AFTER FOUR CENTURIES: SHAKESPEARE'S GHOSTLY SHADOWS

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ABSTRACT
The present essay tries to answer the question why Shakespeare is the inspiring source for an ever-increasing list of literary productions even four centuries after his death. He has been haunting readers and writers not only with his very little known life story but also with his texts, characters, even absent personages, which are all phantoms that challenge an ever increasing spectrum of creators to consider Shakespeare's drama as a great provocation. The analysis of these four types of spectres is meant to underline a multitude of issues: that attention should not only be focussed on Shakespeare's works, but also on their relationship with other texts; that contemporary writers enjoy "play-giarising" Shakespeare's texts and characters; that intertextuality makes Shakespeare's plays resemble subatomic electrons described by quantum physics as being simultaneously *particles* (closed, well-delimited units) and *waves* (open, permeable undulation, in permanent motion and change); and that phantasms are linked to *phantasia* or imagination, the hermeneutical instrument for reaching gnosis, for knowing the self, the world, and fictional myths.

KEYWORDS: adaptation, anxiety of influence, appropriation, ghosts, intertext, play-giarism, prod-users, quantum physics, Shakespeare the man, wreaders

Four centuries have passed since the death of William Shakespeare. His shadow persistently watches over us, and his works are more and more successful today. I am not referring here to the delight directors have in staging or filming Shakespeare's plays, actors in interpreting them, and spectators in watching them, although it has happened hundreds of times by now. I just want to express my surprise at the ever-increasing list of literary productions inspired by Shakespeare's life and drama. Postmodern and post-postmodern writers seem to take enormous pleasure in finding something that the playwright did not imagine, describe, or conclude, in reformulating his plots, and in choosing details that can developed, overturned, or contradicted. Whether they start from a story, character, line, or even a mere word, writers have come up with astounding meta-, inter-, intra-, and trans-literary strategies, have played most surprisingly with the known and unknown details of Shakespeare's life and texts, have sought meanings beyond words, and have struggled with his numerous ambiguous lines. Their prolific activity proves

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without doubt that Shakespeare is frantically haunting us. Like a ghost. Like an ineluctable intertextual ghost. He was even placed on stage in 1679 by one of Shakespeare's first imitators, John Dryden, who decided in his adaptation of *Troilus and Cressida* to have the prologue recited by Shakespeare's phantom. Thus, already in the seventeenth century, we are reminded that one of the basic philosophical gestures of humanity is to gain a new vision of the world with the help of phantasmal avatars and that even early modernity is associated with the tendency of moving away from its past by paradoxically coming closer to it.

But is it Shakespeare the man who is haunting us with his very little known life story, or is there something in his texts, characters, even silences which stirs us to appropriate his plays? The present essay will deal with some of the possible phantoms that challenge an ever increasing spectrum of writers to take Shakespeare's drama as a source. As it is claimed in the occult *Emerald Tablet of Hermes Trismegistus*, contemplation, processing, and adaptation are at the origin of all things, since the secret lies deep beneath the image (Tablet V). Literature has to be included here, as Hermes/Mercury is the god of magic, music, and writing. Represented on Tarot cards as the Magician, with the symbol of infinity above his head, he is a reminder of the infinite resources of intertextual approaches, of the unlimited and audacious vibrations experienced by imaginative minds when encountering great literature.

Shakespeare's life and texts are the sides of a huge prism wherein creative energies, lines of influences, and clusters of problems haunt and animate at the same time. This is why his intertextual field experiences today a dizzying expansion, teaching us that attention should not only be focussed on Shakespeare's works, but also on their relationship with other texts. But although the new sequences imply a process of rejuvenation for Shakespeare himself, in reality writers follow two different aims. On the one hand, they want to take the chance of exploring the ground tread upon by an illustrious predecessor, placing themselves in the shadow of his statue. On the other hand, they want to sustain the idea that although everything has already been said, they can be original in imitating a story told by someone else. That they are not liable for plagiarism, but for "play-giarism," if we are to use Judie Newman's (21) term, or take Paul Ricœur's description of appropriation as "the playful transposition of a text" (87).

Rewriting Shakespeare's plays can also be a very appealing process, since adaptation makes "pleasure come from repetition with variation, from the comfort of ritual combined with the piquancy of surprise. Recognition and remembrance are part of the pleasure (and risk) of experiencing an adaptation; so too is change" (Hutcheon 4). Furthermore, the experience of *déjà lu*, of a rereading in which the familiar becomes novelty, can be a more substantial experience than the discovery of a totally new narrative plot.

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Embracing the ghost

Shakespeare the man is one of the main spectres who haunts us with his secrets: his childhood and youth, his manuscripts, sonnets, and second best bed are the great enigmas of the Renaissance, well-kept until today and therefore good occasions to encourage "every Shakespeare-lover who has ever lived to paint his own portrait of the man" (Burgess 9). Among such great lovers are Anthony Burgess, John Berryman, Bill Bryson, Robert Nye, Peter Ackroyd, and A. L. Rowse, writers who persist in presenting "so shadowy a figure" and "so maddening an author," who in fact "gives us nothing" (Burgess 10). But their writerly concern denotes love, Burgess adds, because it makes Shakespeare emerge today in various forms, even "as a living folk-spirit in lavatory graffiti and pub jokes."

To John Gross, all the fictional recreations of Shakespeare's life seem acceptable. He claims:

> Story-tellers as different as Kipling and Anthony Burgess offer us equally plausible Shakespeares; and the fascination of the portraits they paint is a tribute not only to his greatness, but also to the fact that we know so much about him (since we have the plays) and so little, that he is forever just eluding our grasp.
>
> (Gross ix)

A. L. Rowse is of the contrary opinion: such writers offer only "a complete muddle of Shakespeare's life and work," that are "made nonsense of, even by good literary scholars, and reduced to confusion" (xi).

Both Gross and Rowse are right. The spectre cannot be grasped, and he keeps stirring our imagination in spite of his muddled and confusing shadows. But what else can we expect from hauntology? For Jacques Derrida, the author of the concept, there is an infinite process of spectralisation in the cities of modern capitalism generated by crowds, money, and prostitution (11). Can this process be extended to literature, drama, and Shakespeare himself? Derrida links hauntology to ontology through an historical disjunction, in which the present is replaced by a phantom defunct and living, invisible and visible at the same time. It opposes the romantic nostalgia for the past and orients things towards a future seen from a different, often polemic, perspective. Challenge or invitation, encouragement or seduction, desire or war, the secrets of the ghost are, at the same time, profound and superficial, opaque and transparent, based on the unresolvable doubleness of fantasy and power so often analysed by theorists of intertextuality.

Interpreting Shakespeare's life to suit their own imagination, modern writers suggest a second existence, in which "Shakespeare (Will he, nil he) becomes a collaborator in conveying the opinions, visions, and emotions of the shake-shifters" (Henderson 11). They fabulate, shift known aspects, and celebrate the power existing as a seed in all the things we do not know about the playwright, proving once more that phantasms are linked to *phantasia* or imagination, the hermeneutical instrument for reaching gnosis, for knowing the self, the world, and fictional myths.

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Inhabited by ghosts

Shakespeare the man is not the only ghost that haunts us. His texts are populated by what J. Hillis Miller calls "a long chain of parasitical presences, echoes, allusions, guests, ghosts of previous texts" (446). All these strange textual presences reach beyond appearances and establish connections with invisible things, charm the readers, cast a spell on them, and, through unexpected forces, turn them into writers. Or "wreaders" (Landow 14) and "prod-users" (*Bruns 21), two new terms* which blur the boundaries between passive consumption and active production and imply an open participation in the creation of palimpsestic artefacts. Simultaneously, the process generates tensions and anxieties, hostilities and inadequacies, always felt when forerunners are confronted. The fear that their works assume essential priority is called by Harold Bloom "anxiety of influence" (11). It cripples weaker talents, but stimulates canonical genius as it is generated by "the desire to be elsewhere, in a time and place of one's own, in an originality that must compound with inheritance" (Bloom 11).

Large fields of academic theorizing on intertextuality, represented in semiotics by the challenging works of Julia Kristeva, Paul Ricœur, Gérard Genette, and Roland Barthes, are now completed by studies in textual appropriation, film adaptation, and collaborative enterprises. Books by Linda Hutcheon, Julie Sanders, Deborah Cartmell, Brian McFarlane, and essays published in the journal *Borrowers or Lenders: Shakespeare and Appropriation* mention repeatedly that adaptations are inherently palimpsest works, "haunted at all times by their adapted texts" (Hutcheon 6). There is no wonder then that Shakespeare determines the reader to seek the story and the pattern lying under visible layers, because there is always another story beyond every story and another indigo copy in "an ocean of texts" (Warner 265). An ocean in which the new creations are nothing else but older texts, more or less visibly disguised, encouraging wreaders to go deeper into the analysis of "textual ghosts and hauntings, both literary and metaphorical" (Sanders 5). The textual ghosts are important in both adaptations and appropriations, although there is a difference consisting ultimately in the latter's practice of taking "a more decisive journey away from the informing source into a wholly new cultural product and domain" (Sanders 26). This means that adaptations keep closer to the ghostly source than appropriations, which have fewer limits in their processes of addition, expansion, accretion, or interpolation.

The distance to the source is also noticeable in the three types of appropriation categorized by Thomas Cartelli into *dialogic, transpositional,* and *confrontational* (17–18). The dialogic appropriations involve a careful integration into a work of allusions, identifications, and quotations that complicate, "thicken," and qualify that work's primary narrative line; transpositional appropriations take a greater distance by isolating specific themes or plots and bringing them into new interpretive fields; finally, the confrontational appropriations are the most distanced, contesting the ascribed meaning or prevailing function of the Shakespearean text in the interests of an opposing or alternative social or political agenda.

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Even film adaptations cannot avoid distanciation. It is inevitable and necessary, as Deborah Cartmell claims when discussing the major difference between *commentaries* (merely a comment of the politics of the source text usually by means of alteration or addition), *transpositions* (which journey further, relocating the source text in new cultural, geographic, and temporal terms), and *analogues* (a form of appropriation which does no longer require knowledge of the original to be understood and can be enjoyed totally separated from the source) (24). The greater the separation from the source, the more independent the adaptation becomes. But in no case should one stick too much to the ghostly shadows: "Those who cling too fiercely to the old text, the thing to be adapted, the old ways, the past, are doomed to produce something that does not work, an unhappiness, an alienation, a quarrel, a failure, a loss," says Salman Rushdie in "A Fine Pickle." His *Yorick* and *The Moor's Last Sigh* are great examples of successful postcolonial Shakespearean appropriation. Like Suniti Namjoshi (*Snapshots of Caliban*, 1984), Derek Walcott (*A Branch of the Blue Nile*, 1986), Salih Tayeb (*Season of Migration to the North*, 2003), Gloria Naylor (*Mama Day*,1989) or Jane Smiley (*A Thousand Acres*, 1991), Rushdie takes distance from Shakespeare's plays, resituating them within totally new postcolonial frames as contestatory, counter-discursive appropriations.

It is true that Shakespeare himself adapted and transformed stories and plays written before him. His texts are "highly labile, adaptive patchworks themselves" (Sanders 24), but they reveal no anxiety of influence or fear of preceding ghosts. Neither was Shakespeare afraid of losing control over his plays once they were finished, as they were frequently adapted to the different scenic occasions of the age, by him or by others. He knew that when the texts got out of his hands, all variations became possible. But he probably did not know that it was only his own literary and theatrical force that was unleashed as a powerful stream, not that of his sources. Results were seen as early as the seventeenth century: Nahum Tate adapted *King Lear* (1681) to let the audience go home with the satisfaction of a happy end. William Davenant and John Dryden rewrote *The Tempest* in 1667 and Thomas Shadwell turned their variant into an opera, inventing many new characters, particularly female ones. Other adaptations were used for political purposes: Horace Walpole parodied *Macbeth* (*The Dear Witches*, 1742) with the intention of attacking those responsible for the political downfall of his father, Prime-Minister Robert Walpole. Later on, in the Victorian period and in the twentieth century, the examples multiplied rapidly, as one can easily notice in the two books published in 2002 by John Gross and Chantal Zabus. The former's volume is a collection of poems, literary essays, excerpts from novels and drama written by lots of great authors, such as Alexander Pope, Lewis Carroll, G. B. Shaw, Boris Pasternak, and Eugen Ionescu. Zabus' *Tempests after Shakespeare* is dedicated to one play only and to the over twenty writers who were challenged by the story of Prospero, Caliban, and Miranda. Zabus' explanation for the attractiveness of Shakespeare's last play is convincing: *The Tempest* has been used as a source by writers of the most diverse ideological, cultural, racial, and sexual convictions for the very reason that it allows a

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simultaneous postcolonial, post-patriarchal, and postmodern approach (11). This is also the answer to Robert B. Pierce's questions referring to *The Tempest:*

> How can one play look so different from different perspectives, and how can I make sense of my seeing it in two such seemingly incompatible ways as the traditional and colonialist readings? Should I reject the one or the other view as mistaken or perverse? Can I reconcile them in some larger framework? Or must I simply live with the incongruity?
>
> (Pierce 373)

But, strangely enough, although in the introduction to her book Zabus includes a very short subchapter on spectres and revisions, admitting that "ghosts do haunt the rewriting process" and that "the contemporary rewrite looks like it is haunted rather than inhabited by the meaning of the original" (5–6), she reduces the whole problem to a feminist issue: "The ghost, the zombie, the specter, the revenant mole has not only to be raised from the dead but also made to survive; the female text has to outlive, to outgun the primal, often male, text" (6). Indeed, for women writers it has been essential to take on the writing of the past in order to subvert patriarchal norms. By manipulating or reworking Shakespeare's plots and language, female characters are able to challenge and, at times, subvert patriarchal norms. But obviously one cannot reduce all intertextual paths to feminist undertakings only. Lots of others can be followed, since the inner energies of the play create many whirlwinds. They easily turn readers and spectators into future scribes, ready to unleash new storms after Shakespeare's now major "master-text" (Zabus 7), which generates all those negotiations, exchanges, and contestations of the most eccentric kind described by Stephen Greenblatt as "traces of the dead" (1).

But which other writers can boast with such tumultuous storms raised after their death? Has Shakespeare not inflicted upon us an "anathema of intertextuality" (Brînzeu, "Colours, Waters, and Reflections" 71), imprisoning us in the labyrinth of his texts to conserve them by being subtly and subversively interrogated after centuries? If he did so, we are lucky, since something else that has been changed by the increasingly proliferating intertextual productions: the perspective on Shakespeare's plays. It reconsiders them as being like the subatomic electrons described by quantum physics as simultaneously *particles* (closed, well-delimited units) and *waves* (open, permeable undulation, in permanent motion and change). Being so frequently appropriated, Shakespeare's plays are no longer simple, enclosed entities, well-delimited from a material point of view and filled only with static energy. As I have already suggested with another occasion (Brînzeu, "Intertextual Complementarity"), they get charged with kinetic energy, and like matter in motion, activate interconnected probabilities, being always open to new rewritings. Any particle of the intertextual series, seen in its evolution as a wave, redraws its borders after each new appropriation / adaptation, and inscribes itself in a new way in the intertextual field. If we use Ken Wilber's integral theory or Kimberlé Crenshaw's theory of intersectionality, we reach the same conclusion: Shakespeare's drama and all the future productions inspired by it remain for ever

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interrelated. They are permanently enriched and enriching, in a dynamic movement which implies contamination via context. Nothing can any longer be simply read, it must be read *together with.* But whether reading is a polyphonic conversation or a combat, whether any other author is enriched or devoured by his readers, in the case of Shakespeare there are no doubts: until further notice, he remains the sole victor. The four centuries stand as solid evidence that one may come after Shakespeare in time, but most probably one will remain second in quality. He is at the centre of the Western canon, says Harold Bloom, setting the standards and limits of literature as a source of unquestioned artistry and authority (47). He is a unique case in which both the forerunners and successors are "invariably dwarfed," since his "particular excellencies" (Bloom 9) are impossible to rival. But the dwarfs, even in the case of recent popular romance novelists, can heighten the original without damaging it. Even rephrased for a commercial audience, *Hamlet*, *Othello*, or *Romeo and Juliet* may ricochet into the source, giving it new meanings. This is, however, always the case with important rewritings. Once you read *Lear* by Edward Bond, or *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* by Tom Stoppard, you have to return to Shakespeare and see how he is mirrored and changed by his imitators.

Sometimes the intertextual chain is longer, and there are other ghosts interfering. When writing *Macbett*, Eugen Ionescu had in mind *Ubu roi* by Alfred Jarry and *Shakespeare, Our Contemporary* by Jan Kott. Both books stirred him to undertake a personal meditation upon the violence of evil in an apocalyptic world of grotesque unreality, also frequently present in everyday life. According to Kott, what Shakespeare wanted to show was that absolute power corrupts, that it is always criminal. Therefore, Ionescu wrote his own variant of *Macbeth* to reveal that politicians are paranoid and that any policy of power leads to murder.

With such great predecessors, Ionescu feels encouraged to show his authorial skills: he plays with the story, cuts the original text or amplifies it when he feels the need to do it, and reverses the characters' personalities. The most elaborate one among them is Lady Duncan, both a witch and the wife of two kings, Duncan and Macbett. Perverse, cruel, and lacking scruples, she slides between roles so as to bring her husbands' archduchy to ruin and to convince us that women represent a persuasive completion of the male forces of evil. Not only has she turned Ionescu into "the Shakespeare of the absurd" (Shusha Guppy), but she inevitably sends us back to Shakespeare's play and to his Lady Macbeth. As if we were on a Moebius strip: on whichever side we start, we invariably finish on the other one.

Character-clouds

Shakespeare's characters are equally prolific in haunting wreaders. Because of their nebulous nature, they are seen as "character-clouds," personages who can be reconstructed in many other ways, since they open up empty spaces, urge unnamed desires to manifest themselves freely, and let strange things occur unexpectedly (Albright 120). Numerous examples are at hand. **Desdemona and Juliet in Toni Morrison's (2011) and** Anne Fortier's (2010) eponymous works, Shylock in

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Howard Jacobson's *Shylock Is My Name* (2016), King Lear's fool in Christopher Moore's *Fool* (2009), the Nurse in Lois Leveen's *Juliet's Nurse: A Novel* (2015) are only some of the most recent and less known appropriations of Shakespeare's characters.

One of the most inspirational tragic character is Othello. Like the camel-cloud in *Hamlet* (III.2), he is seen from all possible places on earth and provides a blank tablet for wreaders all over the world. One of them is the Caribbean novelist Caryl Phillips, whose obsessions described in *Nature of Blood* (1997) are caused by the numerous instances of racial discrimination he was confronted with when arriving in England as a young man. Phillips reinterprets the tragedy of the Shakespearean hero in an unusual manner: Othello forgets that he is black. He wants to enter Venetian society at any costs and is determined to break the ties with his black wife and child in order to marry Desdemona. He believes he must give up his past to gain a new identity. And his strange story is interestingly enough linked by Phillips to other stories inspired by James Joyce's *The Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Primo Levi's *The Drowned and the Saved*, and *The Diary of Anne Frank*. Phillips places all these forerunners under one umbrella, trying to understand how one can escape the traumatic memories triggered by racial and anti-Semitic violence, and how trauma ultimately connects different destinies, cultures, and historical periods, starting with the Renaissance, going through World War Two, and finishing with the present.

That is why the structure of Phillips' novel is based on other four plots, equally tense: that of Eva Stern, a possible surviving Anne Frank, freed by the British from the Bergen Belsen concentration camp, but ending up in a tragic way by losing her mind and committing suicide in England; that of Stephan Stern, her uncle, a Stephen Dedalus of a different sort, who abandons the family of his brother in Berlin to escape the Nazis and then gives up on his own wife and son in America to lead a clandestine military force in Cyprus and Israel; of a Jewish girl, Malka, an Ethiopian immigrant Stephan meets in a bar in Tel Aviv; and finally, the story of some Jewish moneylenders from Portobuffole, who are accused of having murdered a Christian boy in order to drink his blood and are subsequently sentenced to be burned at the stake in Venice. This is an unexpected mixture. Perhaps it is caused by Phillips' identity as a Caribbean, the identity of an "open insularity," as it has been defined by Daniel Maximin (89). Or perhaps all the stories are meant to underline the overlapping of exploitation, domination, discrimination, and trauma, which do not have a temporal dimension. They remain equally evil along centuries.

Othello takes us to Africa in Tayeb Salih's Sudanese novel *Season of Migration to the North* (1966), which is appreciated as a resounding success of modern Arab literature. We cross the Atlantic Ocean with Joaquim Maria Machado de Assis, a Brazilian writer who revisits *Othello* in twenty-eight of his stories, plays, and essays. In *Dom Casmurro* (1899), Othello is reborn as Bento Santiago, a 57-year-old lawyer, who is consumed by a similarly devastating jealousy as Shakespeare's Moor. However, unlike Othello, the hero of Machado appears in a double role: Bento is the elderly narrator, overwhelmed by memories and willing to tell his most

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intimate experiences, while Benito is the hero's younger variant, who becomes the very object of a neurotic and deceitful narrative analysis. Together, the two form a controversial and challenging personality, confusing for the reader, who cannot realize why Benito is always on the point of killing his wife, believed by him to be adulterous since the days of her youth, although he has no convincing proofs for it. Whether his accusations are true or not remains a mystery to the very end of the novel for we cannot trust the spiteful statements of the narrator. Although he repeatedly affirms that he is describing his feelings in a detached manner, he cannot deceive us: his story is nothing else but an overlapping of misleading illusions, visions, and paradoxes, a rich collection of ambiguities and hypocrisies, realistic only in the portrayal of the dynamic changes characteristic for the Brazilian society during the reign of Pedro II.

Dealing with the void

The last group of ghosts that make Shakespeare's plays remain for ever an inexhaustible source of re-articulation are his great absences. The attraction felt to such characters has been explained by Molly M. Mahood, who comments on why directors place such personages on stage as mutes:

> Duncan's queen, "Oft'ner upon her knees than on her feet" (4.3.110), adds a clear note to the counter-theme of sanctity in *Macbeth* as does the unseen but still living Edward the Confessor. The Indian Boy's mother, who "of that boy did die," is made so vivid by the poetry of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* that she becomes a significant part of a play which is as much concerned with the perils of marriage as it is with its joys. And in other comedies, defunct fathers, as psychologists have been pleased to note, keep a lasting ascendancy over the actions of their children.
>
> (Mahood 7)

The most inspiring Shakespearean never-seen-on-stage characters are Sycorax, Yorick, Romeo's first love Rosaline, and the Macbeth baby. Sycorax, the voiceless, disembodied character of *The Tempest*, is used by Marina Warner in her novel *Indigo* (1992) as a starting point for revising a significant event in the imperial policy of the English, when in the seventeenth century one of Warner's ancestors landed on the Caribbean island of St. Kitts. It is there that Warner enthrones Sycorax, the powerful indigo witch-queen, with the declared intention of making the voices of women, particularly native women, be clearly heard. They are absent, Warner claims accusatorily, from Shakespeare's play and from "the all-encompassing music of the island" (5). Warner's daring form of rewriting *The Tempest* was remarked as soon as the novel came out: critics have underlined how the author uses an absent character to successfully oppose a witch to the great European conquerors, reversing thus the traditional Eurocentric perspective that turns native cultures into caricatures; how the novel produces an echo of *The Tempest*, like a cave from which sounds are reflected; and how a transparent novel can become a complicated labyrinth, wondrously entangled through its narratives, motifs, and themes, in which

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nothing is perfectly black or white (Gilbert 191; Press 68). This corresponds with Warner's desire to create a multicolour palette, dominated by indigo, the colour of the paint prepared by Sycorax for the native islanders, but also of herself. It becomes the shade of the story that melts away into the waters of the Caribbean Sea, into the waves of the intertext, as an echo of the sounds and voices heard across time. And if for some readers the indigo colour might seem the magic colour of fictional make-believe, for others it undoubtedly becomes associated with the rereading, overlapping, and repeating of Shakespearean themes and characters, including the absent, bodiless personages.

John Brian Aspinall uses Sycorax to write a back-story to *The Tempest*, fixing on a period which anticipates the great colonial conquests of the Renaissance. The plot of *Sycorax* (2006) is placed in Yorkshire, at the end of the fourteenth century. The monk Edmund of Byland is sent to the region where once Sycorax lived and has to interrogate witnesses about the unfortunate events caused by the witch. The result of the inquest is not only the story of the woman, retold by Edmund years after her death, but also the tragedy of the narrator, who can no longer separate his own self from the personality of the witch: obsessions, fears, and temptations of the flesh turn the monk into a male Sycorax. Accused of witchcraft, humiliated, and ridiculed in various ways, he ends up by losing his mind, in a delirium populated by witches, demons, and, evidently, ghosts. An Africanist interpretation of the Sycorax / Miranda story is imagined in Gloria Naylor's *Mama Day* (1989), whose central character is a black female equivalent to Prospero, a wise-woman and healer respected above all others on the island of Willow Springs. There are also two onscreen variants of Sycorax, featured in the well-received films by Derek Jarman (*The Tempest,* 1979) and Peter Greenaway (*Prospero's Books,* 1991).

Another challenging Shakespearean absence is Yorick, who has inspired Laurence Sterne in *Tristram Shandy* (1759–67) and Salman Rushdie in *Yorick* (1995) and *The Moor's Last Sigh* (1995). Rosaline has become the heroine of Lisa Fiedler's *Romeo's Ex: Rosaline's Story* (2006) and Rebecca Serle's *When You Were Mine* (2013). Then there is also the Macbeth baby, referred to by Shakespeare in the extremely controversial lines about Lady Macbeth's joys of nursing a child, who is never again heard of in the play. Rebecca Reisert speculates in *The Third Witch* (2001) on how the life of a possible royal daughter might unfold: she is raised by the witches in Birnam Forest, comes to Macbeth's castle, and undergoes an anti-ambition, pro-love-thy-neighbour evolution full of promises. In *Lady Macbeth's Daughter* (2009), Lisa M. Klein features Albia, who is brought up by three strange sisters in Wychelm Wood, falls in love with Fleance, and courageously opposes the tyranny of her father Macbeth.

Finally, one last issue should be mentioned before concluding this essay: even simple mistakes may enrich the post-Shakespearean territories. In one of her speeches, Barbara Garson, a young graduate from Berkeley University involved in the organization of several anti-Vietnam War meetings, mentioned Bird Johnson, the wife of the American president Lyndon B. Johnson and by mistake called her Lady Mac Bird. This led to the idea of a clever political satire, *Mac Bird!* (1966),

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woven around a member of the Democratic Party, who has great political plans: in light of the prophecy of the three witches and encouraged by his wife, Mac Bird decides to kill the Irish president John Ken O'Dunc in order to take his place. The play, based on an obvious allusion to the successor of John F. Kennedy, was immediately successful. Criticizing a disturbing reality of the Kennedy era and skilfully presenting its political subtleties, Barbara Garson won the hearts of Shakespeare's readers with a modern interpretation of the politicians' ambitions and struggle for power. The caricatures of some real twentieth-century personalities, together with Garson's subtle irony, transform Shakespeare's tragedy into a witty, humorous, and entertaining play.

In conclusion, writers are not scared, but greatly attracted by Shakespeare's ghostly shadows. The process of appropriating them follows a simple path: wreaders discover, understand, love, and rewrite Shakespeare to experience the plays in their own way, including their own obsessions and inner phantasms, establishing new relations, and offering new points of departure. And since the conventions of story-telling—and story-retelling—are changing daily in a quick pace through the global reach of the internet, Shakespeare's literature will, in the future, generate not only more literary productions and films but also more computer games, You Tube video-clips, and all the rest. The game of play-giarism will go on. And on. And on. For ever.

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