitation of historicity, however, suggest that the pre-oedipal desire for non-differentiation in the pursuit of history—of discovering bridging moments between the past and the present—always already depends upon an oedipal relation to the present, to name and thus fix what has been lost in the present as a means of suturing over the trauma of difference. Because the easy slide between past and present is presented here as a pedagogical corrective, the films offer a valuable opportunity to question the systems of rehabilitation in our classrooms. It would seem, then, that in grieving our loss of Shakespeare, of never knowing the truth behind the author of the texts that have fathered our contemporary consciousness, Shakespeare becomes the grieving father who works through the traumatic loss of his son in a way that predetermines our contemporary consciousness.

Excitable Pedagogy

³⁶ Katherine Duncan-Jones, ed., “Preface” in *The Arden Shakespeare: Shakespeare’s Sonnets* (London: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1997), xiii.

The lines of performative rehabilitation at this point are as dizzying as they are multiple. *In Search of Shakespeare* purports to be a rehabilitation of the ways in which we teach Shakespeare in the classroom. It works to dramatize for students and educators alike the pleasures of mimetically identifying with Shakespeare across systems of historical alterity, systems that the film suggests have become the dominant mode of pedagogy. Homohistory, as it operates in the film, desires to seduce: the film would have us follow the model of historical engagement in which it plays with Shakespeare. In the process of rehabilitating the student-teacher subject, the film likewise rehabilitates systems of historicity, as well as the subject of Shakespeare. As I have discussed, however, these homo lines of rehabilitation intersect to transform Shakespeare into a homogeneously normative and culturally identifiable if not wholly uninhabitable figure of perfect paternity. The implication here is that to disidentify with Shakespeare as the father of the age is to occupy the position of the prodigal child. The demands that this film places on us are completely unreasonable. That is, the demands are between reasons: if we seek the pleasures of mimetically identifying with Shakespeare—which the film frames as a radical mode of defying dominant cultural demands placed on us—then what we get in our mode of defiance is a mandated and politically troubling Shakespeare identity position. In positioning Shakespeare as the ultimately heterosexual father, the film likewise carries with it the ideological baggage of that position, which includes heteronormative social and sexual reproductivity as the appropriate position of performing subjecthood in our present moment.

Queer desire, however, explicitly challenges such claims. As the queer theorists I discussed earlier point out time and again, ideologies of temporality and futurity depend

upon notions of appropriate social and sexual reproductivity and the forms this takes. The indeterminacy of *queer* certainly calls attention to these forms and their manifestation in systems of social power. Social power is always constructed along the lines of inclusion and exclusion, and the performance queering educational practices, as we see in *In Search of Shakespeare*, has the power to exclude even as it works toward a model of education built upon temporal inclusion: to unite us all through the egalitarian pleasures of identifying across boundaries of history. While the project would have us believe in the old adage that education is the great equalizer, queer theory's attendance to the power of social reproductivity would likewise urge us to be skeptical of such fantasies of sameness. For education's equalizing force obscures the operations of social reproduction that attend the social institution of education behind the veiling fantasy of a subject's ability to willfully transform his or her social position. The process of equalization, built upon sameness, uniformity, and compensation, works to cordon off and abject systems of difference in its desire for utopian idealism. As I argued in chapter two, for instance, in the process of offering underprivileged, inner city youth a chance to take part in cultural resources traditionally foreclosed to them, like attending college, their struggle to become something more socially recognized depends upon the erasure of the socioeconomic and cultural differences that contribute to their marginalized social status.

One of the primary problems the film experiences in fulfilling its project of performing a mode of history-making resists dominant ideologies of alterity is that this is one man's search. Wood would have us believe that history needs to be reconsidered as a mode of erotic engagement with the past, and many early modern theorists likewise follow this call, myself included. The film suggests that through an affective

identification that crosses historical boundaries, we both discover and embody Shakespeare's transcendental understanding of humanity; thus we can become better citizens of our world. And yet the call of Shakespeare appears to be the voice of Wood, both ventriloquizing questions and answers through a Shakespeare mouthpiece. We see this most clearly in the first segment, just before Wood discovers the ancient road. At this point, the film weaves voiceover narration with expository and speculative speeches delivered by Wood to the student-spectator audience. However, the narrative voice, which takes on the performative mode of omnipotent Voice-of-God perspective, also belongs to Wood. The excitable educator asks and answers:

WOOD (as omnipotent narrator): Why go in search of Shakespeare? Can the life of a writer ever be as interesting as a conqueror, an inventor, or an explore, a Napoleon, a Columbus, an Alexander the Great?

WOOD (as speculative lover): Well, yes! Yes, it can, more so, because the writers and the poets are the explorers of the human heart, and long after the conquerors are forgotten, their legacy will be the most valuable to us as human beings. And Shakespeare's one of the greatest writers who ever lived! Who wouldn't want to know what made him tick? That's what I want to try to do on this journey.

This scene demonstrates the way in which the performance of rehabilitation creates a fractured subject, in this case Wood as the desiring pedagogue. Wood bifurcates his performance of identification along the lines both of sameness and difference. He stages himself at different moments as the "traditional" historian he implicates in today's miseducation of Shakespeare, and as the pedagogue who channels the pleasurable space of historical indeterminacy. While the Narrator Wood poses what initially sounds like a rhetorical question, the excitable pedagogue Wood answers the question with a

determination to prove his answer correct. And this staging repeats throughout the film. Sometimes it succeeds, sometimes it fails; but he always answers his own questions by framing them in terms of his own personal and unyielding desire, rather than historical fact or a sense of documented accuracy.

In fracturing Wood as authoritative purveyor of the search as well as the searching pedagogue, the film stages the self-encounter of the rehabilitated subject. It is not so much that this doubled performance coalesces into a singular performance at any point in the film; nor does Wood's performance of the normative historian give way to the nonnormative one, or vice versa. These performances exist together in the film, sharing cinematic time within a sort of fort-da game. And it is within this tension of performing both normative and non-normative that we witness both the "o-o-o" pleasure and threat of rehabilitation as a queer performance. In Wood's pedagogy, *Shakespeare* becomes a transcendental signifier that allows for a multitude of pleasurable identificatory positions; but we also see that in asserting the truth of Shakespeare's transcendental position, the signifier *Shakespeare* becomes an alibi for ideologies of normative gender and sexuality. In searching for Shakespeare in order to rehabilitate the ways Shakespeare is taught, Wood must first establish both the normative and non-normative modes of this performance; this is the foundational move of rehabilitative as a performance, the way in which transformation can be evaluated. And by evoking the normative as a point of resistance again and again in order to perform its distance from that point, Wood's would-be mode of pedagogical resistance always already carries with it the point of normative resistance. My point here is that in the desire to rehabilitate pedagogy and in the process be a rehabilitated pedagogue, Wood's very performance of

rehabilitation constitutes or brings into existence both the normative and the non-normative. Both normative and non-normative become byproducts of rehabilitation, or what Judith Butler has called modes of “constitutive constraint”: practices of identity as sites of agency that avoid easy delineations of the subject as either wholly subjected or subjecting.³⁷ To read this back on theories of queer history, it would seem that instrumentality of *queer* lies not so much in its indeterminacy, but rather in its tendency toward overdetermination: *queer* as a performative sense of self determines normative and nonnormative and flirts with the inhabitation of these positions, without ever faithfully inhabiting one in particular.

Just as Wood’s performance between models of pedagogy splits his identity, his process of becoming—that is, of rehabilitating—likewise fractures the model of pedagogy he offers us. It repeatedly sets its own limits only to exceed them, for rehabilitation is always evaluated on the performance of *going beyond*, or inciting the subject to the excitement and excitability of transformation. Wood’s performance represents a mode of excitable pedagogy: a consideration of how teaching should be performed that exceeds imperatives while constituting them. I take a cue in my understanding of *excitability* here from Butler.³⁸ In her theorization of mechanisms of censorship and their unexpected effects, Butler explains that “excitable speech” is a legal term that refers to utterances deemed by the state apparatus to perform beyond the speaker’s intended aim; but since utterances take place within discursive contexts that precede and exceed the speaker, all speech is excitable. In this way, the performative speaker always exists within a sense of “belated metalepsis,” or a system of substitutions

³⁷ Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of “Sex”* (New York: Routledge, 1993), esp. ch. 3.

³⁸ Butler, *Excitable Speech* (New York and Routledge, 1997).

that, rather than preceding discourse, become the effect of discourses that precede it. *In Search of Shakespeare* represents the excitable state of the pedagogue who doubly engages with the discourse of the truth, actuality, and authenticity of history. The mode of pedagogy Wood adopts in the film mixes education and entertainment, or learning and pleasure, with the goal of making the study of history more engaging by teaching the spectator-student ways of working within the limitations of discourse. This is “edutainment” at its finest. Most exciting, Wood’s pedagogy is the point at which the discourse of historical difference *and* sameness fails to register as either normative or non-normative. As a rehabilitative project, *In Search of Shakespeare* likewise fails to deliver on its promises of transformation. And yet, there is a lesson to be learned: if a discourse cannot faithfully account for an actual event, it is not that the event never preceded the present; rather, our understanding of how we connect to history today can be understood as a discourse predicated on the question of *how we know* not *what we know*; more importantly, the film demonstrates the ways in which the failures of discourse to make absolute meaning represent, rather than moments of traumatic epistemological crisis, strategic opportunities whereby we witness overlapping and multiplicitous cultural imperatives whose very plurality can be negotiated, or perhaps even exploited.

The performance of excitable pedagogy operating in the film resonates with theoretical and practical questions that have come to establish the study of queer pedagogy. While theories of queer history take a predominantly anti-identitarian stance, theories of queer pedagogy continue to mark the use of *queer* as a qualifier dependent upon a discussion of identification and its relation to systems both of sameness and

difference. Is queer pedagogy a mode of pedagogy of or about queers, by queers and for queers? Or does *queer* stand in relation to a *pedagogy* of diverse contents, contexts, and constellations of subjects? These are questions that theories continue to work through. Many of the earlier writings on the subject of queer pedagogy take an autobiographical approach and offer first-hand discussions primarily by instructors who identify as lesbian and gay on the trials of teaching within heteronormative systems of education. These projects act as explorations on being queer (which reads as an umbrella term here primarily for gay and lesbian) in the classroom and do the important work of documenting the damaging effects that heterosexism and homophobia have on non-hetero teachers and students alike.³⁹

My concept here of excitable pedagogy and the queer effects it produces, while sympathetic to these projects, takes a different turn. As Mary Bryson and Suzanne de Castell have explored, a mode of pedagogy based upon *queer* as a system of sexual identification, or even academic identification, cannot operate as a fantastical structure of oppositionality that would throw the effects of heterosexism and homophobia into relief.⁴⁰ Even in designated queer studies classrooms, systems of normativity and their referents outside of the classroom reemerge and threaten the fantasies of pedagogical liberation that a queer “safe space” would promise. The efficacy in a system of queer pedagogy, rather, exists in the ways in which *queer* is deployed in a way that positions

³⁹ See for example: Debbie Epstein and Richard Johnson, “On the Straight and Narrow: The Heterosexual Presumption, Homophobias, and Schools” in *Challenging Lesbian and Gay Inequities in Education*, ed. Debbie Epstein (Buckingham, England: Open University Press, 1994), 197-230; and Karen M. Harbeck, *Coming Out of the Classroom Closet: Gay and Lesbian Students, Teachers, and Curricula* (Binghamton, NY: Hawthorn Press, 1992).

⁴⁰ Mary Bryson and Suzanne de Castell, “Telling Tales out of School: Modernist, Critical, and Postmodern ‘True Stories’ about Education Computing” in *Education/Technology/Power: Education Computing as a Social Practice*, eds. H. Bromley and M. W. Apple. (Albany: New York Press, 1998) 65-84.

cultural practices in a strange relation to themselves, to (irreverently) change the stakes of the practice. Studies of pedagogy, for instance, which would supplement *pedagogy* with monikers like *feminist*, *anti-racist*, and *radical*, or qualify with suffixes *of the oppressed* or *of multiliteracies*, are critical of the roles that dominant educational systems play out as sites for the reproduction of unequal power relations.

In what I find to be the clearest articulation on the subject of pedagogy's subjection to the resistance of queer, Susanne Luhmann's work explains the queering of pedagogy becomes the querying of pedagogy. A queer pedagogy would question received models of instruction. Rather than focusing on traditional question of teaching, like what texts should be learned and how should we teach this knowledge, pedagogy might begin with the questions: How is knowledge created in the relationship among teacher, text, and student? And in what ways does the creation of knowledge depend upon the understanding of the student or the teacher as a text, and the text as a student to be taught or disciplined? Luhmann writes: "Although few progressive educators would agree with such a transmission model of learning and teaching, I suggest that it returns like the repressed in the prevalent preoccupation of teachers with methods, or the how-to of teaching. The rationale behind this search for an adequate method is that the teacher's pedagogical skills...will reflect in the students' progress of learning."⁴¹ Wood's pedagogical performance defies the biographical tradition of situating Shakespeare within a more appropriate, and thus more understandable, historical context. His desire to revel in the indeterminacies of histories registers not only in the film's stylistic investments (namely, the use of Wood as omnipotent narrator) but also in the ways in which the limits

⁴¹ Susanne Luhmann, "Queering/Querying Pedagogy? Or, Pedagogy Is a Pretty Queer Thing" in *Queer Theory in Education*, ed. William F. Pinar (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1998), 141-155, 148.

of historical discourses of truth come to be mobilized into Wood's self-critical and yet incredibly disturbing performance of unearthing of his affective investments in how the figure of Shakespeare signifies today.

Reflections

Many of us, I hope, will find the final image of Wood's Shakespeare as the hopelessly heterosexual and dutiful patriarch troubling—both politically and pedagogically—since, no doubt, supporting this image as an historical “truth” would make teaching the playtexts incredibly difficult given the numerous and conflicting ideologies of sexuality represented in the playtexts. But surely many of us find an affinity with Wood's impulses to make Shakespeare enjoyable in the pedagogical setting. I must admit, I see little to no educational value in *In Search of Shakespeare* for my students, but this is not to say it doesn't offer pedagogical value in its metacritical impulse. *In Search of Shakespeare*, along with the larger collection of bio-projects I have examined here, poses to us the question: What excites our pedagogical practices and through us performs in the classroom in a way that incites excitability in our students? Surely this is an impossible question to answer: performativity always exceeds intentions in ways that cannot be foreseen or foreknown. But we can look at the ways Shakespeare has been placed traditionally in institutions of education as a means of understanding the implications that such positionality plays out for our students.

Most of us would agree that today there exists in literature departments, regardless of the decade long canon wars, an emphasis on Shakespeare. At least, we might ask ourselves: can an undergraduate matriculate from our department without

studying Shakespeare in some form? Can the same be said of other literary figures?

Barbara Bowden considers this an example of institutionally supported “Shakespearean exceptionalism,” and she urges us to move beyond it because it operates at the expense of other early modern texts, notably those authored by women.⁴² Bowden is not interested in striking Shakespeare from the academic canon—as if that were even a possible task, let alone a beneficial one; rather, she urges us to rethink how we might include in Shakespeare courses a consideration of the ways Shakespeare was and is shaped, made, and remade, in the early modern period and today, by female audiences.

Shakespeare in the postmodern classroom has become a multi-modal enterprise: many of us use recent technological adaptations of Shakespeare to supplement discussions on the playtexts and on early modern cultural imaginations. To some degree, the inclusion of screen Shakespeares, for instance, has confronted Bowden’s understandable displeasure with Shakespearean exceptionalism. In particular, vernacular adaptations of Shakespeare work to reimagine and recreate Shakespeare—either the cultural idea of Shakespeare as an historical figure or the playtexts—within cultural dialects that include not only specific communities of women but also a multiplicity of raced, classed, and sexed bodies not traditionally represented in conjunction with Shakespeare. *The Street King* (aka *King Rikki*, dir. James Gavin Bedford, 2002), for instance, revises *Richard III* in a specifically east Los Angeles Chicano tone; *Scotland, PA* (dir. Billy Moressette, 2001) adapts *Macbeth* in a way that displaces courtly power struggles onto conflicting working class sensibilities; and *My Own Private Idaho* (dir. Gus Van Sant, 1991) discontinuously samples the *Henriad* to represent the lives of gay

⁴² Barbara Bowden, “Beyond Shakespearean Exceptionalism” in *Shakespeare Matters: History, Teaching, Performance*, ed. Lloyd Davis (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2003), 209-21.

and bisexual male sex workers.⁴³ And the larger collection of rehabilitative Shakespeares document the attempts of marginalized communities to remake and in turn be remade by Shakespeare.

The figure of Shakespeare has become as utilitarian in the larger body of screen adaptations as he has in the subgenre of rehabilitative Shakespeares. It is a foundational premise of this dissertation that the process of rehabilitation produces in the subject a *queer subjectivity*, that is a performative sense of self that operates in flirtatious opposition to both normative *and* nonnormative systems of identification. *Queer*, as I deploy the term, then, is less bound by the desire to disrupt the definition and ultimately the boundaries of identity; rather, the desire—and the performance of that desire—to identify across multiple identity boundaries offers the subject an oppositional strategy wherein systems of identificatory binaries converge in a way that overloads easy delineations of whether or not identity is performative or constitutive. Shakespeare operates as the ideal figure for the performance of identity ideals precisely because, as a signifier, it performs queerly. *Shakespeare* can mean oppression and/or liberation, that which must be overcome and that which can help one to overcome. As an historical figure, Shakespeare can operate both as the son of a glove maker and the man who applied for a family crest; he is the genius who penned compelling dramatic works for the groundlings as well as aristocratic patrons like the Earls of South Hampton and Pembroke.

And yet, in the desire for Shakespeare in this age of mechanical reproduction, consider the implication of the ways in which many of us use film in the classroom.

⁴³ For a discussion on vernacular screen Shakespeares, see: Thomas Cartelli and Katherine Rowe, *New Wave Shakespeare on Screen* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007), esp. ch. 5.

Annalisa Castaldo has argued that many Shakespeare classes include media Shakespeare of some kind at this point, and film in particular.⁴⁴ On some level, this is a response to the ways in which the love of Shakespeareplay in the contemporary moment comes to us in various mediatized forms, courtesy of video and various modes of digital technology. It has become increasingly clear that to teach Shakespeare today means teaching today's Shakespeare. Yet she finds that many educators screen Shakespeare films as part of the syllabus without actually teaching the films. When I was in college, for instance, "film days" were essentially days off, gifted time from our instructor after we turned in papers or resentfully returned from breaks—days, in other words, when we were imagined to be too tired or unwilling to intellectually engage. I wonder how many of us screen films for this same reason. Or perhaps we screen film without critically engaging our students in discussion on, say, how the film reimagines, rejects, or reimplements particular themes, narrative structures, or cultural myths surrounding the playtexts. It is not often that instructors assign material without critically discussing it, but this tends to be the case quite frequently when screen or "entertainment" Shakespeares meet the literary Shakespeare classroom. Perhaps this is a result of the fact that many of us aren't fluent in film studies, or, as Katherine Rowe has suggested, that this is part of the systemic ideologies within Shakespeare studies that entertainment and scholastic rigor should occupy a separate peace from one another.⁴⁵

Whatever the case, our use of film in the Shakespeare classroom, or rather our lack thereof, can lead to the ideological implication that historical boundaries are

⁴⁴ Annalisa Castaldo, "The Film's the Thing: Using Shakespeare Film in the Classroom" in *Spectacular Shakespeare: Critical Theory and Popular Cinema*, eds. Courtney Lehmann and Lisa S. Stark (London: Associated University Presses, 2002), 187-204.

⁴⁵ Katherine Rowe, "Medium-Specificity and other Critical Scripts for Screen Shakespeare" in, *Alternative Shakespeares 3*, ed. Diana Henderson (New York, NY: Routledge, 2007), 34-53.

infallible, even when we try to subvert them; this by extension can serve to (re)install a belief in teleological concepts of time and social reproduction, backed by the institutional power within which we perform our roles as educators. For many of us, this might simply reinforce an already established Shakespearean teleology. In Shakespeare classes, his works are often organized to represent a teleological development of thought or genre. Conceding that Shakespeare haunts the present moment by screening Shakespeare in the classroom without critically discussing it reinforces the idea of the Shakespeare canon as hermetically sealed, impervious to intertextuality or the ways we construct him, the authority of his works, and the place of these works in history. He remains a discreet subject of inquiry in and of himself. Jean E. Howard and Marion F. O'Connor have explored the implications of such treatments of Shakespeare and the ideological effects they have on student bodies: "somewhat like a Dior suit, Shakespeare never ages and eludes all historical implication."⁴⁶

Thus, transforming the pedagogical practices of teaching *Shakespeare* and how that signifier has come to be rehabilitated time and again requires a consideration of the ways in which our own performances may be inadvertently implicated in the effacement of both the historicity of the text at its moment of production as well as the subsequent cultural appropriations of those texts. Rehabilitative Shakespeares are appropriate aids both in a pedagogical and educational meditation on the ways in which a Shakespearean text is never outside of history or ideology; in fact, a consideration of the performances of rehabilitation that Shakespeare authorizes offers an opportunity to discuss with our students not only how meaning is made but also the historical and political means toward

⁴⁶ Jean E. Howard and Marion F. O'Connor, "Introduction" in *Shakespeare Reproduced*, eds. Jean E. Howard and Marion F. O'Connor (New York: Methuen, 1987), 3-17, 6.

which that meaning is used to create alternate meaning, fractured along the lines of disparate social bodies. For the deployment of Shakespeare as a privileged rehabilitative tool in the contemporary moment suggests that Shakespeare is anything but a Dior suit, but he is made to wear one at times to signal his place in certain contexts as a signifier of privilege. Rehabilitative Shakespeares suggest that Shakespeare owns a wardrobe of multiple suits and accessories, some Dior, some decidedly not name brand, but always “hand-me-downs.” He tends to wear well whatever articles we dress him in, from Dior to prison uniform. A problem arises, however, when Shakespeare is invited to an event with the unspecified instructions to dress appropriately. One cannot wear Dior to every event, however accessorized. And sometimes, when outfitted in prison scrubs over a Dior suit, Shakespeare appears too bulky to move freely in certain social spaces.

The ability of *Shakespeare* to perform queerly across contexts suggests that, as a signifier, it comes to embody ideological values that serve to differentiate one context from another. That is, the utilitarian quality of *Shakespeare* lies in its ability to perform an authorizing function in a system of contextual difference. The fact that Shakespeare is deployed as an institutionally sanctioned rehabilitative tool in contexts as disparate as socio-economically challenged elementary school and high-security prison yards suggests that Shakespeare has come to embody embodiment itself, the tangible performance of ideals, values, qualities of feelings being promoted by the very institutions that subsidize the performance of Shakespeare. Shakespeare has become a paradigm—perhaps *the* paradigm—for ideologies of futurity, and all the socio-cultural politics they entail. And as we recapitulate this paradigm in our classes, not as truth but as constructed truth in the

historical moment, we might attend to the futures we imagine for our students, the futures we train and discipline, that is, rehabilitate, them into.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION: CONFRONTING INTERSECTIONS AND EXCLUSIONS

The cultural phenomenon of rehabilitating by Shakespeare suggests that the contemporary moment invests in a humanistic understanding of the subject as imbued with a relatively high-functioning level of personal and social agency. In many ways, rehabilitative Shakespeares point to a present moment coincidental with the early modern, which Stephen Greenblatt has famously characterized as preoccupied with the process of self-fashioning, or the act of constructing one's public persona according to socially acceptable standards of identity and practice.¹ Throughout this dissertation, however, I have traced the ways in which the process of rehabilitation produces both non-normative and queer performances of identity as unintentional byproducts of the desire to normalize and "normativize" individuals into the ideal image of the socially successful subject. These byproductive elements of the normative subvert final claims of rehabilitative success, or a subject's ability to ascend social hierarchies of privilege and resource and leave behind that which it once was.

Yet, rehabilitative Shakespeares programmatically close with a celebration of the subject's effectual performance of self-determination.² Even when rehabilitative aims are left glaringly unfulfilled—most clearly represented in the audio-visual artifacts

¹ Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From Moore to Shakespeare* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983).

² This is perhaps most apparent in the final scene of *My Shakespeare* (see chapter two). During first-person testimonials, rehabilitative subjects have little to say on the benefits of having performed Shakespeare; nonetheless, the program facilitator surprises them with a trip to Shakespeare's Globe Theater, where they seem less than enthused.

documenting Shakespeare's potential behind bars³—they formulaically end with a commemorative nod to what they present as the ability of the subject to transcend systems of social inequality. With this transcendence, they imply, follows social ascension, or the rejection of a previously held identity deemed unsuccessful and non-normative in favor of another, one promised access to increased resource and a more secure, normative future. Documentary and reality-based media artifacts generically present images and accounts of social activity as delivering simple, relatively unmediated meaning: what you see is what you get.⁴ Rehabilitative Shakespeares are no exception.⁵ What we as spectators are imagined to gain is an opportunity to become knowledgeable subjects. Rehabilitative Shakespeares position spectators to learn both about the use value of Shakespeare today and the efficacy of self-determination. We may marvel at the ability of Shakespeare—the historical literary figure and the playtexts associated with that name—to find cultural purchase within divergent and marginalized communities and social spaces. Rehabilitative Shakespeares mark the fantastical point at which Shakespeare's intrinsic value meets its use value. We learn (or at least, we are asked to learn) that the transformative power of Shakespeare can be found in some of the most

³ As I discuss in the third chapter, none of the inmates in the Shakespeare Behind Bars program receive parole. On one level, the documentary uses this point to underscore its representation of the American prison industrial complex as detrimentally regulatory. On the other hand, the film pushes aside the parole board's decisions in order to make the claim that the men, nonetheless, gain valuable insight into the "human condition" through their encounter with Shakespeare.

⁴ Perhaps the most well-cited articulation of this point can be found in Bill Nichols earlier works, especially *Representing Reality: Issues and Concepts in Documentary* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991). While several documentary theorists have successfully troubled this claim, of course, the genre at large, nonetheless, markets itself as offering the most unmediated representation of reality and truth possible. I discuss this point at length in chapter two. For more on critical works that trouble the documentary genre's claim to the transmission of simple truth, see especially: Michael Renov, ed, *Theorizing Documentary* (New York and London: Routledge, 1993) and his monograph *The Subject of Documentary* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004).

⁵ Again, it's worth making the distinction, though I problematize the claim that documentary film transmits unmediated truth, each of the rehabilitative Shakespeare I examine nonetheless make such a claim in their marketing or introductory sequences.

unlikely places, and that a subject's desire for self-survival can overcome amazing social obstacles.

Operating much like the final scenes in Shakespearean romantic comedies, the celebrations offered at the ends of rehabilitative Shakespeares prompt moments of forgetting that threaten to suture over the ways in which attempts at teleological narrative closure often come at someone's expense. The multiple marriages ending *Twelfth Night* tempt us to put Malvolio's humiliation, torture, and imprisonment out of mind. Hymen's nuptial blessing in *As You Like It* allows us to misremember that Rosalind dupes Phebe into marrying Silvius. Isabella's silence on the Duke's marriage proposal in *Measure for Measure* is often taken to signify consent or at least a lack of refusal, but notoriously cannot affirm it.⁶ Rehabilitative Shakespeares would have us rejoice in the union of two paradigms—Shakespeare's contemporary and practical use value and the triumph of doggedly individual agency—at a great political expense. The cultural bodies upon which we are invited to celebrate Shakespeare's use value are avowedly marginalized ones, as rehabilitative Shakespeares point to again and again. The representation of cross-cultural Shakespeare in these artifacts can too easily veil over the fact that rehabilitative Shakespeares celebrate Shakespeare as an intervening resource by propping up marginalized subjects as those in need. It is worth asking what precisely “they” need according to these artifacts. On one level, we witness that these rehabilitative subjects are indeed in need of some mode of social intervention. From immigrant youth and young adult communities who must navigate the daily violence of their current situations,

⁶ The relation between rehabilitative Shakespeares and romantic comedy surfaces most clearly in the pornographic feature films that I group under the title rehabilitative Shakespeares. In each of the various *Romeo and Juliet* adaptations, the sexual teleology of the Juliet figures move from lesbianism to romantic union, and in some cases marriage and children, a decidedly un-pornographic convention. For more on the relation between rehabilitative Shakespeares as romantic comedies, see chapter four.

to inmate populations whose daily existence comes to be structured by detached state regulations: the subjects of Shakespeare rehabilitation represent a diversely collective cultural body situated outside of dominant social consciousness. Systems of social resource are foreclosed for these subjects. However, rehabilitative Shakespeares programmatically confuse social intervention and the need for increased resource with self-determination and personal agency. To celebrate Shakespeare's transformative potential is to position these marginalized cultural bodies as those who must take action on their own behalf, who must learn the transformative power of taking self-action. The implication here is that marginalized social status is not so much a product of particular ideologies of subjecthood—who counts as a subject, and who may access social resources—but a failure of particular bodies to take action in order to better their stations in life. Such an implication should be cause for alarm, not the reason for rejoicing.

I have examined rehabilitative Shakespeare through a queer theoretical lens because queer theory concerns itself with aporia, those modes of social and cultural forgetting that attend processes of normalization. In Barbara Freeman's words, queer theory tends to expend the force of its critical energies in "understanding that what has not entered the historical records, and what is not yet culturally legible, is often encountered in embodied, nonrational forms: as ghosts, scars, gods."⁷ In rehabilitative Shakespeares, the identity of the subject in process signifies that which is "not yet culturally legible." To explicate the ways in which rehabilitative processes confound expectations of how particular identities can be performed—even in supposedly transformational or "inspirational" ways—I have deployed *queer* (and, along with it, *queer subjectivity*) in a way that doesn't readily match up with many contemporary

⁷ Barbara Freeman, "Introduction" in *GLQ* 13.2-3 (2007): 159-176, 159.

understandings of the term. *Queer*, as I deploy it in this project, signifies a processual and performative approach to identifying as a subject. It is a means of conceptualizing identity as a socially and politically constructed system of categorization through which institutions normalize particular modes of living as more or less appropriate or authentic. Many theorists have clearly articulated this point over the past two decades, to the point that understanding identity as socially and politically constructed has become a concept generally understood and accepted.⁸ Along with this understanding and acceptance, however, my understanding of queer also takes seriously the ways in which the non-essence of identity nonetheless serves as a primary basis by which social institutions perform processes of regulation and socialization—processes dependent upon systems of ascension and oppression, and the distribution and withholding of particular socio-cultural resources that signify success, authenticity, appropriateness, and, more generally, life. By extension, *queer subjectivity* signifies a mode of self-representation situated within multiple systems of identification at all moments. Queer subjectivity signifies a strategic sense of self, one in which a subject confounds systems of regulation and socialization by willfully engaging within social imperatives of how “successful subjects” should exist in various cultural spaces.

The emergence of queer subjectivity suggests that the circulation of Shakespeare’s cultural capital cannot easily reduce to either a sense of radical appropriation by marginalized subjects,⁹ nor can it exclusively signify Shakespeare’s

⁸ Most often, cursory nods or brief quotes from Judith Butler establish this theoretical point. See: *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990) and *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of “Sex”* (New York: Routledge, 1993).

⁹ This stance is adopted most aggressively by Kate Chedzoy in *Shakespeare’s Queer Children* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995) and Marianne Novy in the Introduction to *Transforming Shakespeare: Contemporary Women’s Re-Visions in Literature and Performance*, ed. Marianna Novy (New York: Palgrave, 1999) 1-12.

situation within a hopelessly hegemonic rubric.¹⁰ Rather, the process of rehabilitation demonstrates that Shakespeare has become a primary site of cultural negotiation, a mode of cultural capital through which ideologies of appropriateness intersect with concepts of identity and performance in such a way as to reflect back to us our cultural investments in individuation and personal agency. With this investment, however, comes a refusal to articulate differences among identities, and the ways in which some bodies must be abjected from narratives of possibility in order for our laudation of Shakespeare and social agency to continue on as an inspirational tale.

In this conclusion, I explore the benefits of juxtaposing my understanding of queer with representations of Shakespeare's cultural capital from a different perspective. While the previous chapters have explored what queer can tell us about the cultural politics of Shakespeare today, here I examine what Shakespeare's signification in the contemporary moment says on politics of queer theory.

The emergence of queer subjectivity in rehabilitative Shakespeares remind us of the ever-entangled relationship between cultural capital and identity, a politicized relationship that has increasingly become either disavowed, undertheorized, or wholly neglected in recent queer theories of subjectivity and social power. It seems we have forgotten this dynamic in our understanding of the operation of queer as a theoretical tool.¹¹ While the exhausted and exhausting debates over the political efficacy of queer as

¹⁰ For Shakespeare scholars who consider Shakespeare appropriations little more than hegemonic recirculation, see: Michael Bristol, *Big-Time Shakespeare* (New York and London: Routledge, 2005); Kathleen McLuskie and Michael Bristol, *Shakespeare and Modern Theatre: The Performance of Modernity* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001); and Denis Salter, "Acting Shakespeare in Colonial Space." *Shakespeare, Theory, and Performance*, ed. J.C Bulman (London and New York: Routledge, 1996) 113-32.

¹¹ Cindy Patton characterizes such forgetting as endemic in queer theory. She makes the claim that our ability to understand that the social "*constitution* of identities in the civil sphere lags behind the techniques for deconstructing them." See: "Tremble, Hetero Swine!" in *Fear of a Queer Planet: Queer Politics and*

either an intellectual or social method of understanding relations of power will no doubt wage on (as they have since the introduction of the term into academic vernacular), what has been lost in these debates is a reflection on the ability of queer theory to open new considerations on the concept of efficacy itself and the political baggage always already attendant to that concept as a rubric of evaluation.

To put it bluntly, considerations of the politics of queer theory have become stale if not disturbingly hegemonic. Lisa Duggan, for example, has identified this increasingly hegemonic turn as evidence of “the new homonormativity,” which she describes a mode of “politics that does not contest dominant heteronormative assumptions and institutions but upholds and sustains them.”¹² The political has become the internal aporia of queer theory.¹³ That I had to reformulate my use of queer from dominant understandings of the term in this dissertation, so as to more effectively bring to the critical surface the ideological politics saturating the process of rehabilitating subjects into normative ideals, should give pause. That recent work on queer politics and its place in academic, theoretical communities singularly represents queer as built upon a sense of negativity and disbelonging that can be deployed against the political in strategic way should become the occasion for sustained reflection.

Social Theory, ed. Michael Warner (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1993) 143-77, 166.

¹² Lisa Duggan, “The New Homonormativity: The Sexual Politics of Neoliberalism” in *Materializing Democracy: Toward a Revitalized Cultural Politics*, eds. Russ Castronovo and Dana D. Nelson (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002) 175-94, 179.

¹³ Diana Fuss writes, “politics...represents the aporia in much of our current political theorizing” because “that which signifies activism is least actively interrogated” (105). Fuss, writing here in 1989, represents one of many theorists working to articulate the differences by which newly or recently re-politicized identity categories operate in the academic landscape and the activist one. I find today, however, that which signifies activism is too quickly dismissed in “intellectual” work, at least in part because of the desire to establishing such boundaries. While this dynamic may have shifted, understandings and interrogations of the political complexities of queer remain a central aporia in theoretical (and, as Fuss is right to point out, many activist) projects. See: *Essentially Speaking: Feminism, Nature, and Difference* (New York: Routledge, 1989).

It is worth wondering, who has the potential of negating which modes of belonging? What sort of political past and future does this mode of negativity presuppose? It is time, in other words, to return to a consideration of the politics of identity and the role such politics play in the ideological circulation of cultural capital. As queer continues to operate as a critique on the operations of identity, it becomes crucial to question which identities fall outside of queer projects operating in various social spaces, in academia and beyond. In what follows, and as an attempt to synthesize the multiple ways in which queer subjectivity signifies in my previous chapters, I articulate a mode of re-politicizing queer theory by attending to the systems of exclusions and intersections upon which queer is critically imagined to perform politics.

At stake in the re-politicization of queer theory is the ability for it to continue to perform cultural work against normative thought, even as systems of normativity mutate and take on new forms. To frame this theoretical call, I want to consider two important visions of queer politics circulating today. The first, Lee Edelman's *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (which I have variously cited throughout this dissertation) aggressively calls for both a rejection of identity politics as well as what Edelman deems the always normative concept of futurity.¹⁴ He argues that the concept of political hope fails queers because it signifies on the level of reproductive futurity, a concept itself structure around the rejection of queerness. The future, he maintains, simply was not made for queers. Thus, he proposes as a political reaction the radical self-exclusion of queers from not only reproductive politics but the very concept of the future. As I will argue, however, Edelman's dystopic utopia of calculated queer apathy, while built on a

¹⁴ Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2004).

sense of self-exclusion, itself excludes considerations of identity and difference, how differently identified subjects possess varying ranges of cultural capital. The future may fail queers, but it also performs its failure along lines of race, ethnicity, class, and geography, as well as sexuality. What we need in the present moment is a politically-informed sense of queer performativity that takes into account the unavoidable intersections of sexuality with ranges of identity formations we can only yet imagine.

Second, I examine what I consider the most successful articulation of queer intersectionality and how concepts of intersectionality offers a means of rethinking the exclusionary tendencies within the politics of queer theory. In her article, “Punks, Bulldaggers, and Welfare Queens: The Radical Potential of Queer Politics?” Cathy Cohen calls for a reconceptualization of how queer can be brought to bare and made more relevant to the lives and struggles of those marginalized subjects who fall within nonce taxonomies, those neither particularly normative nor non-normative, but who fall between binaries of thought and, consequential, outside of most queer theoretical projects.¹⁵ Attending to intersectionalities of queerness, as Cohen demonstrates, offers a means of performing queer theory that resists the privileging of already politically privileged subjects. As I will argue, however, Cohen maps the lines of intersectionality in a too geometrical way, one that potentially flattens political inequality in order to bring systems of social inequality into the future of queer theory.

Working with and against Edelman and Cohen’s provocative works, I suggest that if we are to move beyond the stalemate that has become queer politics in queer theory, we must understand that the challenge is not so much in the rejection of the inertia of

¹⁵ Cathy Cohen, “Punks, Bulldaggers, and Welfare Queens: The Radical Potential of Queer Politics” in *GLQ* 3 (1997): 437-65.

normative ideologies to usher society into what is for some of an impossible vision of the future. As rehabilitative Shakespeares demonstrate, for some subjects the promise of a better future signifies as illogically as the promise of a future in the first place.¹⁶ For queer politics, the challenge is to actively organize in aggressively visible, outspoken, and harassing ways against normative ideologies of futurity and betterment *while also understanding that any concept of futurity—queer or otherwise—is always already framed in the identity politics of race, ethnicity, class, and geography, as well as sexuality*. The ways in which these lines of identification intersect, wavering across the asymmetrical lines of cultural capital (who has it, and who can use it in which contexts) need to centrally factor into queer theories of social practice and power if queer theory is to have any political purchase beyond a critique of academic navel gazing. If we are to resist this tendency, then, the politics of exclusion offer a productive starting point.

Exclusions

It has been over a decade since Annamarie Jagose posed the question, “Does queer become defunct the moment it is an intelligible and widely disseminated term?”¹⁷ Almost as soon as queer gained recognizable diacritical usage in academia, critics were offering apocalyptic (and I would add premature) warnings that the term had lost political

¹⁶ In *Terrorist Assemblages Homonationalism in Queer Times* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), Jasbir K. Puar similarly calls for a reconsideration of the overdetermined dynamic of the intersections of identity in queer politics. She argues that the challenge for queer politics is to “understand how the biopolitics of regenerative capacity already demarcate racialized and sexualized statistical population aggregates as those in decay, destined for no future, based not upon whether they can or cannot reproduce children but on what capacities they can or cannot regenerate and what kinds of assemblages they compel, repel, spur, deflate” (211). In my treatment of queer politics, I take a cue from Puar’s work, with the addendum that socio-economically underprivileged cultural bodies, as rehabilitative Shakespeares continually suggest, must also be understood in terms of class lines, which are themselves always already inflected by race, ethnicity, and geography, as well as sexuality.

¹⁷ Annamarie Jagose, *Queer Theory: An Introduction* (New York: New York University Press, 1996), 127.

valence. In 1995, for instance, David Halperin proclaimed, “queer politics may, by now, have outlived its political usefulness” because “the more it verges on becoming a normative academic discipline, the less queer ‘queer theory’ can plausibly claim to be.”¹⁸ That same year, Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner observed that “Queer is hot,” but that its appeal spoke more to critical fantasies of what queer theory is imagined to accomplish than how it tended to operate in various critical practices and disciplines.¹⁹ They offer the caveat, “The critical mass of queer work is more a matter of perception than volume” (343). Teresa de Lauretis disagrees, slightly. De Lauretis, who is commonly credited with inaugurating the term “queer theory” into academic vernacular, similarly claimed that queer had lost, at least by 1994, what she articulated three years earlier as its intervening potential to “recast or reinvent the terms of our sexualities, to construct another discursive horizon, another way of thinking the sexual.”²⁰ Within an incredibly short time, queer, she explains, had “quickly become a conceptually vacuous creature of the publishing industry.”²¹ It would seem, then, that many of the major figures of queer theory in the 1990s would affirm Jagose’s question in their claims that queer has lost its ability to perform the radical political ends for which it was intended.

¹⁸ David Halperin, *Saint Foucault: Toward a Gay Hagiography* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 112, 113.

¹⁹ Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner, “What Does Queer Theory Teach us about X?” in *PMLA* 110.3 (1995): 343-49, 343.

²⁰ Teresa de Lauretis, “Queer Theory: Lesbian and Gay Sexualities” in *differences* 1 (Summer 1991): vii-xvii, iv. For de Lauretis, queer theory initially offered a potential means of repairing the rift between gay and lesbian communities, through what she explains as both a move of transcending and transgressing boundaries of difference. While she never offers a clear articulation of how queer theory would function, she does offer the following: “rather than marking the limits of the social space by designating a place at the edge of culture, gay sexuality in its specific female and male cultural (or subcultural) forms acts as an agent of social progress whose mode of functioning is both interactive and yet resistant, both participatory and yet distinct, claiming at once equality and difference, demanding political representation while insisting on its material and historical specificity” (iii).

²¹ de Lauretis, “Habit Changes” in *differences* 6:2-3 (1994): 296-313, 297.

While dubious claims of the death of theory can account in some part for the quick turn against the political potential of queer, for the most part it seems that queer has been abandoned primarily for the ways in which it has moved from a once activist-inflected term to a relatively disciplined rubric of thought.²² As Tavia Nyong'o warns, "that this perceived transformation of queer from 'street' to 'straight' theorizing...should come so rapidly—at times it seems as if queer theory was greeted at birth with castigations of academic insularity—ought to become the occasion for further reflection."²³ Queer political potential has not come under erasure because it has become a recognizable academic discipline,²⁴ but rather because its mode of thought has been disciplined around what are imagined to be "academic" interests. It has become apolitical in practice, not position or potential. The apolitics of queer theory results from tendency, in other words, not inevitability. Since the 1990s, queer theorists have worked to distance their intellectual pursuits from more colloquial and vernacular understandings of queer operating in lesbian and gay rights movements and grassroots activist projects.²⁵ Many activist-based uses of queer, then and now, constitute a political rallying cry for liberation, a concept of which postmodern thought is particularly suspicious. In this dissertation, I am also incredibly suspicious (in fact, I reject the claim) that the cultural

²² As Sue Ellen Case puts it so well, "Many 'queer' academics write this affluent, commodity fetishism...Antiassimilationist in its move from pleading civil rights, the queer movement insinuates sexual citizenship through affluence in the market and the willing participation in national agendas" (31). See: "Toward a Butch-Feminist Retro-Future" in *Queer Frontiers: Millennial Geographies, Genders, and Generations*, eds. Joseph A. Boone, Martin Dupuis, Martin Meeker, Karin Quimby, Cindy Sarver, Debra Silverman, and Rosemary Weatherston (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2000) 23-38.

²³ Tavia Nyong'o, "Punk'd Theory" in *Social Text* 23.3-4 (Winter 2005): 19-34, 19.

²⁴ In these years of the American economic crisis, for instance, I challenge anyone to scan the few available jobs open to junior scholars—or senior scholars for that matter—and find one that calls for a someone exploring or even utilizing queer theory. This challenge goes double for listing for scholars of Shakespeare and Renaissance literature.

²⁵ For an account of the tension between activist and academic understandings of queer, see: Annamarie Jagose, *Queer Theory: An Introduction*, and William B. Turner, *A Genealogy of Queer Theory* (Philadelphia, P.A.: Temple University Press, 2000).

iconicity of Shakespeare can liberate marginalized subjects from lower-class social status, but I do acknowledge that in most cases subjects are offered increased social resource as a result of their encounter with Shakespeare. That this encounter liberates them is an impossible claim; that it destabilizes political boundaries of identity, social power, and cultural capital is clear. That theorists need to acknowledge the intersection between queer and the social is crucial.

Edelman understands that queer always already evokes fantasies of the social. In his searing polemic, he defines and describes queer within a psychoanalytic optic of negativity. The coercively naturalized and naturalizing state of politics and its strategic deployment of heteronormative reproductivity serve as his primary critique, and his basis for alerting readers to the notion that “the structuring optimism of politics of which the order of meaning commits us, installing as it does the perpetual hope of reaching meaning through signification, is always...a negation of this primal, constitutive and negative act” (3). On the concept of queer negativity, he argues, “the embrace of queer negativity...can have no justification if justification requires it to reinforce some positive social value; its value, instead, resides in its challenge to value as defined by the social, and thus in its radical challenge to the very value of the social itself” (6). In Edelman’s terms, the political moment inevitably excludes particular bodies (specifically, queer bodies) to allow others to signify naturally, normally; politics excludes, just as signification negates. Both political exclusion and the negativity of signification, he explains, condense on the figure of the queer.

Queerness plays out in the social and political sphere most clearly for Edelman through ideological investments in futurity and reproduction. In fact, in *No Future*, the

concepts of futurity and reproduction are tethered together by the political and to the political, hopelessly intertwined in such a way the forecloses political hope to those unable to signify within the normative—which is for Edelman, synonymous with heteronormative—ideology of reproduction. Since politics makes queerness unthinkable, the queer political response, then, would be a rejection of the political itself, a refusal to attempt to signify within ideologies of futurity at all. “*Queerness*,” he urges, “names the side outside the consensus by which all politics confirms the absolute value of reproductive futurism. The ups and downs of political fortune may measure the social order’s pulse, but *queerness*, by contrast, figures, outside and beyond its political symptoms” (3).

This rallying statement against reproductive futurity, like so many to be found throughout *No Future*, offers a seductive stance, one which, I fully admit, hails me as forcefully as any “Hey you!” I might hear on the street. To be outside the political consensus, to just say no to the future and the social imperative to multiply and prosper, to displace social anger onto the figure of the Child: this is what political fantasies are made of. Whenever I attend conferences or workshops entitled some variation of “Women in Academe” and the conversation inevitably centers on how to make time for one’s children and family, I may commiserate with those concerns but want to, nonetheless, screamingly point out the presumptive and normativizing effect such conversations engender. Whenever I feel the back of my ankles clipped by an enormous stroller while I’m out shopping or running errands, or when I cannot walk at my own pace because I’m trapped behind the cue of one of those grandiose child carriages, I find affinity with Edelman’s angry calls to renunciation:

Queers must respond to the violent force of such constant provocations not only by insisting on our equal rights to the social order's prerogatives, not only by avowing our capacity to promote that social order's coherence and integrity, but also by saying explicitly what Law and the Pope and the whole of the Symbolic order for which they stand hear anyways in each and every expression or manifestation of queer sexuality: Fuck the social order and the Child in whose name we're collectively terrorized; fuck Annie; fuck the waif from *Les Mis*; fuck the poor, innocent kid on the Net; fuck Laws both with capital ls and with small; fuck the whole network of Symbolic relations and the future that serves as its prop. (29)

The degree to which *No Future* has been mobilized in myriads of re-articulations of the politics and cultural work of queer suggests its seductive quality, as well as the critical desire to authorize Edelman's view of political resistance.

Less concerned with defining queer than describing the political conditions of queerness, he explains, "queerness can never define an identity; it can only ever disturb one" (17) because queerness insistently resists the Symbolic order, that which "invests us as subjects insofar as we invest ourselves in it" (18). Edelman figures queerness as an embodiment of the psychoanalytic concept of the death drive: that destructive pull toward a *jouissance* that confounds sense of unity and cohesion. Edelman's insistence on the negativity of queer, if it does nothing else, reminds us again and again, like continual thumps on the head throughout this book, that he "propos[es] no platform or position from which queer sexuality or any queer subject might finally and truly become itself, as if it could somehow manage thereby to achieve an *essential* queerness" (18). I sympathize and agree for the most part with Edelman's dissatisfaction over the ways in which academic deployments have essentialized the term queer, either as a synonym for individuals who regularly engage in non-normative sexualities (primarily gays, lesbians, and sometimes bisexuals). I find the easy equation between queer and non-normative less

of a critical oversight than a habitual practice, one that, in my estimation, accounts for much of the intellectual inertia behind the reiteration that queer cannot describe an identity.²⁶

However, Edelman follows his description of queer as “anti-identitary” with a telling footnote, one that illustrates the degree to which the desire to resist essentializing queer as an identificatory marker continually rebounds, in *No Future* as well as in other seminal works on queer theory, with the refusal to engage the socio-political elements always already bound up with the term. Edelman anticipates objections to his methodology by writing:

There are many types of resistance for which, in writing a book like this, it is best to be prepared. One will be the defiantly “political” rejection of what some will read as an “apolitical” formalism, an insufficiently “historicized” intervention into the materiality of politics as we know it. . . . A variant will assail the bourgeois privilege (variously described, in identitarian terms, as “white,” “middle-class,” “academic,” or most tellingly, “gay male”) by which some will allege that my argument here is determined. That many of those proposing this reading will themselves be “white, “middle-class,” and “academic”—and, perhaps, not a few “gay males”—will not disturb the ease with which such “determination” is affirmed. I have somewhat greater sympathy for those who might be inclined to dismiss the book for its language (which they’ll call jargon), for its theoretical framework (which they’ll view as elitist), for its difficulty (which they’ll see as pretension), or for its style (which they’ll find to be tortuous). These objections at least have the virtue of acknowledging a frustration of desire in the face of what is experienced as overpresence of a drive. “Somewhat greater” though it may be, however,

²⁶ We can see a more recent example of the methodological homology between “queer” and “non-normative” in Karin Quimby and Walter L. Williams’s contribution *Queer Frontiers*, a text which introduced, in many respects, the importance of intersectionality into contemporary queer thought. On their methodology, Quimby and Williams write: “We use *queer* in this context to refer to the myriad forms of same-sex and other nonnormative kinds of desire that have come to inform certain specific identity groups. At the same time, we acknowledge that many of those from the generation about which this chapter is written find this term offensive. Later in the chapter, we will use the term *gay* when we write about what was in fact a mostly male homosexual movement” (194). While they are willingly to take into account difference in generation, they leave queer and non-normative entirely synonymous, which demonstrates the degree to which the conceptual sameness between the terms has become dangerously normalized. See: “Unmasking the Homophile in 1950s Los Angeles: An Archival Record” in *Queer Frontiers*, 166-95.

my sympathy for even this form of response has its limits as well, I confess. (157-8)

It is difficult not to admire Edelman's tenacity here, even if it overdetermines both the reception of the book as well the relationship between theory and politics. He astutely points toward some of the major critique of queer theory in his defense and the exhausting if not disturbing ways in which it has been variously deemed elitist or based on jargon. (Admitting to what can be seen as an intellectual oversight on my part, I have never managed to see the elitism involved in introducing colloquial or vernacular descriptors into academic discourse.)²⁷ It is difficult not to acknowledge that much queer theory is dedicated to explorations of gay male communities or practices, as several critics have noted.²⁸ Less theorized, queer theory also tends to universally racialize and class their subjects and concerns, while also almost exclusively working within an urban context. Edelman's theory of queer politics is no exception. He may anticipate my critique, but it makes it no less applicable, and more importantly, crucial to an understanding of the relationship between queer theory and queer politics.

²⁷ In one of the most illustrative examples of critical receptions of queer theory as based upon elitist and inaccessible vernacular, Stevi Jackie and Sue Scott make the claim, "Much of this theory is couched in language inaccessible to those outside the intellectual clique which produces it" (16). Emblematic of this argument, they turn toward a passage from Judith Butler. They cite her exploration of butch-femme dynamics in *Gender Trouble*, in which Butler write, "As one lesbian femme explained, she likes her boys to be girls, meaning that 'being a girl' contextualizes and resignifies 'masculinity' in butch identity. As a result, that masculinity, if it can be called, is always brought into relief against a culturally intelligible 'female body'" (156). Jackie and Scott follow this citation with the claim, "It is doubtful whether those depicted here would recognize themselves" (17). While there are many means into a critique of Butler's argument here, to assess this passage as elitist based on its use of concepts like girl boys and female masculinity seem to speak more to critical desire to uphold intelligible distinctions of identity and boundaries of "intellectual" thought than inaccessibility of language. See: *Feminism and Sexuality* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1996).

²⁸ This claim was posed early on by Sheila Jeffreys and extended into a new direction by Judith Halberstam. See: Jeffreys, "The Queer Disappearance of Lesbian Sexuality in the Academy" in *Women's Studies International Forum* 17.5 (1994): 459-472; and Halberstam's *Female Masculinity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998).

Like many others, I, too, deploy the term *queer* as a non-identity, in that it signifies the ways in which subjects are read between and across multiple identities, from categories of sexual orientation and gender, to those denoting specific ethnic, racial, and class affiliations. This should not imply, however, that the ability of queer to disrupt and potential rupture the boundaries by which we perceive identity equates an *anti-identitarian* stance. Queer subjectivity, as I describe it here, emerges through an understanding of the strategic ways in which regulatory and disciplining powers deploy concepts of identity for social effect, but also by subjects as they navigate these different powers. Queer is not against identity; it stands in opposition to both the wholesale prescription of identity *along with* the fantasy that we can ever rid ourselves of the politics that attend acts of identification. There is no getting beyond identity, just as there is no point at which we can engage the social without also confronting the politics of identities. Deploy queer as an anti-identitarian paradigm forecloses considerations of how specific identities carry varying degrees of cultural capital and social resource in various contexts; it threatens to universalize identification as a singular process while promoting a rather delusional belief that subjects can overcome the ways in which they signify and are made to signify politically based on how they perform their particular modes of being across multiple identities. Politics are built upon debates of identity and resource; anti-identitarianism misremembers that.

If political queerness depends upon a radical renunciation of the figure of the Child as a socio-symbolic gesture of rejecting the future, such a political move presupposes a high degree of social agency on the part of the (queer) subject. To reject the future, one must possess the future. One must first have a future to reject. More to the

point, the politically queer subject Edelman naturalized throughout his polemic must possess the future to such a degree that the gesture of rejection would signify as a radically departure—which is to say, noticeably resistant, recognizably oppositional, and spectacular in its own right. José Esteban Muñoz similarly critiques Edelman, claiming that “[h]e all but ignores the point that other modes of particularity within the social are constitutive of subjecthood beyond the kind of *jouissance* that refuses both narratological meaning and what he understands as the fantasy of futurity.”²⁹ Just as not all subjects find themselves reflected in the privileging ideologies of reproductive futurity, not all subjects possess the privileged ability to signify within Edelman’s queer politic. Also, not all figures of the Child, after all, evoke the powerless political sway of Edelman’s Child.

Intersectionalities

William B. Turner warned in 2000, if it remains unmarked by the politics of identity in critical theory, “‘queer’ could become gender- and race-blind utopia of white males.”³⁰ Nine years later, Edelman’s *No Future*, what I see as the most politically-inflected recent exploration of the relation between queer theory and the social, suggests it already has. Other queer theorists have noticed as much, and present as a means of reclaiming for queer theory its once promising opposition to more rarified operations of theory a critical refocusing on the concept of intersectionality.³¹ Cathy Cohen expresses

²⁹ José Esteban Muñoz, “Cruising the Toilet: LeRoi Jones/Amiri Baraka, Radical Black Traditions and Queer Futurity” in *GLQ* 13.2-3 (2007): 353-67, 364.

³⁰ William B. Turner, *A Genealogy of Queer Theory*, 168.

³¹ In what follows, I call upon Cohen’s work as emblematic of the critical call for intersectionality as an organizing rubric in queer theory, but several other theorists have contributed to this movement. See: Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006); Arnaldo Cruz and Martin F. Manalansan, eds. *Queer Globalization: Citizenship and the Afterlife of Colonialism* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2002); José Esteban Muñoz, *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics* (London and Minneapolis: University

similar dissatisfaction with the inability of queer theory to account for (or even make room for) considerations of queerness beyond binaristic understandings of heterosexual and “everything else.” She identifies that “one of the greatest failing of queer theory and especially queer politics has been their inability to incorporate into analysis of the world and strategies for political mobilization the roles that race, class, and gender play in defining people’s differing relations to dominant and normalizing power” (457). Cohen recommends that theorists conceptualize categories of identity based on sexual reproductivity along the points at which they collide with other categories of identity, namely race. People of color, she testifies, often voice distance (or at the very least unease) with queer politics because the very term *queer* has been historically rooted in gender, class, and racial privilege. Thus, as intersectional political strategy of theorizing sexuality would allow queer politics to rethink the bases upon which social inequality and oppression come to rest.

With Cohen’s call for political and theoretical intersectionality in mind, we can rethink the perversely privileged system of politics operating in Edelman’s *No Future*. For Cohen, intersectionality—theoretically framed or otherwise—enables a mode of alternative coalition building, or working against universalizing systems of politics that situate certain cultural bodies as allies and others as enemies. Applying this approach to Edelman, we see that the Child he scarifies to the new queer political order may not be the enemy after all—the name by which queerness comes to be terrorized—but yet another fetishized socio-symbolic figure abjected from the homonormative social

of Minnesota Press, 1999); and John C. Hawley, ed., *Postcolonial, Queer: Theoretical Intersections* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2001).

consensus to the effect that privileged white, middle-class, gay male populations may perform an unquestioning form of politics under the banner of radical action.

By the same token, Cohen's testimonial of gays and lesbians of color and the understandable skepticism of queer as a radical mode of coalition building evokes a host of conceptual problems as well. We must wonder if introducing another binaristic paradigm (of color and not) can conceptually spin the already binaristic axis of "queer" and "not queer" in a productive direction.³² Again, we return to the threat of essentializing queer as a stable and privileged identity, against which Cohen herself attempts to work. By all means, theorists need to confront the ways in which race and sexuality form mutually constitutive identity categories if queer is to perform its political potential. However, re-conceptualizing difference outside of singular focused systems of socialization and regulation becomes equally crucial. We might think here, for example, of the tensions between the local and the national or the global represented in *The Hobart Shakespeareans*. The documentary racializes its representation of Los Angeles as specifically Latino and Korean, to the point that its claim that Latino, Korean, and Korean-American youth must dissociate from their local environment in order to capitalize upon social resource becomes an ambivalent one. On one level, the film fetishizes these youth communities to make a social commentary on race and social privilege; on the other hand, it uses this social commentary in order to refashion these youth communities into an image of the white, non-violent, educated-class American

³² For instance, Cohen writes, "Despite the possibility of the idea of queerness and the practice of queer politics, I argue that a truly radical or transformative politics has not resulted from queer activism. In many instances, instead of destabilizing the assumed categories and binaries of sexual identity, queer politics has served to reinforce simple dichotomies between heterosexual and everything 'queer'" (438). Her understanding of the politics of race, equally represented within an either/or framework, seems to extend the problem to another axis rather than destabilizing the larger structure of the problem.

ideal. Such refashioning, however, takes different forms. The film offers though first-person testimonials images of Korean-American youth who fight to access systems of higher education, while it represents Latino youth as the identity category that primarily struggles to avoid gang life. By taking into account the different modes of racialization between the local and the national, we witness the ways in which social power and cultural capital take various and sometimes unexpected forms.

The Hobart Shakespearians also demonstrates that, if we understand queer as performance of identity, an event that occurs at the point of multiple intersections without following any one line of identity through to its expected endpoint, then it is not always necessary take sexuality or sexual orientation as the primary rubric of questioning or evaluation. If we think of identity as an intersectional and contingent phenomenon, always emerging and mutating in different and unforeseeable directions, then privileging sexuality as a theoretical concern is little more than that: a mode of conceptual privilege, one that, so far, has by and large produced theoretical work that follow the lines of social privilege it would question. As one collective article puts it, emergent work in the field “demands a renewed queer studies ever vigilant to the fact that sexuality is intersectional, not extraneous to other modes of difference, and calibrated to a firm understanding of queer as a *political metaphor without a fixed referent*” (my italics).³³

Let me be clear here: though I insist on a reconsideration of the politics of identity operation within queer theory, I am not calling for a return to an understanding of queer as an umbrella term for lesbian, gay, and bisexual identities. As activists and theoretical

³³ David L. Eng, Judith Halberstam, and José Esteban Muñoz, “Introduction: What’s Queer about Queer Studies Now?” in *Social Text* 23.3-4 (Winter 2005): 1-17, 1. This introduction remains one of the most important representations of the emergent critical turn toward assessing the social and political dynamics that inflect the term queer, across multiple geographies, including but not reducible to academia.

projects on intersex and transgender communities has demonstrated,³⁴ attempting to stretch the signification of queer toward an all-encompassing paradigm tears at the very coalition-building potential such a move usually intends by covering over notable differences in the ways in which some “queer” subjects are made to move in various social spaces. Acknowledging these limitations, however, should not presuppose an abandoning of the political potential of queer to bring together variously marginalized subjects while also testifying to difference of marginalization. In calling out the political limitations of the use of queer as an umbrella term, or in questioning the possibilities of liberation, I am signaling my refusal to forego the activist ethos with which queer continues to circulate, even if these circulations fail to register in seminal works on queer theory.

³⁴ See, for instance: Judith Kegan Gardiner, *Masculinity Studies & Feminist Theory: New Directions* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002); Joan Nestle, Clare Howell, and Riki Wilchins, eds. *GenderQueer: Voices from Beyond the Sexual Binary* (Los Angeles: Aylson Books, 2002); and Susan Stryker and Stephen White, eds. *The Transgender Studies Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2006).

REFERENCES

- “Act V.” *This American Life*. Prod. Ira Glass. Radio. International Public Radio, 2004.
- Aebischer, Pascale and Nigel Wheale. “Introduction.” *Remaking Shakespeare: Performance Across Media, Genres and Culture*. Eds. Pascale Aebischer, Edward J. Esche, and Nigel Wheale. New York: Palgrave, 2003. 1-17.
- Ahmed, Sara. *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2006.
- Althusser, Louis. “A Letter on Art.” *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*. Trans. Ben Brewster. New York: Monthly Review Press, 2001. 151-55.
- , “Ideology and the Ideological State Apparatus.” *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*. Trans. Ben Brewster. New York: Monthly Review Press, 2001. 85-126.
- Altman, Rick. *Film/Genre*. London: British Film Institute Publishing, 1999.
- Alwes, Derek B. *Sons and Authors in Elizabethan England*. Newark, DE: University of Delaware Press, 2004.
- Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities*. London: Verso, 1983.
- Anderson, Mark. *‘Shakespeare’ By Another Name: The Life of Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford, the Man Who Was Shakespeare*. New York: Gotham, 2005.
- Auslander, Philip. *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture*. New York and London: Routledge, 1999.
- Barish, Jonas. *The Anti-Theatrical Prejudice*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985.

- Bate, Jonathan. *The Genius of Shakespeare*. London: Picador, 1997.
- , *Soul of the Age: A Biography of the Mind of William Shakespeare*. New York: Random House, 2009.
- Berlant, Lauren and Barbara Freeman. "Queer Nationality." *Fear of a Queer Planet: Queer Politics and Social Theory*. Ed. Michael Warner. Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1993. 193-229.
- Berlant, Lauren and Michael Warner. "What Does Queer Theory Teach us about X?" *PMLA* 110.3 (1995): 343-49.
- Bernett, Mark Thornton and Romona Wray, eds. *Screening Shakespeare in the Twenty-first Century*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006.
- Bersani, Leo. *Homos*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995.
- Bhabha, Homi. "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse." *Modern Literary Theory: A Reader*. Eds. Philip Rice and Patricia Waugh. Arnold, 1989.
- Billing, Christian. "The Distorting Mirror." *Refiguring Mimesis: Representation in Early Modern Literature*. Eds. Jonathan Holmes and Adrian Streete (Hatfield: University of Hertfordshire Press, 2005. 137-59.
- Borch-Jacobson, Mikkel. *Lacan: The Absolute Master*. Trans. Douglass Brick. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991.
- Bowden, Barbara. "Beyond Shakespearean Exceptionalism." *Shakespeare Matters: History, Teaching, Performance*. ed. Lloyd Davis. Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2003.
- Brecht, Bertolt. *Brecht on Theatre*. Ed. and trans. John Willett. New York: Hill and Wang, 1964.

- Bristol, Michael. *Big-Time Shakespeare*. New York and London: Routledge, 2005.
- *Shakespeare's America, America's Shakespeare*. London and New York: Routledge, 1990.
- Brooks, Douglas A. *From Playhouse to Printing House: Drama and Authorship in Early Modern England*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
- Brooks, Peter. *Melodramatic Imagination*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995.
- Bryson, Mary and Suzanne de Castell. "Telling Tales out of School: Modernist, Critical, and Postmodern 'True Stories' about Education Computing." *Education/Technology/Power: Education Computing as a Social Practice*. Eds. H. Bromley and M. W. Apple. Albany: University of New York Press, 1998. 65-84.
- Burt, Richard. *Shakespeare After Mass Media*. New York: Palgrave, 2002.
- *Unspeakable ShaXXXspeares*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998.
- Butler, Heather. "What do you call a Lesbian with Long Fingernails? The Development of Lesbian and Dyke Pornography." *Porn Studies*. ed. Linda Williams. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2004.
- Butler, Judith. *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* New York: Routledge, 1993.
- *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative*. New York and London: Routledge, 1997.
- *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge, 1990.
- *Giving an Account of Oneself*. New York: Fordham University press, 2005.

- , "The Force of Fantasy: Feminism, Mapplethorpe, and Discursive Excess." *Feminism and Pornography*. Ed. Drucilla Cornell. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000. 487-508.
- Calderwood, James. *Shakespearean Metadrama*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1971.
- Carroll, William C. *Fat King, Lean Beggar: Representations of Poverty in the Age of Shakespeare*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996.
- Cartelli, Thomas. *Repositioning Shakespeare: National Formations, Postcolonial Appropriations*. New York and London: Routledge, 1993.
- Cartelli, Thomas and Catherine Rowe. *New Wave Shakespeare on Screen*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007.
- Cartmell, Deborah, ed. *Interpreting Shakespeare on Screen*. London: McMillan, 2000
- Case, Sue Ellen. "Toward a Butch-Feminist Retro-Future." *Queer Frontiers: Millennial Geographies, Genders, and Generations*. Eds. Joseph A. Boone, Martin Dupuis, Martin Meeker, Karin Quimby, Cindy Sarver, Debra Silverman, and Rosemary Weatherston. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2000. 23-38.
- Castaldo, Annalisa. "The Film's the Thing: Using Shakespeare Film in the Classroom." *Spectacular Shakespeare: Critical Theory and Popular Cinema*. Eds. Courtney Lehmann and Lisa S. Stark. London: Associated University Presses, 2002.
- Caserio, Robert. "Queer Passions, Queer Citizenship: Some Novels about the State of the American Nation, 1946-1954." *Modern Fiction Studies* 43.1 (1997): 170-205.
- Charnes, Linda. *Notorious Identity: Materializing the Subject in Shakespeare*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993.
- Chedgzoy, Kate. *Shakespeare's Queer Children*. Manchester: Manchester University

Press, 1995.

Children of Paradise. Dir. Marcel Carne. Film. Pathé Consortium Cinéma. 1945.

Colbert, Steven. "The Word, 'Bard': Teaching Kids Shakespeare will just make them more Violent." *The Colbert Report*: Comedy Central. Episode 2051. Television. 2006

Cohen, Adam Max. *Shakespeare and Technology: Dramatizing Early Modern Technological Revolutions*. New York: Palgrave, 2006.

Cohen Cathy. "Punks, Bulldaggers, and Welfare Queens: The Radical Potential of Queer Politics." *GLQ* 3.1997.

Cohen, Derek. *The Politics of Shakespeare*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993.

Coursen, H.R. *Shakespearean Performance as Interpretation*. London and Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1992.

----- *Shakespeare Translated*. New York: Peter Lang, 2005.

Cruz, Arnaldo and Martin F. Manalansan, eds. *Queer Globalization: Citizenship and the Afterlife of Colonialism*. New York and London: New York University Press, 2002.

Dawson, Robert. "Cross cultural Shakespeare: Akira Kurosawa Reading Shakespeare." *A Concise Companion to Shakespeare on Screen*. Ed. Diana Henderson. Oxford: Blackwell, 2006. 155-175.

De Lauretis, Teresa. "Habit Changes" *differences* 6:2-3 (1994): 296-313.

----- "Queer Theory: Lesbian and Gay Sexualities." *differences* 1 (Summer 1991): vii-xvii.

- Derrida, Jacques. *Speech and Phenomena*. Trans. D. Allison. Evanston: Northwest University Press, 1973.
- . "Signature Event Context." *Margins of Philosophy*. Trans. Alan Bass. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982. 309-330.
- Desmet, Christy. "Introduction." *Shakespeare and Appropriation*. Ed. Christy Desmet and Robert Sawyer. London and New York: Routledge, 1999. 1-12.
- Desmet, Christy and Robert Sawyer. "Introduction" in *Harold Bloom's Shakespeare*. eds. Christy Desmet and Robert Sawyer. London: Palgrave, 2002.
- Dinshaw, Carolyn. "Theorizing Queer Temporalities: A Roundtable Discussion." *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*. 2007.
- . "Chaucer's Queer Touches/A Queer Touches Chaucer." *Exemplaria*.7.1, 1995
- Dinshaw, Carolyn, Lee Edelman, Roderick A. Ferguson, Carla Freccero, Elizabeth Freeman, Judith Halberstam, Annamarie Jagose, Christopher Nealon, and Nguyen Tan Hoang. "Theorizing Queer Temporalities: A Roundtable Discussion." *GLQ* 13.2-3 (2007): 177-195.
- Doane, Mary Ann. *The Desire to Desire: The Woman's Film of the 1940s*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987.
- Dobson, Michael. *The Making of the National Poet*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994.
- Dream in Hanoi*. Dir. Tom Weidlinger. Film. Dateline Productions. 2002.
- Double Life*. Dir. George Cukor. Film. Garson Kanin Productions. 1947.
- Duggan, Lisa. "The New Homonormativity: The Sexual Politics of Neoliberalism." *Materializing Democracy: Toward a Revitalized Cultural Politics*. Eds. Russ

Castronovo and Dana D. Nelson. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002. 175-94.

----- "Queering the State." *Social Text* 39.2 (1994): 1-14.

Duncan-Jones, Katherine, ed. "Preface." *The Arden Shakespeare: Shakespeare's Sonnets*. London: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1997.

Dutton, Richard. "'If I'm Right': Michael Wood's *In Search of Shakespeare*" in *Screening Shakespeare in the Twenty-First Century*. eds. Mark Thornton Burnett and Ramona Wray. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006

Edelman, Lee. *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2004.

Eng, David L., Judith Halberstam, and José Esteban Muñoz. "Introduction: What's Queer about Queer Studies Now?" *Social Text* 23.3-4 (Winter 2005): 1-17.

Epstein, Debbie and Richard Johnson. "On the Straight and Narrow: The Heterosexual Presumption, Homophobias, and Schools." *Challenging Lesbian and Gay Inequities in Education*, ed. Debbie Epstein. Buckingham, England: Open University Press, 1994.

Fimrite, Peter. "Convicts action out Shakespeare bare their inner feelings." *San Francisco Chronicle* (25 July 2006): B5.

Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Trans. Alan Sheridan. New York: Vintage Books, 1995.

----- "Discourse on Language." *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*, Trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith. New York: Pantheon, 1972.

----- *History of Sexuality Volume One. An Introduction*, Trans. Robert Hurley. New York: Vintage, 1990.

----- *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault*. Eds. Luther H. Martin,

Huck Gutman, and Patrick H. Hutton. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988.

Freccero, Carla. *Queer/Early/Modern*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2006.

Freeman, Barbara. "Introduction." *GLQ* 13.2-3: 159-176.

Frontline: The Shakespeare Mystery. Prod. Kevin Sim. Television Broadcast. PBS, 1989.

Freud, Sigmund. *Interpretation of Dreams*. Trans. and Ed. James Strachey. New York: Avon Books, 1998.

Fuss, Diana. *Essentially Speaking: Feminism, Nature, and Difference*. New York: Routledge, 1989.

-----, *Inside/Out: Lesbian Theories, Gay Theories*. New York: Routledge, 1991.

Gardiner, Judith Kegan. *Masculinity Studies & Feminist Theory: New Directions*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2002.

Get Over It! Dir. Tommy O'Haver. Film. Ignite Entertainment. 2001

Gile, Denis. "Angel on Fire: Three Texts of Desire." *The Velvet Light Trap*, 16 (Fall 1976): 41-45.

Gledhill, Christine. *Home is Where the Heart Is*. London: British Film Institute, 1984.

-----, "Rethinking Genre." *Reinventing Film Studies*. Eds. Christin Gledhill and Linda Williams. London: Hodder Arnold Publication, 2000. 221-43

Goldberg, Jonathan. "The History That Will Be." *Premodern Sexualities*. Eds. Louise Fradenburg and Carla Freccero. New York and London: Routledge, 1996.

Goldberg, Jonathan and Madhavi Menon. "Queering History." *PMLA* 120.5. Oct. 2005.

- Gosson, Stephen. *Playes Confuted in Five Actions*. London: Imprinted for Thomas Gosson, 1582.
- Greenblatt, Stephen. *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From Moore to Shakespeare*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983.
- . *Shakespearean Negotiations: The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988.
- Greene, Robert. *The Defense of Conny-Catching. Or A confutation of those two iniurious pamphlets published by R.G. against the practitioners of many nimble-witted and mysticall Sciences*. London, 1592.
- Greenhouse, Sandra “‘Virtual’ Child Pornography Ban Overturned” in the *New York Times*. 17 April 2002.
- Grabes, Herbert. “A Typology of Works Bearing Mirror-Titles.” *The Mutable Glass*. Trans. Gordon Collier. London: Cambridge University Press, 1982. 38-63.
- Greenhalgh, Susanne and Robert Shaughnessy. “Our Shakespeares: British Television and the Strains of Multiculturalism.” *Screening Shakespeare in the Twenty-First Century*. Eds. Mark Thornton Burnett and Ramona Wray. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006. 90-112.
- Gunning, Tom. *D.W. Griffith and the Origins of American Film: The Early Years at Biograph*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1991.
- Hall, Donald E. *Queer Theories (Transitions)*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.
- Haithman, Diane. “London Shakespeare Workout Prison Project puts the Bard behind Bars.” *Los Angeles Times*. 20 Feb. 2008.
- Halberstam, Judith. *Female Masculinity*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press. 1998.
- . *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives*. New York:

New York University Press, 2005.

Halperin, David. *Saint Foucault: Toward a Gay Hagiography*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995.

Harbeck, Karen M. *Coming Out of the Classroom Closet: Gay and Lesbian Students, Teachers, and Curricula*. Binghamton, NY: Hawthorn Press, 1992.

Hawker, Phillipa. "DiCaprio, DiCaprio, Wherefore art Thou, DiCaprio?" *Meanjin*. March 1997.

Hawkes, Terrence. *Meaning by Shakespeare* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992

Hawley, John C., ed. *Postcolonial, Queer: Theoretical Intersections*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2001.

Hedier, Karl G. *Ethnographic Film*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2006.

Heywood, Thomas. *An Apology for Actors*. Nicholas Okes: London, 1612.

Hobart Shakespeareans. . Dir. Mel Stuart. Film. New Video Group, 2005.

Howard, Jean E. "Crossdressing, The Theatre, and Gender Struggle in Early Modern England" in *Shakespeare Quarterly* 39. 4. Winter 1988.

----- *The Stage and Social Struggle in Early Modern England*. New York and London: Routledge, 1993.

Howard, Jean E. and Marion F. O'Connor. "Introduction." *Shakespeare Reproduced*. Eds. Jean E. Howard and Marion F. O'Connor. New York: Methuen, 1987.

Hunt, Lynn. "Obscenity and the Origins of Modernity, 1500-1800." *Feminism and Pornography*. Ed. Drucilla Cornell. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.

- Hutcheon, Linda. *A Theory of Adaptation*. New York and London: Routledge, 2006.
- In Search of Shakespeare*. Dir. David Wallace. Film. Maya Vision Production. 2003.
- Jackie, Stevi and Sue Scott. *Feminism and Sexuality*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1996.
- Jagose, Annamarie. *Queer Theory: An Introduction*. New York: New York University Press, 1996.
- Jeffreys, Sheila. "The Queer Disappearance of Lesbian Sexuality in the Academy." *Women's Studies International Forum* 17.5 (1994): 459-472.
- Kidnie, Margaret Jane. "The Way the World is Now: Love in the Troma Zone." *Shakespeare, Film, and Fin de Siecle*. Ed. Mark Thornton Burnett. St. Martin's Press, 2000. 102-20.
- Kikunen, Kaarina and Susanne Paasonen. "Porn Star as Brand: Pornification and the Intermedia Career of Rakel Liekki." *The Velvet Light Trap* 59. Spring 2007.
- King, Thomas A. *The Gendering of Men, 1600–1750: Queer Articulations*, 2 vols. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2008.
- Kinney, Arthur F. "Shakespeare's Mirrors." *Shakespeare's Webs*. New York: Routledge, 2004.
- Markets of Bawdrie: The Dramatic Criticism of Stephen Gosson. Salzburg: University of Salzburg Press, 1974.
- Kipnis, Laura. "(Male) Desire and (Female) Disgust: Reading Hustler." *Cultural Studies*. Eds. Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson, and Paula Treichler. New York: Routledge, 1992. 373-91.
- Kristeva, Julia. *Powers of Horror*, trans Leon S. Roudiez. Columbia: Columbia University Press, 1982.

Lacan, Jacques. *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: Book II*. Trans. Sylvana Tomaselli. New York: Norton, 1988

----- *The Sublime Object of Ideology*. London: Verso, 1989.

----- *The Seminars of Jacques Lacan: Book III*, Trans. Russell Grieg. New York: Norton, 1993

----- *The Seminars of Jacques Lacan: Book I*. Trans. John Forrester. New York: Norton, 1988.

Lanier, Douglass. *Shakespeare and Modern Popular Culture*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2002.

Lebovits, Susan Chaityn. "Shakespeare Goes behind Prison Bars." *Boston Globe* (15 July 2007): 8.

Lehmann, Courtney. "Out Damned Scot: Dislocating Macbeth in Transnational Film and Media Culture" in *Shakespeare, the Movie II: Popularizing the Plays on Film, TV, and DVD*. Eds. Lynda E. Boose and Richard Burt. London and New York: Routledge, 2003.

----- *Shakespeare Remains: Theatre to Film, Early Modern to Postmodern*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002.

Lehmann, Courtney and Lisa A. Starks. "Introduction: Images of the 'Reel': Shakespeare and the Art of Cinema." *The Reel Shakespeare: Alternative Cinema and Theory*. London: Associated University Press, 2002. 9-24.

Levine, Lawrence. *High Brow/Low Brow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America*. Boston: Harvard University Press, 1988.

The Life of Shakespeare (aka *William Shakespeare*). Dirs. Mark Cullingham and Robert Knights. Television mini-series. Associated Television. 1978.

Lippke, Richard L. "Response to Tudor: Remorse-based Sentence Reductions in Theory and Practice." *Criminal Law and Philosophy* (2008) 2:259-268.

Live Nude Shakespeare. Dir. Michael D. Fox and Dale Evans. Film. 1997

Luhmann, Susanne. "Queering/Querying Pedagogy? Or, Pedagogy Is a Pretty Queer Thing." *Queer Theory in Education*. Ed. William F. Pinar. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1998.

Marcus, Leah S. *Unediting the Renaissance: Shakespeare, Marlowe, Milton*. New York: Routledge, 1997.

----- *Puzzling Shakespeare: Local Readings and Its Discontents*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988.

Mason, Paul. "Cinematic Penal Discourse and Populism 1995-2005." *Social Semiotics* 16.4 (December 2006).

Massai, Sonia. "Introduction: Defining Local Shakespeares." *World Wide Shakespeares: Local Appropriations in Film and Performance*. Ed. Sonia Massai. London and New York: Routledge, 2005. 3-14.

Masten, Jeffrey. *Textual Intercourse: Collaboration, Authorship, and Sexualities in Renaissance Drama*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

McLuskie, Kathleen and Michael Bristol. *Shakespeare and Modern Theatre: The Performance of Modernity*. London and New York: Routledge, 2001.

Melberg, Anne. "Plato's Mimesis" in *Theories of Mimesis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

Melnikoff, Kirk. *Writing Greene: Essays on England's First Notorious Professional Writer*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008.

Menon, Madhavi. "Spurning Teleology in Venus and Adonis." *GLQ: Journal for Gay*

and Lesbian Studies 11.4. 2005.

Midsummer Night's Cream. Dir. Stuart Canterbury. Film. 2000.

Much Ado About Something. Dir. Michael Rubbo. Television broadcast. PBS. 2001.

Mullaney, Steven. *The Place of the Stage: License, Play, and Power in Renaissance England*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995.

Muñoz, José Esteban. *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics*. London and Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999.

-----, "Cruising the Toilet: LeRoi Jones/Amiri Baraka, Radical Black Traditions and Queer Futurity." *GLQ* 13.2-3 (2007): 353-67.

My Bare Lady. Television broadcast. Fox Reality. 2007.

My Shakespeare: Romeo and Juliet for a New Generation, with Baz Luhrmann. Dir. Michael Waldman. Film. PBS, 2005.

Nestle, Joan, Clare Howell, and Riki Wilchins, eds. *GenderQueer: Voices from Beyond the Sexual Binary*. Los Angeles: Aylson Books, 2002.

Novy, Marianne. "Introduction." *Transforming Shakespeare: Contemporary Women's Re-Visions in Literature and Performance*. Ed. Marianna Novy. New York: Palgrave, 1999. 1-12.

Nyong'o, Tavia. "Punk'd Theory." *Social Text* 23.3-4 (Winter 2005): 19-34.

Nichols, Bill. *Representing Reality: Issues and Concepts in Documentary*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991.

- Patton, Cindy. "Tremble, Hetero Swine!" *Fear of a Queer Planet: Queer Politics and Social Theory*. Ed. Michael Warner. Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1993. 143-77.
- Penley, Constance. "Crackers and Wackers: The White Trashing of Porn." *White Trash: Race and Class in America*. Eds. Matt Wray and Annalee Newitz. New York: Routledge, 1997. 89-112.
- Plato. *Republic*. Trans. R.E. Allen. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004.
- Prothero, G. W., ed. *Select Statutes and Other Constitutional Documents Illustrative of the Reigns of Elizabeth and James I* (2nd ed.). Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1898.
- Prynne, William. et al, *The vvhole triall of Connor Lord Macquire with the perfect copies of the indictment, and all the evidence against him*. London 1645.
- Puar, Jasbir K. *Terrorist Assemblages Homonationalism in Queer Times*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2007.
- Quimby, Karin and Walter L. Williams. "Unmasking the Homophile in 1950s Los Angeles: An Archival Record." *Queer Frontiers: Millennial Geographies, Genders, and Generations*. Eds. Joseph A. Boone, Martin Dupuis, Martin Meeker, Karin Quimby, Cindy Sarver, Debra Silverman, and Rosemary Weatherston. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2000. 166-95.
- Rainbold, John. *Th' Overthrow of Stage-Playes*. London, 1599. Early English Books Online. Cambridge University Library. 25 March 2007.
- Renov, Michael. *The Subject of Documentary*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004.
- , "Introduction." *Theorizing Documentary*. New York and London: Routledge, 1993.
- , Ed. "Toward a Poetics of Documentary" in *Theorizing Documentary*. New York and London: Routledge, 1993.

- Reynolds, Bryan. *Becoming Criminal: Transversal Performance and Cultural Dissidence in Early Modern England*. Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002.
- Roach, Paul. *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1996.
- Rocky Horror Picture Show*. Dir. Jim Sharman. Film. Twentieth Century-Fox Film Corporation 1975.
- Romeo and Juliet*. Dir. Paul Thomas. Film. 1987.
- Romeo and Juliet, II*. Dir. Paul Thomas. Film. 1988.
- Ross, Andrew. "The Popularity of Pornography." *No Respect: Intellectuals and Popular Culture*. New York and London: Routledge, 1989.
- Rowe, Katherine. "Medium-Specificity and other Critical Scripts for Screen Shakespeare" in *Alternative Shakespeares 3*, ed. Diana Henderson. New York, NY: Routledge, 2007.
- Ruby, Jay. *Picturing Culture: Explorations of Film and Anthropology*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000.
- Saldivar, José David. *The Dialectics of Our America: Genealogy, Cultural Critique, and Literary History*. Duke University Press, 1991.
- Salter, Denis. "Acting Shakespeare in Colonial Space." *Shakespeare, Theory, and Performance*. Ed. J.C Bulman. London and New York: Routledge, 1996. 113-32.
- Secret Sex Lives of Romeo and Juliet*. Dir. Bethel Buckalew. Film. Boxoffice International Pictures. 1969.
- Scott-Douglass, Amy. *Shakespeare Inside: The Bard Behind Bars*. New York:

Continuum, 2007.

Scott-Kastan, David. *Shakespeare and the Book*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001

----- . *Shakespeare After Theory*. New York: Routledge, 1999.

Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. "Queer Performativity: Henry James's *The Art of the Novel*." *GLQ* 1, 1993

Senn, Werner. *Studies in the Dramatic Construction of Robert Greene and George Peele*. Bern, Franke, 1973.

Shailor, Jonathan. "When Muddy Flowers Bloom: The Shakespeare Project at Racine Correctional Institution." *PMLA* 123.3 (2008): 623-41.

Shakespeare, William. *The Riverside Shakespeare*. Ed. G. Blakemore Evans. 2nd ed. Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin. 1997.

Shakespeare Behind Bars. Dir. Hank Rogerson. Film. Philomath Films. 2005.

Shakespeare In and Out. Dir. Peter Sushitari. Film. Water & Light Productions. 1999.

Shakespeare Revealed. Dir. Ren Savant. Film. 2001.

"Shakespeare upon Ipod." Radio Broadcast. Prod. Mark Anderson. 2006-07.

Shakespeare Wallah! Dir. James Ivory. Film. Merchant Ivory Productions. 1965.

Sharpe, J. A. *Crime in Early Modern England, 1550-1750*. London and New York: Longman, 1984.

Shaughnessy, Robert. Introduction. *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare and*

- Popular Culture*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- Sheridan, Allan. "Translator's Notes." *Ecrits: A Selection*, by Jacques Lacan. New York: Norton, 1977.
- Sidney, Philip. *The Defence of Poesie*. London: James Roberts, 1595.
- Stryker, Susan and Stephen White, eds. *The Transgender Studies Reader*. New York: Routledge, 2006.
- Sturgess, Kim C. *Shakespeare and the American Nation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- Sullivan, Nikki. *A Critical Introduction to Queer Theory*. New York: New York University Press, 2003.
- Taming of the Screw*. Dir. Jim Powers, 1997
- Taylor, Gary. "Power, Pathos Character." *Harold Bloom's Shakespeare*, eds. Christy Desmet and Robert Sawyer. New York: Palgrave, 2001. 43-63.
- Taylor, John. "A Comparison between a Thiefe and a Booke." *An arrant thiefe, vvhom euery man may trust in vvord and deed, exceeding true and iust. With a comparison betweene a thiefe and a booke*. London, 1622.
- Teague, Frances. *Shakespeare and the American Popular Stage*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.
- Throne of Blood*. Film. Dir. Douglas Hickox. 1973.
- To be or not to be*. Film. Dir. Ernst Lubitsch. 1942.
- Traub, Valerie. *The Renaissance of Lesbianism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

-----, "The (In)Significance of 'Lesbian' Desire in Early Modern England." *Erotic Politics: Desire on the Renaissance Stage*. New York and London: Routledge, 1992.

Tromeo and Juliet. Dir. Lloyd Kaufman. Film. Troma Entertainment, 1996.

Trounstein, Jean. "Beyond Prison Education," *PMLA* 123.3 (2008): 674-77.

-----, *Shakespeare Behind Bars: The Power of Drama in a Women's Prison* (St. Martin's, 2001

Tudor, Steven Keith. "Why Should Remorse be a Mitigating Factor in Sentencing?" *Criminal Law and Philosophy* (2008) 2:241-257.

Turner, William B. *A Genealogy of Queer Theory*. Philadelphia, P.A.: Temple University Press, 2000.

Vickers, Brian. "Introduction." *English Renaissance Literary Criticism*. Oxford 1999.

Walsh, Michael. "Returns in the Real: Lacan and the Future of Psychoanalysis in Film Studies." *Post Scripts* 14. Fall 1994 – Spring 1995.

Wan, William. "Bard Behind Bars." *Washington Post* (5 Nov. 2007): B01.

Waste of Shame. Dir. John McKay. BBC, 2005.

West Side. Dir. Ren Savant. Film. Video Team Productions, 2000

West Side Story. Jerome Robbins and Robert Wise. Film. MGM, 1961.

Wilgoren, Jodi. "In One Prison, Murder, Betrayal, and High Prose." *New York Times* (29 April 2005): A16.

William Shakespeare: A Life in Drama. A&E's Biography Series. 1996.

William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet. Dir. Baz Luhrmann. Film. Fox Searchlight, 1996.

Williams, Linda. *Hard Core: Power, Pleasure, and the "Frenzy of the Visible."*
Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989.

-----, "Melodrama Revisited." *Reconfiguring American Film Genres: History and Theory*
Ed. Nick Browne. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998. 42-88.

Zizek, Slavoj. "Pornography, Nostalgia, Montage: A Triad of the Gaze." *Looking Awry:
An Introduction to Jacques Lacan Through Popular Culture.* Cambridge: MIT
Press, 1991. 107-22.

-----, *The Sublime Object of Ideology.* London: Verso, 1989.