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Editor's Letter

EMILY SMITH

The origin story of the word 'nostalgia' is well-known. To shave a short story shorter: in 1688, the dissertation of the medical student Johannes Hofer coined the term to describe the suffering of Swiss soldiers away from their native land. It is quite ironic, then, to speak of 'nostalgia' in a time when we are far more likely to remain within (if not be restricted to) our own [Switzer]land.

Yet 'home' is not only where the heart is. The philologist Carl Darling Buck argued that the word "[h]ome" in the full range and feeling of [contemporary English] home is a conception that belongs distinctively to the word home and some of its [Germanic] cognates and is not covered by any single word in most of the [Indo-European] languages' (459): the ability of the word to refer to one's sense of identity and tradition in addition to their place of dwelling is unique.¹ What we recognise as our *nostos*, then, has as much to do with states as well as places of being.

I may be breaking untrodden ground in this declaration, but I proceed nonetheless: the world has not been very normal for a fair while now. Such strange conditions encourage – if not compel – us to consider how our lives were constituted before those fateful days in March 2020. The *Noted* team decided upon the theme of this edition, 'nostalgia', so as to enable such exploration. But this retrospection, we hope, will not only result in strolls down memory lane. Rather, if we engage in critical examination of how the narratives which we create are constructed, nostalgia can spur us forwards as much as backwards.

The essay with which this edition of *Noted* opens is very much concerned with how stories of the past are told. Holly Ann Lavergne, in her analysis of the poem "Pocahontas to her English Husband, John Rolfe", illustrates how Paula Gunn Allen constructs and manipulates the perspective made available to the reader upon the historical figures of its title. Far more than merely recounting, the speaker's act of looking back performs a narrative transformation. Such poetic interventions, the essay demonstrates, have deep ethical implications – going to far as to challenge how "the conventional narrative of colonisation" is received (10).

Nathan Régis Blanchard's essay continues to reflect upon the value of retrospection. Reflecting upon the implications of capitalism through an unlikely pair of texts – Ben Jonson's *Volpone* (1607) and Scorese's film *The Wolf of Wall Street* (2013) – this essay elucidates how characters' identities are (un)constructed. Blanchard illustrates the value which reading historical texts may have in the here and now: identifying many unexpected similarities between these two narratives, his work allows the early modern play to provide a foil to our own experiences in and of society, and encourages us to reflect further upon the construction of selfhood in the present day.

The Art section contains two pieces which reflect upon familial relationships, ever a source of nostalgia. I dare say very little about either Lorraine Devillard's short story 'Stone of Life' or Sabrina Martins' heart-breaking poem 'Telemachus', for fear of falling into tears. Needless to say, reading will reveal all. The two drawings that follow, by Valérie Fivaz and Megan Zeitz, likewise capture the bittersweet emotions evoked by reflection – made all the more poignant by the reminder that, as Sara Cerqueira's poem so beautifully puts it, each moment is all 'too soon a short-forgotten past' (32).

Having dealt with such emotional intensity, the Culture section provides some light relief in the form of some truly awful poetry, collated for your delectation. In a similarly positive spirit, Gemma Allred then recounts how lockdown spurred novel ways of experiencing theatre – and, perhaps, reconstituted the future of drama. We remain on the subject of theatre in the following essay, in which Aïcha Bouchelaghem masterfully critiques the re-presentation of the American founding fathers in the ever-popular *Hamilton* – the perfect reminder that remembering is, at its root, a creative act, and never neutral.

After all that nostalgia, you may find yourself in need of something rooted in the here-and-now. As we're back in-person, the Varia section delivers a game you can play between classes: Mind The Gap allows you to re-imagine some iconic literary moments. Rounding off this edition in our accustomed manner, Dr. Sarah Brazil – under a gentle grilling – reveals her opinions on musical theatre, medieval literature (a certain recent film, of course, included), and more.

As ever, it's been an utter joy to work with everybody involved in this issue – a joy which I hope that you, dear reader, will partake in as you read on...

1 Carl Darling Buck. *A Dictionary of Selected Synonyms in the Principal Indo-European Languages*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1949.

ACADEMIA

The Role of Auto- and Altero-Characterization

Deconstructing the Dominant Narrative of Colonization in Paula Gunn Allen's Poem "Pocahontas to Her English Husband, John Rolfe"

HOLLY ANN LAVERGNE

Editor's Note: This essay was originally submitted for the BA7 module 'American Literary Counter-Voices' in Spring 2021.

In Paula Gunn Allen's poem "Pocahontas to Her English Husband, John Rolfe," the speaker and her husband represent fictionalized versions of the historical figures Pocahontas and John Rolfe. The ambiguous characterization of these two figures raises the question of whether they serve to validate or invalidate the conventional roles of English settlers and Indigenous peoples in the dominant narrative of colonization. I will argue that the speaker uses auto- and altero- characterization to invalidate the binary opposition between "civilized" Europeans and Indigenous "savages" in the accepted narrative of colonization.

Characterization, or representation of a character in a text, can be divided into auto-characterization, when the characterizing subject describes themselves, and altero-characterization, when the characterizing subject describes another character ("Narrative Analysis," 6-7). In Gunn Allen's poem, the speaker's diction contributes to ambiguous characterization through contrasts and polysemy, which in turn challenges the supposedly inflexible binary depicted in the dominant narrative of colonization. Voice, or the specific characteristics exhibited by the poetic speaker (Baldick), is also used to construct auto- and altero- characterization. There are two distinct voices in the poem: the first is the voice of John Rolfe on the level of representation, and the second is the voice of the first-person speaker, a fictionalized version of Pocahontas, whose voice pertains to the level of the discourse. By level of representation, I mean that Rolfe does not speak on the level of the discourse like the speaker: rather, his voice is represented by the speaker through indirect, reported speech. The speaker uses her highly critical, retrospective voice to describe the characters who exist on the level of the diegesis.

In order to construct the dominant narrative of colonization, John Rolfe characterizes the speaker through altero-characterization using colonial diction. His voice is present

on the level of representation from lines twenty-eight to thirty-four, where the speaker becomes the object of her husband's gaze. Rolfe's colonial diction evokes negative depictions of Indigenous women in colonial literature. The line "who cartwheeled naked through the muddy towns" (Gunn Allen 31) is one of only three lines of perfect iambic pentameter within the poem's generally irregular meter, suggesting that this image is a "regular" historical representation of Pocahontas. Indeed, this image of Pocahontas is an allusion to William Strachey's *The Historie of Travaile Into Virginia Britannia*, where he describes Pocahontas as "a well featured, but wanton yong girle ... of the age then of eleven or twelve yeaeres" who would "get the boyes forth with her into the markett place, and make them wheele, falling on their hands, turning up their heeles upwards, whome she would followe and wheele so her self, naked as she was, all the fort over" (Strachey 65). John Rolfe's repetition of Strachey's exact diction – "wanton" (Gunn Allen 29), "daughter" (30), and "naked" (31) – constructs his voice, distinct from that of the speaker, and suggests that his voice represents the dominant narrative of colonization. Rolfe characterizes Pocahontas as unruly, as does Strachey, and both passages express an underlying tone of supercilious disapproval. The speaker's husband describes her as "a simple wanton, a savage maid," and a "dusky daughter of heathen sires" (29-30). The pejoratives "simple," "savage," and "heathen" are inextricably linked, in the North American imagination, to the historical portrayal of Indigenous peoples. He also uses the gendered nouns "wanton," "maid," and "daughter," which create tension between Pocahontas' status as a child and as a woman. The noun "wanton" can refer to "a child, of playful or mischievous conduct" or to a woman of "loose or unrestrained sexual conduct" (Oxford English Dictionary, henceforth OED) – it is unclear which of these definitions is being evoked here, as Pocahontas is only "eleven or twelve" (Strachey 65) at the time of the cartwheeling incident alluded to by Rolfe. Similarly, the nouns "maid" and "daughter" typically refer to girls or young women. Rolfe depicts Pocahontas ambiguously as both a childish girl and a sexually unrestrained woman. Her "naked" cartwheeling figure embodies her impropriety; she is sexualized in a way that would be inappropriate when describing an English woman, revealing the perceived inferiority of Indigenous peoples. Through altero-characterization of the speaker, John Rolfe depicts a binary view opposing "civilized" English settlers to uncivilized Indigenous "savage[s]" (Gunn Allen 29).

John Rolfe's characterization of Pocahontas is an example of the "dream of cultural superiority" described in the poem's epigraph – a dream which emphasizes the superiority of European settlers and the necessity of converting Indigenous peoples to Protestant Christianity. In Charles Larson's *American Indian Fiction*, he explains that "we have never really known how Pocahontas felt about any of these matters [...]" if we

look at her story solely through the eyes of the white participants [...] our conclusions may be rather one-sided" (Larson 27). He highlights that Pocahontas' ambiguity as a historical figure stems from the one-sided representations of her life as told by European settlers. The epigraph emphasizes that her conflicting statuses as a "traitor" and a "hostage" contribute to this ambiguity. She represents a collective "white dream," that is to say, a dream that is not her own. She does not have a voice in historical sources, and her status as a historical myth is exploited for the furthering of this "white dream ... of cultural superiority." The speaker's husband believes that it is through his "firm guidance" (Gunn Allen 33) and "husbandly rule" (34) that she can learn "the ways of grace" (32). He uses diction connoting superiority to reinforce the binary opposing the settlers' civility and the Indigenous peoples' lack thereof. The polysemic noun "grace" implies that there is a "proper" way for women to act in society – in this case, the European way – and that individuals can only achieve salvation through the grace of the Christian settlers' God. The inclusion of the poem's epigraph substantiates my argument that the poem functions as a response to one-sided canonical representations of Pocahontas' life, such as that of her husband.

By giving a voice to Pocahontas in the form of the speaker, the poem presents an alternative narrative of colonization which invalidates the binary opposition between "civilized" Europeans and Indigenous "savages." The speaker's voice directly precedes and follows her husband's voice, allowing her to contrast his characterization by surrounding it with her version of this narrative in which Indigenous peoples have been historically silenced. She introduces his voice by proclaiming "I'm sure / you wondered" (27-28) and ends it with "no doubt, no doubt" (34-35). These speech tags signal the transition into and out of John Rolfe's altero-characterization of the speaker. In the first quotation, the speaker's retrospective voice is apparent through the use of the present tense, and in the second, it is apparent through the punctuation separating it from Rolfe's voice. Both "I'm sure" and "no doubt" are expressions of high modality which characterize the speaker as having a high level of certainty. The colon before "no doubt, no doubt" indicates that this repeated expression is an explanation of what precedes it. A sarcastic tone permeates John Rolfe's stereotypical characterization of the speaker, as his words are surrounded by this subtle, yet critical, articulation of the speaker's disapproval. The speaker asserts the invalidity of her husband's settler perspective by framing his voice with her own.

In the discourse, the speaker characterizes her husband using direct addresses which reveal his ambiguous character, thereby invalidating the erroneous binary that depicts invariably "good" English settlers. She addresses him as "oh beloved perfidious one" (2), "oh my fair husband" (14), and "deceiver, whiteman, father of my son" (47). The

first two addresses begin with the interjection “oh,” which simultaneously expresses the emotions of longing and sorrow. In both cases, this interjection precedes a noun used vocatively, that is to say, a noun which identifies the addressee (OED). These vocative expressions allow the speaker to address her husband without naming him.

Through the oxymoron “beloved perfidious,” the speaker juxtaposes her husband’s love and duplicity, thereby articulating his ambiguous character. Similarly, in the expression “my fair husband,” there is an underlying contradiction, even though the diction appears outwardly more positive. The possessive pronoun “my” used with the noun “husband” can be read as a term of endearment. However, the polysemic adjective “fair” evinces the speaker’s critical tone; while it can be used to refer to beauty, skin tone, or lawful moral conduct, it can also connote insincerity by referring to words that are “ostensibly pleasant or attractive, but intended to deceive or to conceal an ulterior motive” (OED). I argue that this outwardly affectionate address is a facade used to accuse Rolfe of his deception. This connotation is reinforced by the context of the utterance, as it is followed by the remark that her husband derives his riches from his exploitation of her knowledge.

In her final direct address to him as “deceiver, whiteman, father of my son” (Gunn Allen 47), the speaker most explicitly characterizes her husband by highlighting her struggle to reconcile the antithetical roles he plays in her life: he is both the father to her son and a deceitful colonizer who brings abuse to her people. The line is ten syllables long, but its meter is irregular, as it is composed of alternating trisyllabic and disyllabic feet. I read it as:

x / / / / / x x x /
deceiver, | whiteman, | father of | my son (47).

There is first a bacchius, followed by a spondee, a dactyl, and an iamb. The irregular stress pattern accentuates the assertive, accusatory tone of the speaker’s final address to her husband on the level of the discourse. The speaker does not resolve the ambiguity created by John Rolfe’s contradictory roles in her life, but rather uses it as a means to invalidate the binary opposing “good” English settlers and Indigenous “savages.”

The speaker’s commentary on her own death functions as an example of auto- and altero-characterization that negates the superiority of English settlers over Indigenous peoples. She describes her passing as “—a wasting, / putrefying Christian death—” (45-46). The precise organic term “putrefying” stands out due to its unusual usage. It can be interpreted as synonymous to the literal “wasting” of her dead body; however, here, its usage

is rather figurative, implying that the speaker’s “Christian death” is an instance of the “moral corruption” (“Putrefaction,” OED) of English Protestant Christianity. Through recounting her own death, she also characterizes her husband as a member of the corrupt English society where she dies “in [his] keeping” (Gunn Allen 45). The description of her death as a morally corrupt “Christian death” negates the supposed superiority of “civilized” European religion and society. In doing so, the speaker provides an indirect and ambiguous answer to the question in the epigraph: “Would she have converted freely to Christianity if she had not been in captivity?” Her conversion cannot be regarded as unambiguously voluntary, and it is this ambiguity in the speaker’s auto-characterization that contributes to the dismantling of the rigid opposition between “civilized” European settlers and Indigenous “savages.”

Furthermore, the speaker’s characterization of Rolfe’s descendants’ deaths contradicts the stereotypical view of Indigenous peoples as “savages.” She asserts that

It is not without irony that by this crop
your descendants die, for other
powers than you know
take part in this as in all things (18-21).

The “crop” she refers to is “[t]obacco” (17), a sacred medicinal and spiritual resource cultivated and smoked by Indigenous peoples long before colonization (Encyclopedia Virginia). Beginning in 1612, tobacco crops in Virginia were grown – and exploited – by John Rolfe for exportation to England (Salmon). For the speaker, the deaths of subsequent generations of European settlers due to the smoking of tobacco is an example of situational irony because the outcome contradicts that expected from Rolfe’s exploitation of her teachings. This critical judgement she could not have made during her lifetime is entirely in the present tense, and, in fact, the second clause is in the gnomic present, as the speaker expresses a general spiritual truth without a specific temporal reference (Matthews). The religious connotation of “other / powers” and the connectivity of “all things” allude to the Indigenous spiritual practices in place before the arrival of English settlers. The speaker suggests that there exists knowledge unknown to her husband and the English settlers. She counters Rolfe’s “ways of grace” (Gunn Allen 32) by constructing an alternative narrative in which each group, settlers and Indigenous peoples, possesses knowledge unknown to the other. Her spiritual assertion creates further ambiguity surrounding the motivations for her conversion to Protestant Christianity, as well as contradicts the idea that Indigenous peoples are cultureless “savage[s]” (29).

The speaker's auto-characterization using maternal diction invalidates the prior depiction of Indigenous peoples as helpless. The poem begins with the speaker's description of how she "cradled" (1) her husband in her arms. The verb "cradled" connotes maternity by evoking the image of a nurturing mother rocking her child to sleep. By using this verb to describe her past self, the speaker characterizes the character Pocahontas, the object of her retrospective observation, as a mother. This auto-characterization contrasts with Rolfe's description of her as a "maid" (29) and "daughter" (30). Similarly, the speaker repeats the phrase "I taught you" (16, 50), characterizing herself as a teacher who taught her husband the knowledge necessary for his mere survival in North America. Again, this description contrasts with Rolfe's perspective that she required his "guidance" (33) and "husbandly rule" (34). By reversing the metaphorical roles of parent and child played by her and her husband, the speaker reverses the power dynamic that characterizes their relationship.

This same reversal occurs in the speaker's altero-characterization of her husband, where she uses childish diction to highlight her husband's unreliability as a source of knowledge, invalidating his settler perspective. She asserts:

And indeed I did rescue you—
not once but a thousand thousand times
and in my arms you slept, a foolish child,
and under my protecting gaze you played,
chattering nonsense about a God
you had not wit to name (22-27).

The third and fourth lines of this passage are, like Rolfe's cartwheeling image, in perfect iambic pentameter; this regularity amidst irregularity is striking. I argue that these two lines represent her "regular" perception of John Rolfe, just as the cartwheeling image represents a conventional representation of Pocahontas by the English settlers. In this passage, the speaker's maternal auto-characterization is inextricably linked to her childish altero-characterization of John Rolfe. She alternates between maternal diction and childish diction, linking auto- and altero- characterization to contradict the conventional image of the civilized, rational European settler: she "rescue[s]" him and he "slept" in her arms, she has a "protecting gaze" under which he "played," and she understands his lack of "wit" while he is "chattering nonsense." She uses the metaphor "a foolish child" to describe her husband; both "foolish" and "child" have negative connotations, as they are associated with irresponsibility and immaturity. She presents her husband as an unreliable source of knowledge by characterizing him as a nonsensical child. The speaker

uses childish and maternal diction to reverse the parent-child relationship portrayed in the dominant narrative of colonization.

Thus, in "Pocahontas to Her English Husband, John Rolfe," the speaker invalidates the binary opposition between "civilized" Europeans and Indigenous "savages" in the accepted narrative of colonization through auto- and altero- characterization, constructed by diction and voice. The voices of John Rolfe and the speaker enable the construction and deconstruction of this erroneous binary. Contrasting and polysemic diction create ambiguity in both Pocahontas' and John Rolfe's characters and allow the speaker to reverse the roles played by English settlers and Indigenous peoples in the metaphorical parent-child relationship depicted in the conventional narrative of colonization.

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A Research Sneak Peek...

WITH MARIA PETERS

Maria Peters is an assistante in the English Department here at the University of Geneva, where she previously completed her BA and MA (with a research stay at the University of Oxford). She has just begun the second year of her assistantship, during which she is responsible for teaching TP classes on the module BA1 and leading BA seminars.

Here, she kindly divulges where her doctoral research has led her, and where she plans to go next...

1. *Describe your project in five key-words.*

Aesthetic education in contemporary refugee narratives.

2. *What phase of your project are you currently in, and which tasks are you carrying out to complete it? (And...what will be next?)*

After a preliminary phase last year of extensive research on the main fields on my topic (refugee studies and aesthetic education) and research on the authors of my corpus (J.M. Coetzee; W.G. Sebald; Behrouz Boochani), I am currently in the phase of submitting a description of my research topic and what I intend to achieve with this PhD to the décanant of our faculty.

My next task will be to start writing my pre-doctoral project, this will be a first section of my overall project, where I will try out my research topic on one of the authors of my corpus, namely the South African author, J.M. Coetzee.

3. *What motivates you to pursue this research project?*

The current refugee crisis is a central contemporary issue of the globalised world which we all live in. Media representations most often slot refugees into statistics and essentialising categories: a refugee is either a humanitarian victim or an economic threat. Literature, particularly narratives which resist and challenge the standardisation of refugee experience by showing refugees as thinking beings who acquire knowledge through their experience, enables opposition to these mainstream representations.

Therefore, literature, and aesthetic education through literature, allow us to educate ourselves through reading. Moreover, such narratives provide a space for us to educate our students within the classroom, but also and (perhaps more significantly) to train our imagination to become citizens who can think critically and emphatically, observing and reflecting from different perspectives upon complex contemporary issues.

4. *What is one text – literary, theoretical, or otherwise – you would recommend to anyone interested in finding out more about your research domain?*

For anyone interested by the contemporary refugee crisis, I would suggest reading Behrouz Boochani's autobiographical narrative *No Friend but the Mountains: Writing from Manus Prison* (2018). This text was written while the Iranian-Kurdish author was imprisoned on Manus Island offshore detention center for six years as a consequence of trying to reach Australia in order to claim for political asylum. He smuggled out his narrative through hundreds of WhatsApp messages written in Farsi and his collaborators edited and translated the text into an English version.

This massive achievement is a challenging text both in terms of its emotional impact on the reader and the complex theory of the refugee camp it builds. It gives a powerful testimony of the experience of a refugee, whose claim is that through literature he can "create [his] own discourse and not succumb to the language of oppressive power" (329). This enables him to build his subjective experience of detainment and to empower himself and other refugees: by becoming the theorists of their own experience, they can be seen as valuable and insightful contributors to the discourse.

Capitalism, or the Scattering of the Identity

NATHAN RÉGIS BLANCHARD

Editor's Note: This essay was originally submitted for the BA5 seminar 'Ben Jonson: Prose, Drama, and Poetry', in Autumn 2021. Any vested interest in said module by the editor is, of course, fervently denied.

In this essay, I will engage with two works: *Volpone*, written at the very beginning of the 17th century by the playwright Ben Jonson, and *The Wolf of Wall Street*, a biopic of the life of Jordan Belfort, a Wall Street trader who has ascended and descended in his fortunes. Why choose two works that seem so distant and different? Well, it seems to me that their two protagonists can be compared in many aspects. Their motivations and ends are similar: they chase the accumulation of money whatever the cost. In their respective cities, Venice and Wall Street (which both are symbolically important mercantile places of their time), they pursue and worship money as a God. Both are totally dependant upon the economy, the goods and property of others. As the character played by Matthew McConaughey says: "we don't create shit. We don't build anything" (0:10:17). Volpone admits this too: "... since I gain / No common way: I use no trade, no venture / I wound no earth with ploughshares" (1.1.32-4). They both have a special relation to work. Where most people do concrete tasks and thereby receive money, Volpone and Belfort have a direct relation to money overruling, thus, tangible production. All they do is lie, manipulate and speculate, and they are ready to do whatever it takes to achieve their desires. I think there is no better expression than 50 Cent's to express both protagonists' states of mind: "Get rich or die tryin".

Now that I have established the pertinence of the comparison, I will develop the matter of my essay. The topic in which I will take an interest is the impact of a capitalist ethos and attitude on the concept of identity and the development of a character. Thus, I will ask myself: how does a mindset determined by capitalism, which promotes the individual above everything else, form or, on the contrary deform, the concept of identity? I will argue that capitalism makes the identity fickle, shifting, and that it augments the splitting up of one's personality. To do so I will, first, analyze the definitions of capitalism and of identity, and I will illustrate how those two concepts enter in conflict in the

case of Volpone. Then, I will show how the little scheme of Volpone, which consists of him adopting different roles, participates in his loss of individuality. Finally, I will take an interest in the animal imagery present in the play and in the movie. I will argue that this dehumanisation also affects identity in the same manner that the objectification of women does.

To start my analysis, I would like to take the *Oxford English Dictionary* definition of capitalism and see how it fits with *Volpone*: "The possession of capital or wealth; an economic system in which private capital or wealth is used in the production or distribution of goods and prices are determined mainly in a free market". Basically, the more money one has, the more one can get. Money, thanks to capitalism, has become a means to get richer. For both Jordan Belfort and Volpone, the end appears to be the accumulation of wealth: the more they have, the more they want, and all of this is made possible thanks to money. This is the reason why I can argue that Volpone's approach corresponds to the definition of capitalism. What is even more interesting concerning this character is the fact that he is less interested in the end than in the means. Of course, wealth is what he is chasing, but "Yet, [he] glor[ies] / More in the cunning purchase of [his] wealth / Than in the glad possession" (1.1.30-2). This results in an inversion: the means become the end. It is striking to notice that the word "mean", from the 15th to the beginning of the 17th century, could refer to "a trick, contrivance, bribe, etc." (*OED*, 3c). This is exactly what Volpone enjoys: tricking people, lying to them in the hope that they will serve his own personal interest. As capitalism uses money to make more of it, whereas Volpone tricks for the pleasure of tricking, both function in a closed circuit. It is a closed path on which no term can be achieved, because the satisfaction is found in accumulation, which by definition, is a process that cannot be ended. It is worth noticing the importance given to the word and the verb "mean" in the text of the play. The expression "by no means" is used multiple times by the play's characters, and we can detect an ironic use of this idiom if we link it back to the obsolete definition of "mean" that we referred to above. In Act 5 Scene 12, Volpone realizes that his parasite, Mosca, has potentially betrayed him, but he ends up saying "His meaning may be truer than my fear" (5.12.18). Means are everything to Volpone, so much so that he even respects and values the means of a traitor more than his own fear. The Fox honors, then, the performance, the action and not the reality and the concrete benefit. And the consequences, as noticed by Jakob Ladegaard, are grave: "It is this irrepressible desire for performance and deception, this insatiable urge to invent and play new tricks on his three visitors that spells Volpone's end" (*Luxurious Laughter*, 67).

To come back to my initial question, I will now take the *OED* definition of identity and

see how it could interfere with the capitalist mindset of Volpone. The dictionary defines identity as “the quality or condition of being the same in substance, composition, nature, properties, or in particular qualities under consideration; absolute or essential sameness; oneness.” What is interesting about this definition, if we apply it to a theatrical character, is that it emphasises the persistence of the self over time. The question that now naturally arises is the following: is Volpone persistent in his personality? I have argued that Volpone enjoys the path more than the destination, to the extent that for him the means become the end. But still, everything that he does is in the hope of accumulating the most money that he can. A character who pursues the accumulation of wealth as a goal will never be satisfied. Accumulation is never achieved: one can always have more, thus the ideal is unattainable since nonexistent. An identity based on accumulation is, therefore, never stable and is always changing, desperately trying to match an ever-growing ambition.

Before moving on to the next movement of this essay, I would like to address the question of whether in the play a character who would contrast with the fickleness of the Fox exists. Celia and Bonario seem to correspond to that constancy. Indeed, Celia symbolizes the innocence and the candor: “but I, whose innocence / Is all I can think wealthy, or worth th’enjoying” (3.7.206-7). Note here that “innocence” is emphasised, being the last word of the line and rhyming with the cut line which ends with “conscience” (l.209), highlighting the value defended by the author. Celia is innocent and she stays so throughout the play, until she is finally rewarded. Bonario is also innocent, as his name suggests, but Jonson stresses his honor more (unlike Celia: an example of the unjustified sexism the author expresses throughout his works). When Bonario witnesses the sexual attempt of Volpone on Celia, he defends her in an honorable reaction, he “unmask[s], unspirit[s], undo[es]” (3.8.277) Volpone in a chivalrous manner. Plus, he will not lie in front of the court during the final proceedings. To sum up, the only two good characters of the play are described as constant in their virtue, they have not been infected by the capitalist mindset, which forces the fragmentation of the self and the shifting of one’s identity as we are about to see.

Having analyzed the relation Volpone has with his means and ends, becoming inevitably inconstant, I am now going to address his concrete way of acting: trickery. I will focus on how specifically Volpone acts to get what he wants, and I will show how his method supports my thesis statement. Tricking people, as Volpone and Belfort do, requires that one lies and adopts several roles. The harmony of their identities are therefore affected. In the play Volpone the spectator witnesses multiple transformations of the lead character. Those metamorphoses are mostly made explicit thanks to stage directions, such

as: “Mosca dresses Volpone” (1.2.7), “Mosca anoints Volpone’s eyes” (1.2.114), or “he leaps off from his couch” (3.7.39). But they can also be perceived in the text itself. For example, in the first act, Volpone feigns a disease in the hope of outwitting “all [his] birds of prey / That think [him] turning carcass” (1.2.89-90). I will come back to the term “carcass”, and more generally to the development of the animal imagery in a following arguments. Notice that, here, the inversion is prefigured already: ultimately those “vultures” will, at their turn, become “carcass[es]”, on which Volpone will take advantage gaily. Transformations are precisely orchestrated: “Now, my feigned cough, my phthisic and my gout, / My apoplexy, palsy and catarrhs, / Help with your forced functions this is my posture” (1.3.124-6). The use of specialized medical jargon shows how well Volpone prepares his tricks; we can see his enthusiasm at the idea of becoming the person whom he wishes to feign. Notice also the lexical field of falseness, allowing Volpone to make a barefaced admission of his trickery to the audience. Once again, this illustrates how Volpone enjoys that falsity.

Then, in Act 2 Scene 2, Volpone dresses up as an Italian mountebank. He tries to sell medicine to a crowd, which is mostly a pretext to try to seduce Celia. What is interesting with this persona of the false doctor is the fact that he has the same relation to money that the real Volpone has. Both worship gold, and Scoto Mantuano even goes so far as to advise money as a remedy: “For when a humid flux or catarrh, by the mutability of air, falls from your head into an arm or shoulder or any other part, take you a ducat, or your sequin of gold, and apply to the place affected: see what good effect it can work” (2.2.96-100). Such constancy between Volpone and his costume is very indicative, capitalism and by metonymy money are the only forms of steadiness Volpone can pursue. In Act 5 Scene 5, Volpone plays the role of a commendatore. Note how, with the complicity of Mosca, he completely persuades himself that he is the character he wants to impersonate: when he says “you are he” (5.5.2) and tells Mosca “thou becom’st it!” (5.5.3): he literally melts into this new character, abandoning his identity, and this transformation is made in order, again, to trick Corvino, Corbaccio and Voltore. I could also have mentioned the ill and impotent Volpone, who is made up in the hope of moving the judge, and also how Peregrine disguises to take revenge against Sir Politic in Act 5 Scene 4. Examples of disguise are not lacking in the play, and they have driven the critic Howard Marchitell to assert that: “Volpone maintains his identity through the denial of identity [...] Volpone is, finally, (even as Mosca aspires to be), the accumulation of the roles he plays – none of which are even himself” (302). Note how this notion of role-playing corresponds to that which Jonson stated in his printed common-place collection *Discoveries*: “we so insist in imitating others, as we cannot (when it is necessary) return to ourselves” (105). So, Volpone models his identity, at least his external identity, according to his pecuniary desires.

He therefore inevitably presents a shifting and altering identity. Notice, as Raymond Williams did, that the etymology of “individual” comes from “indivisible” (161), an adjective which could hardly be applied to Volpone. The fact that Jonson ironically wrote a character with no internal character is highly indicative. Indeed, we could perceive here the criticism made by Jonson on the premises of the capitalist economic system. Those characters obsessed with money will not be willing of what we call today a personal development, for them there is only the economic development that counts. This leads to a depersonalization, because they are reduced to only a part of a much bigger whole. Volpone has lost himself in the interest of the capitalist economy. Lust also had a dramatic effect upon Jordan Belfort’s identity: “Who the fuck are you, Jordan? You’re like a completely different fucking person!” (1:00:55) laments his first wife after having found out that he was cheating on her. His wife, who knew him before he completely surrenders to capitalism, witnesses those abrupt transformations. This scene ends with large shots of this broken couple in front of a hotel, on which deforming golden mirrors are covering up the wall, reflecting the money obsession of Belfort and its effect upon the scattering and the loss of the main character’s identity. Plus, when he wants to get covered and protected from the FBI, he must come to Geneva, deposit his capital and change his banking name. We see here how capitalism also affects identity, imposing false names upon individuals.

Let’s come back now to the motif of treachery and see how it expands in the play. Obviously, tricks are seen at the diegetic level of the two works, but they can also be perceived on the extradiegetic ones. One could argue that spectators and moviegoers are also tricked by Jonson and Scorsese. This effect is due to their leading position and the fact that both characters seem to have fun with their ploys – we, as spectators, tend to find Volpone and Belfort friendly, even though they are both quite monstrous characters, who are ready to do whatever it takes to achieve their monetary interest. That is, incidentally, one of the biggest critiques that was stated against both of these works: the fact that the author/director lauds an outrageous and excessive character. But I will come back to that critique in the conclusion. So, how is this extradiegetic trick pulled off? An illustrative example: Volpone appears to be quite funny and sympathetic before he lays into the innocent character of Celia and tries to rape her. At that point, one could feel betrayed by the author, who presented Volpone as a money-obsessed con artist who was funny when tricking old, greedy and self-serving people, but who becomes frightening when forcing a young girl. This *mise en abyme* can be developed if we consider how Volpone, Belfort, Scorsese and Jonson are similar in the economic benefit that their performance has given them. As their character, authors need to disguise their need of money behind the art piece of action. As their characters, they must invent roles and play with them in

the hope of an economic success. The play itself is, thus, a disguise, which allows both authors to convey their message by an indirect and fictional approach, but also to conceal their monetary intention. I reiterate that accumulation is incited and encouraged by the capitalism system, which is why, anew, it renders the identity multiple and therefore unstable. I have just shown the effect of the changing roles that one character could adopt upon the splitting of one’s identity. This results in the loss of identity, understood here as the persistence of the self over time.

I am now going to address another movement that also results in identity trouble, but which is conducted through a different process. Here, it is through a fixation of the personality, and not longer a scattering, that the identity is troubled. In both *Volpone* and *The Wolf of Wall Street* the naming system leads to “bestialization” or animalization of subjects. First, I will address this system in Volpone and then in Scorsese’s movie. “Volpone”, at the time of Jonson, meant, as defined in the introduction of Watson’s edition of Volpone, “an old fox and hence an old craftie, sly, subtle companion, sneaking lurking wily deceiver” (3). His companion’s name Mosca, coming from the Latin *musca* meaning a fly, refers to a human parasite who prays on his master’s leftovers to get fed. Due to his malefic betrayal, editors have detected a reference here to Beelzebub, “the Lord of the Flies”. Then, several names of birds are used by Jonson for other characters. Surprisingly, those birds are not symbolic of liberty: they all refer to characters that are captives of their cupidity and their immediate goals, and who have shown strong hypocrisy and absolutely no integrity. Indeed, the advocate is named “Voltore”, who obviously comes from the Latin word for vulture, the bird which feeds on carcasses – a harsh and pessimistic way of describing the lawyer’s profession. Then, there is “Corbaccio”, whose name comes from the Italian word for “raven”, and “Corvino”, whose name comes for the Italian word for a small crow. This practice of taking Italian version of words shows not only the fondness Jonson has with antiquity and the Latin language, but also reveals a trend of the time, where Italy was seen as exotic, and which aroused a lot of enthusiasm from the English bourgeoisie. I would like to address three more examples: at one point, Mosca evokes a physician who goes by the name “signor Lupo” (2.6.61). Lady Would-Be is referred to as a “she-wolf”, and her husband is sometimes called “Sir-Pol”, thus evoking a parrot whose most distinctive trait is his imitation of speech, corresponding perfectly to this character’s comportement. It is interesting to note that almost all those animals chosen for names are carrion-eaters, praying on carcasses. Volpone has completely understood those roles they play, and that is why he literally plays the dead to fool his future victims, as my first argument illustrated. This process, recalling of course Aesop and other fabulists, is a way to simplify the identity of the subject with prominent traits. It confines the person so named into onerole: the mischievous fox is going to play

tricks, and the greedy fly will be a parasite. Their identity is fixed, impoverished, reduced to a core vice and the economic pursuit which it impels them towards.

“Homo homini lupus est” is a Latin proverb that corresponds completely to the problematics evoked concerning Volpone, but even more so in *The Wolf of Wall Street*, which I am now going to consider regarding its animal imagery. Firstly, there is obviously the surname given to Jordan Belfort by the press: “the wolf”. Then, Jordan and his wife Naomi name their daughter “Skylar”, which recalls the bird appellation found in Volpone since it is phonetically really close to the word “skylark”. Jordan also calls his prostitute “dirty little birdie” (1:12:45). During a motivational speech that Jordan gives to his employee, he refers to his place of work as a “real wolf pit, which is exactly how [he] liked it” (1:19:10). He, then, asks his workers to be “ferocious” and “relentless” (1:25:29), note here the strong animal overtone of those terms. At 2:07:00, when he saves his best friend from choking, Belfort does a kind of King Kong celebration, hitting his chest with his fist: animalization is here at its paroxysm. It will, however, continue till the end of the movie. Indeed, at the end Belfort is forced by the FBI to “rat” (2:36:27) his colleague. From the wolf to the rat, the decline of Jordan, as the one of Volpone, was bound to happen. The name, being the first façade of the identity, is used in both works to reduce the character to his vice. There is truly an impoverishment of the identity. More pragmatically, those animal names also help spectators understand what is at stake, by simplifying the character’s motivation.

A parallel can be made between that impoverishment of the identity through the process of “bestialization” and the same process of attenuation, but this time through the objectification of certain characters. With authors being male, and reproducing the sexism inherent in both societies, it is especially women that are objectified. They are represented as goods that men fight to possess. Celia, “the forced lady” (3.8.277) as Bonario refers to her, is for Volpone just as a plate, a jewelry, or a “rope of pearl” (3.7.190). She is just some furniture, a property that can, he hopes, satisfy his infinite avidity. What excites Volpone the most is probably the fact that Celia is unavailable as she is married. Robbing and tricking Corvino one more time is irresistible. “Assure thee, Celia, he that would sell thee, / Only for hope of gain” (3.7.141-42): notice how possession is here rendered explicit, and how funny it is to see that Volpone is entirely capable of spotting his own fault, but only in others. When Volpone imagines costumes which he wants Celia to put on, he professes: “Then will I have thee, in more modern forms” (3.7.225), later: “And I will meet thee in as many shapes” (3.7.232). Notice how in those two lines, verbs of action are imputed to the male subject and how Celia is marginalized by being placed, grammatically, as a direct object. Sex is here represented as a way of possession. The same

system occurs in *The Wolf of Wall Street* with the character of Naomi Belfort. Jordan often nicknames her “the duchess”, thus reducing his wife to her function and her societal role. Eventually, she cannot stand that surname anymore, and she yells at him: “don’t you duchess me” (1:13:06). Notice here the same system analyzed above with the subject and object position in the sentence, but this time it is negated by Naomi. More generally, in the movie, she is often represented with shopping bags, always speaking about new things to buy. Jordan is even going to gift her a yacht called “The Naomi”. If he is the money maker, she is the money consumer; at the end of the movie, when Jordan needs to explain why Naomi is angry, he says: “We probably have to mortgage the house ... Probably end up selling the thing in order to pay for all the lawyers” (2:33:50). Anew, witness here the simplistic stereotyped representation of roles. Every character is reduced to one characteristic, and, thus, they become depersonalized, represented as animals or object. Both authors deny their characters an individualised identity.

In conclusion, I have argued that Volpone and Jordan Belfort have become, as Jonson would put it, “slaves to [their] pleasures” (*Discoveries*, 110), and their “pleasures”, according with their goals, are fulfilled by the accumulation of wealth. Their identity is, therefore, forged not according to their inner personality, but according to their greedy desires, which are instilled to them by the capitalist society and the model of success it brings with it. To use the words of Jordan, they both “deal with [their] problems by becoming rich” (1:24:50). To claim this, I have, firstly, examined definitions of capitalism and identity, and I have shown the effect of the latter on the former concerning our two main characters. I have, then, explained how Volpone’s attitude of tricking, lying and adopting roles, an attitude shared by Belfort too, results in the fragmentation and the dispersal of one’s identity. Finally, I took an interest in the animal imagery of the two works, and I have argued that, in a process of reduction and impoverishment, it impacts severely the identity. In this part, I have also shown that, after capitalism, sexism and the objectification of women that comes with it also participates in the loss of individuality. To go further, I could also have mentioned the phenomenon of inversion, which is central in *Volpone*, but also the deep dependance that Volpone has upon the audience and Mosca. Those two points further support my thesis of the identity’s instability in a capitalist system.

Showing types of characters as excessive and obsessed as Jordan and Volpone can be is not only cathartic, but it also helps us as spectators examine our own suspicions, which is basically what we need to fight against such manipulators. Here is the reason why I think it is worthwhile, and valuable, to read *Volpone* today. Indeed, for a lot of people, accumulation of money is still their main objective. The resonance of this problematic

in an adaptation of F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*. Critics who have argued that those works were validating the comportment that they were, on the contrary, denouncing are misguided. To conclude, I have suggested that an ever-growing lust for money transforms identity and makes it the object of lust, and not the object of the self. Thus, identity becomes a tool, a means that helps avid characters to model their desires.

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Writing Tips from a Former Writing Lab Monitor

MEGAN ZEITZ

Editor's note: You may well remember Megan Zeitz provided much writing advice in last semester's issue of Noted - but if you missed this article (where have you been?), I'd highly recommend that you return to it!

1. Do not hesitate to overdo everything before refining your work: read "too many" secondary sources, collect "too many" excerpts and quotations, have "too many" passages to analyze, come up with exhaustive lists of keywords and definitions, write "too much"—if you need to and if you have time, of course. If you limit yourself when researching and writing, you might feel frustrated and anxious that you have not found the "perfect" secondary source or that you have not said "everything" you meant to say in your essay. Let your brain wander, let your ideas flow onto the page. If you feel a burst of inspiration, by all means, let yourself get carried away. It is totally fine if some of the points, passages, and quotations that you have gathered do not make it into the final product. Write as much as you need and then, when reviewing and editing your essay, you will identify what is not that relevant and you will cut it out.
2. If you are not sure about the structure of your essay once the first draft is written, try the "reverse outlining" technique (credits to Prof. Madsen for that tip): identify the thematic sections and the arguments of your essay; verify that each section has the same number of arguments, that each argument unfolds in roughly the same number of words/pages and that each sub-argumentative unit corresponds to one paragraph. Then, deduce an outline from your review of your essay. If the outline looks balanced and logically ordered, then your essay has an efficient structure.

3. Do not be afraid to be extra clear about what you are arguing — better to be “annoyingly” and repeatedly clear than vague throughout. Explain the potentially controversial or complex terms that you plan to use in your argumentation right from the start in the introduction. Explain your methodological choices and why they are relevant. State your main argument in the introduction and your sub-arguments in the topic sentences of your paragraphs.

4. Be playful with words: look up their multiple meanings in the OED, research their etymology and their history of use. Connect that word that stands out with other relevant terms in the text that you are analyzing. Notice the echoes, the repetitions, the meaningful connections between words, sentences, structures. How do they communicate together and what might that dialogue mean for your text?

5. Historicize and contextualize: what did that word mean for the author of the text when and where they were writing? How does it reflect the Zeitgeist of a time, place, and socio-cultural milieu?

6. A more personal tip to help you study in good conditions: you may want to have background ambient sounds to help you relax while you are studying (because silence can be scary). There are plenty of relaxing ambience videos on YouTube which feature the sound of a crackling fire in a mountain cabin, rain falling and wind howling outside of an old library, or coffee being poured and people quietly chatting in a café. My strategy for ultimate relaxation is to mix a video of ambient sounds with low-volume soft instrumental music.

ART

Stone of Life

LORRAINE DEVILLARD

- Grandma, tell me, what are stones made of?
- They are a consciousness that is aware of itself. So aware that it has densified to take a shape that seems inert.

The child was surprised.

- Seems? Does that mean that stones are alive?
- In my sense of alive, yes.
- Do they also have feelings?
- They feel the world around and send waves from their true heart. You can try to connect to them.

The child was intrigued. Her question was getting very interesting.

- How do I do that, grandma?
- You do it already, quite naturally, dear child. Just feel that shiver on your skin. A diffuse sensation that kindly asks to reach into you. It is an invitation to communicate through the body.
- I can feel something. It is like seeing within a bubble of soap.
- You are opening your heart to this subtle dialogue. How do you feel within that bubble?
- I am not so sure. I am curious and at the same time afraid not to be able to breathe.
- What happens if you try to breathe inside? Just do it slowly.
- I feel like tiny rivers, very thin and light rivers, that come into me.
- Those are flows of information. The stone is delivering messages to the intelligence of your body. Your body knows this language very well. How does it feel like to keep breathing?

The child breathes.

- I was afraid that I would be overwhelmed, but its dialogue is... thin. Delicate.
- Respectful of your rhythm. You are discovering the true taste of life, sweetheart.
- The true taste of life? Does this mean that I can do this with other beings?
- All things, all beings, are a vibration which you can perceive through your heart. When you start speaking the language of your heart, you realize that the whole universe has a heartbeat and you can start vibrating with it. It releases the deep tones of the world, the wisdom secret to those who hang on to the surface. What I am telling you comes from the melody of my heart. Words become gifts of love that weave the fabric of the world in beauty. Trust your heart, sweetheart. It alone knows how to create the beauty your soul so intensely wishes to see on this planet. It alone knows the language of all things and translates the messages that you receive from your body to your mind and from your mind to your body. A safe place that is well guarded and that I wish you to guard well. The dearest thing a grandma can see is her children and grandchildren vibrating the note of their heart, and diffusing its wise messages to the world, like a bee breathing from one flower to another or a butterfly dancing around the plants. Be the sweet melody you are.

The child did not need to answer that. She was listening from her true heart, feeling the accuracy of those words, their rightful tone. Her heart was beating together with her grandmother's. Two hearts sharing their wisdom in silence's secrecy.

There, in that movement, she could feel how her heart is a door that connects her to the rest of the universe. The stones, the plants, the animals, the earth, the stars. All beings willing to infuse their wisdom and kindness into the world, passing it along through delicate rivers of information, of love, of true beauty.

She knew at that moment, breathed it through her whole body, that she would never be alone, that her grandmother would always be there to guide her, from this place of pure wisdom.

She knew that people and stars were dancing beyond the veil of death, and that someday her grandmother would join them.

She felt at peace with the idea, yet the touch of her grandmother's hand at the back of her heart brought her comfort. For the time being, she could still enjoy her earthly presence.

She had always loved her grandmother's true words and the little walks they would take together, just the two of them. These always started with a simple question, innocent, and ended up leading them to this place of beauty within their hearts.

A bird chanted, as to confirm the accuracy of the child's thoughts. It added its own vibration to the chorus of the child's and the grandmother's hearts. And suddenly the whole landscape opened to them.

Each leaf of grass and each droplet of water, each tree and each animal present, from the tiniest insect to the biggest bird, started delivering their messages to their united hearts. It felt like being part of a big orchestra where threads of life communicated from one atom to another. They could have stayed there an eternity, these two in this charming symphony of silence, and maybe they have... maybe they have.

If you open your heart just enough, you might find out that they, still, are enjoying this moment of pure being.

Rapunzel

VALÉRIE FIVAZ



Telemachus

SABRINA MARTINS

It hasn't stopped yet, nor has it begun,
my father telling me to forgive the sea.

They couldn't tell why, but he was drowning
before it struck: bleak, bare, blood-sweet bursting,
taking what was already lost.

He was wrestling the deep before it hit:
a quenchless illness, that yet inspired
his long-conquered skin to battle and war,
going while knowing it would weave its web
into his veins—intertwining. He knew
he'd be choking on weeds.

Consume him, sea.

It that burns but cannot be extinguished,
like a wildfire in funeral July
that swallows night and swells and nearly howls,
whose breath paints our skies bright, apathetic
to the pyres it lit. Eternal morn.
The flood, incandescent: salt-searing us,
tainting our shore wine, or so the songs say,
though it seemed the same colour to me.

We were foolish to think it would be brief.
The kindling nature of hearth.

Lingering.

I sometimes forget how blueless it felt,
my father telling me
do not blame the sea
for its foreign arms and felon's embrace.
Do not blame flames you cannot smother. Rage
won't soothe a wilted heart.

and me singing
the eversame quiet melody

I blame you and the sea. I blame myself mostly.
I still look at driftwood and hope that it's you.

It hasn't stopped yet,
but it will begin,
my father telling me to
dwell in the sea.



Don't regret; remember.

MEGAN ZEITZ

dumb

SARA CERQUEIRA

[dumbness is numbness and a weight i cannot see
 striking past with promises of second-handed joys
 and loves and grief and adventures that hold no bearing
 (on anything, really)

stop, i tell myself - a far-off awareness of the wrongness of it all
 but it's so nice, i tell myself - and round and round i go on pleasures
 i have no claim over for they are not mine, nor anyone else's,
 (don't belong to anything, really)

and time is a wheel and grounds by as vermin on a clock.
 it ticks round and round (and round again), unfathomable
 hold your hand over it, yet it spins some more.
 i cannot stop it – seconds merely pass -
 are too soon a short-forgotten past.

i shouldn't. vermin spoils my time
 or am i the vermin?
 hours deconstructed, nicely limbs my schedule
 cat in a box awaiting the morrow, timelines divided,
 choices weaving the tenants of fate.
 vermin, all of you seconds, gnawing at my mind.
 excuses, nothing more.]

Perigrinations Through Particularly 'Palling Poetry'

COLLATED BY THE *NOTED* TEAM

Because not all verse has virtue.

"Laziness is the worst vice that a poet can have. Sentimentality, cliché, pretension, falsity of emotion, vanity, dullness, over-ambition, self-indulgence, world-deafness, world-blindness, clumsiness, technical ineptitude, unoriginality – all of these are bad but they are usually subsets and products of laziness." *Stephen Fry*

Absurdity in Urbanity

7 April 1852

Went to the Zoo.

I said to Him—

Something about that Chimpanzee over there reminds me of you.

Carol Ann Duffy, 'Mrs Darwin' (1999)

Beautiful city, the centre and crater of European confusion,
O you with your passionate shriek for the rights of an equal humanity,
How often your Re-volution has proven but E-volution
Roll'd again back on itself in the tides of a civic insanity!

Alfred Lord Tennyson, 'Beautiful City' (1889)

You can use it with great pleasure and ease
Without wasting any elbow grease:
And when washing the most dirty clothes
The sweat won't be dripping from your nose.

William Topaz McGonagall, 'Lines in Praise of Sunlight Soap' (1894)

CULTURE

The Bay of Byron

If, for silver or for gold,
You could melt ten thousand pimples
Into half a dozen dimples,
Then your face we might behold,
Looking, doubtless, much more snugly;
Yet even then 'twould be damned ugly.

Lord Byron, 'Epigram: From the French of Rulhières' (1819)

The world is a bundle of hay,
Mankind are the asses who pull;
Each tugs it a different way,
And the greatest of all is John Bull.

Lord Byron, 'Epigram: The World Is a Bundle of Hay'
(date unknown)

Through life's dull road, so dim and dirty,
I have dragg'd to three and thirty.
What have these years left to me?
Nothing—except thirty-three.

Lord Byron, from 'On my Thirty-Third Birthday' (1821)

"Lord Byron" was an Englishman
A poet I believe,
His first works in old England
Was poorly received.
Perhaps it was "Lord Byron's" fault
And perhaps it was not.
His life was full of misfortunes,
Ah, strange was his lot.

Julia A. Moore, from 'Sketch of Lord Byron's Life' (date unknown)

The (Un)Natural World

I think that I shall never see
A poem lovely as a tree.

A tree whose hungry mouth is prest
Against the earth's sweet flowing breast;

A tree that looks at God all day,
And lifts her leafy arms to pray;

A tree that may in Summer wear
A nest of robins in her hair;

Upon whose bosom snow has lain;
Who intimately lives with rain.

Poems are made by fools like me,
But only God can make a tree.

Joyce Kilmer, 'Trees' (1913)

What, canst thou speak, and pity too?
Then yet a further favour do,
And tell if of my griefs I any end shall know.

Echo. No.

Sure she will pity him that loves her so truly.

Echo. You lie.

Vile rock, thou now grow'st so unruly
That hadst thou life as thou hast voice,
Thou shouldst die at my foot.

Echo. Die at my foot.

Thou canst not make me do it,
Unless thou leave it to my choice,
Who thy hard sentence shall fulfil,
When thou shalt say I die to please her only will.

Echo. I will.

When she comes hither, then, I pray thee tell

Thou art my monument, and this my last farewell. *Echo.* Well.

Lord Herbert, from 'Echo to a Rock' (date unknown)

Ode-ious

I do not love thee for that belly,
Sleek as satin, soft as jelly;
Though within that crystal mound
Heaps of treasure might be found,
So rich, that for the least of them
A king might leave his diadem.

I do not love thee for those thighs,
Whose alabaster rocks do rise
So high and even, that they stand
Like sea-marks to some happy land:
Happy are those eyes have seen them,
More happy they that sail between them.

Thomas Carew, from 'The Complement'

Here lies John Bun,
He was killed by a gun,
His name was not Bun, but Wood,
But Wood would not rhyme with gun,
But Bun would.

Anonymous (date unknown)

Her nose I'd have a foot long, not above,
With pimpled embroider'd, for those I love,
And at the end a comely pearl of snot,
Considering whether it should fall or not:
Provided, next, that half her teeth be out,
Nor do I care much if her pretty snout
Meet with her furrow'd chin, and btoh together,
Hem in her lips, as dry as good whit-leather [...]
As for her belly, 'tis no matter, so
There be a belly, and ---
Yet, if you will, let it be something high,
And always let there be a tympany.

Sir John Sucking, 'The Defomed Mistress' (date unknown)

Who doth presume my mistress's name to scan,
Goes about more than any way he can,
Since all men think that it is Susan. *Echo.* Ann.

What sayst? Then tell who is as white as swan,
While others set by her are pale and wan;
Then, Echo, speak, is it not Susan? *Echo.* Ann.

Tell, Echo, yet, whose middle's but a span,
Some being gross as bucket, round as pan,
Say, Echo, then, is it not Susan? *Echo.* Ann.

Say, is she not soft as meal without bran?
Though yet in great haste once from me she ran,
Mush I not however love Susan? *Echo.* Ann.

Lord Herbert, 'Melander Suppos'd to Love Susan, but Did Love Ann'
(date unknown)

She sins upon a larger scale,
Because She is herself more large.

Alfred Austin, from 'The Door of Humility' (1906)

Dubious Devotions

So 'tis with Christians, Nature being weak,
While in this world, are liable to leak.

William Balmford, 'The Seaman's Spiritual Companion' (1678)

Sins, those that both com- and o-mitted be,
Once hot and cold but in a third degree,
Are now such poisons, that though they may lurk
In secret parts awhile, yet they will work,
Though after death; never come alone,
But sudden-fruitful mutlipy 'ere done.

Lord Herbert, from 'The State Progress of Ill' (1608)

Art thou for something rare and profitable?
Wouldest thou see a truth within a fable?
Art thou forgetful? Wouldest thou remember
From New-Year's day to the last of December?
Then read my fancies; they will stick like burs,
And may be, to the helpless, comforters.

John Bunyan, from 'The Author's Apology for his Book', *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1678)

Swiss English Studies Elsewhere: Zoom-ing in on Digital Theatre

AN INTERVIEW WITH GEMMA KATE ALLRED

Gemma Kate Allred, a doctoral student at the Université de Neuchâtel, may well have done the inconceivable: found a research topic that required the pandemic in order to progress. She is one of three editors for a forthcoming collection entitled *Lockdown Shakespeare: New Evolutions in Performance and Adaptation*, to be published by Arden Shakespeare in 2022, and has kindly agreed to talk to the Noted team about her work with online productions.

1. How long have you been interested in digital theatre, and what first attracted you to it?

That's a great question. I think my initial experience of digital theatre was similar to a lot of people in that I was really aware of traditional theatre broadcasts – so the *NT Live* and *Globe on Screen* model where performances are streamed either live or 'as live' to cinemas. Living in Switzerland I really welcomed the ability to access theatre productions, albeit via screen, without having to travel. And then the theatres shut down in March 2020 and productions moved online.

I was a fairly early mover in Lockdown Performance. I watched the first *The Show Must Go Online* – Rob Myles's ambitious project to perform Shakespeare's First Folio canon live via Zoom and streamed to YouTube – on March 19 2020. This was quickly followed by CtrlAltRepeat's *Midsummer Night Stream* a couple of weeks later. I co-edit a blog on adaptation with Benjamin Broadribb, *'Action is eloquence': (Re)thinking Shakespeare* (<https://medium.com/action-is-eloquence-re-thinking-shakespeare>), and while I tend to focus on theatre, Benjamin tends to focus on screen adaptation. We found ourselves debating whether this emergence of theatre on Zoom was screen or stage adaptation – we quickly realised that it was something new, an evolution of adaptation that had its base in both screen and stage.

2. We'd love to hear more about *Lockdown Shakespeare: New Evolutions in Performance and Adaptation*. Could you give us a short run-down of the collection's purpose and ambitions?

The edited collection started its life on *(Re)thinking Shakespeare* and through countless conversations as Benjamin and I navigated the 'new normal' of the pandemic. As editors, Erin Sullivan, Benjamin and I are aware that this book was written within the moment and so we want it to reflect that. In part one, we invited a series of contributors – John Wyver, Pascale Aeberhard, Rachel Nicholas, David Sterling Brown and Ben Crystal – to join us in offering a series of analyses, with a close focus on aspects of Lockdown Shakespeare. These chapters look at aesthetics, audiences, liveness, emotional response and more, as well as the impact of making theatre in moments of change and uncertainty.

We were very clear from the outset that this book should include creatives, so for Part Two we spoke with the practitioners who made theatre in these turbulent times. A series of case studies with *The Show Must Go Online*, *Big Telly Theatre Company*, *CtrlAltRepeat*, and *Merced Shakespearefest*, gives an insight into the creation of theatre during the pandemic and document some of the behind-the-scenes discussions and processes. We also consider the academic applications of Lockdown Performance with a pedagogical round table that brings together three educators from around the globe to consider how they have turned to digital spaces to continue teaching Shakespearean performance during the pandemic. Similarly, staff, students and alumni of The Shakespeare Institute, University of Birmingham, offer a series of reflections on moving their annual play-reading 'marathon' from its usual in-person model onto Zoom.

My background is in business and innovation, and I was very aware that we were writing at the start of a moment – I didn't want the incremental advances to be lost. So much theatre of the last 18 months has been created by small companies and creatives whose input can be overshadowed by the big players. Part Three presents a (long) Year in Review of lockdown digital arts: a chronological examination of adaptation and performance of Lockdown Shakespeare, alongside key non-Shakespearean examples, from approximately March 2020 to May 2021. Across four 'seasons', our hope is to place the many different forms of digital performance and adaptation which have emerged during the pandemic in conversation with one another. It is here that our cultural cartography is inherently at its widest, viewing the digital lockdown landscape panoramically across cultures and continents to consider how and why trends in Shakespeare and beyond have emerged.

3. What has surprised you the most during your research into online theatrical productions?

I've been most surprised, or impressed, really, by the scope of digital theatre over the last long year. Creatives have taken software designed for corporate meetings and created entire believable worlds. While our volume focuses on Shakespeare in performance, the larger digital arts sphere is worthy of attention. Creatives have embraced notions of together/apart to bring audiences into the Zoom room to experience truly interactive immersive theatre. Out of such challenging times has sprung great innovation – multi-device productions that require the audience to undertake real-time research to crack codes or solve crimes, or where audience members are selected for micro-experiences through phone-calls or emails. I've even attended a production that played out entirely on a shared Google document!

The commitment to accessibility has also been impressive. Creatives I have spoken to have been hyper-aware of the intrusive nature of Zoom theatre, that the audience and actors are essentially inviting strangers into their homes. The work that goes on behind the scenes to create a safe and welcoming environment for everyone has been fantastic.

4. Can you remember how many online shows you've seen since March 2020... and could you possibly choose a favourite production?

I can! I have notes on everything I've seen – not including productions filmed pre-pandemic that have been made available from The National Theatre, Shakespeare's Globe Theatre and others. And, excluding repeat viewings (I do like to see things more than once), I have seen 143 different productions. Choosing a favourite is hard, so I'm going to cheat! My favourite Shakespeare production was Big Telly's *Macbeth* from October 2020 – their technical use of Zoom was amazing. I think the most intense production was James Dillon's sci-fi horror production *Siren* in Spring 2021 – with an audience of just five, I was in awe at the complete immersion he created as he responded in real time to audience interaction. Exit Productions' *The Inquest* and *Jury Duty* (which are still running) are great examples of multi-device theatre as the audience are tasked with resolving cases. For pure escapist fun, CtrlAltRepeat's *Viper Squad* is the play I saw the most – I loved living out my 80s action hero dreams!

5. We know that you don't have a crystal ball, but nevertheless: what do you predict will be the future of digital theatre?

I think the genie is out of the bottle now... it's going to be hard to back-track from the accessibility that this moment has provided. Ironically the closure of theatres has made theatre more universally available – mainstream productions streamed directly to an at-home audience has opened up global access. I can now easily access productions from London, Berlin, New York, performed and streamed live to my TV in Switzerland. We're already seeing Big Theatre integrating live streams into their in-person seasons: Shakespeare's Globe, for example, has offered live streams of all their in-person productions this summer. I don't see us giving that up easily.

I also think that there will continue to be innovation in digital arts with increased hybridity – interactive productions that have both at-home and in-person audiences influencing the production. There have already been developments here – last spring Parabolic Theatre company staged an immersive experience that saw in-person participants essentially undertake a scavenger hunt around East London aided by an at-home audience providing intel with an overall true crime style narrative. Big Telly are about to open *Department Story* (October 2021), a site-specific production that sees in-person audiences experiencing immersive theatre in a department store pitted against online shoppers at home. The future of digital theatre is definitely going to be exciting!

“[T]hings that are popular”: Revision and Assimilation in Lin-Manuel Miranda’s Hamilton: An American Musical

AÏCHA BOUCHELAGHEM

Lin-Manuel Miranda's *Hamilton: An American Musical* (2015) recounts the life story of United States founding father Alexander Hamilton, who glowers at us condescendingly from every U.S. ten-dollar bill. Yet, fighting against this iconic representation, Miranda chose explicitly other-than-white modes of mediation. The performers are almost exclusively black, Asian, or Latino (like Miranda himself). Not only is the cast diverse, but the songs are predominantly hip-hop, a genre that stems from marginalized, African American voices. Extending upon this basis, Miranda is careful to invest the style of characters' songs with meaning. For instance, Valerie Lynn Schrader explains that "Hamilton and his friends" sing hip-hop (Schrader 2019, 270). In contrast, King George III (the reigning British monarch during the American Revolution) sings Britpop, in "a homage to the British invasion and the Beatles" (Schrader 270). Thus, rap and hip-hop are coded as genres of revolution, of the dynamic revisionary spirit which characterizes the fictional Hamilton.

However, on the level of diegesis, *Hamilton* embellishes rather than revises the founding father narrative. The explicit subject matter of the play is the national genesis of the U.S., with Hamilton as its main focalizer. However, the play does not so much comment on or criticize his part in the destructive deeds of the founding fathers as it creates a space for discourse about immigration. As Justin A. Williams puts it, *Hamilton* indeed "critique[s] contemporary immigration policy" (Williams 2018, 488). It does not, however, actually discuss racism. Nor does it question the capitalist system which belies the socioeconomic inequalities consistent in U.S. history until the present.

Miranda's concept of a white story mediated through other-than-white voices and bodies is central to the play's marketing. Lyra D. Monteiro cites a telling line from "a radio spot advertising the show, which declares, 'This is the story of America then, told by America now'" (Monteiro 2016, 93). That promise of revision has proven to be effective promotion, closely accompanying the aesthetic appeal of the play itself. As of June 2020, according to the American public radio podcast Fresh Air, *Hamilton* "passed a billion dollars in revenue" (Gross 2020, 00:45). It won no less than 11 Tony Awards (which are presented for achievements in Broadway theatre) in addition to

a Pulitzer Prize for Drama, and the cast recording of the original soundtrack won a Grammy Award (a prestigious prize in the music industry) (Gross 05:08).

Despite enjoying such popularity, the show has also met with harsh academic and cultural criticism. Writer Ishmael Reed, who has been an active counter-cultural voice since the late 1960s, is particularly critical of Hamilton. He finds the notion of a colored cast representing the rich white stakeholders of Independence unforgivable, going so far as to compare it to “Jewish actors in Berlin’s theaters taking roles of Goering[,] Goebbels[,] Eichmann [or] Hitler” (Hsu 2019, n. pag.). In fact, his disapproval was such that it prompted him to write a play of his own, titled *The Haunting of Lin-Manuel Miranda* (2020).¹ In the *New York Times*, Elisabeth Vincentelli called Reed’s response-play “a cross between ‘A Christmas Carol’ and a trial at The Hague’s International Criminal Court” (Vincentelli 2019). Hsu does not expect the radically didactic *Haunting* to join the canon of Reed’s most memorable works. However, it is not unfair to say that *Hamilton* falls short of challenging the U.S. societal status quo.

The show’s most litigious fault seems to be its treatment of slavery – or lack thereof – around the time of Independence. While the play’s diegetic world does include slavery as an integral part of its economic production system, it fails to comment on or even gesture towards the historical Hamilton’s own involvement in slavery. In “Cabinet Battle #1” (Miranda 2.2), the scene in which Hamilton and Jefferson debate (in the form of a rap battle) over “Hamilton’s plan to assume state debt and establish a national bank,” Hamilton calls his colleague “a slaver.”² Jefferson is, like the historical Thomas Jefferson, from Virginia. The reason that he opposes Hamilton’s financial plan is that he does not want to see the Southern states’ comfortable agricultural revenue, which relies on free labor, dissolved by a centralized financial system. The play further distances Jefferson from Hamilton’s moral standpoint through music. Indeed, as Schrader specifies, Jefferson’s first scene, “What’d I Miss” (Miranda 2.1), is not rap but jazz (Schrader 270). Although his character still expresses himself in an African American genre, it is more extravagant and less aggressively revisionary than rap, which reflects the difference the play constructs between Jefferson and Hamilton. To the accusation that Hamilton “just wanna move [the South’s] money around” (Miranda 2.2), Hamilton accusatively alludes to the slavery-based nature of Southern economies: “Yeah, keep ranting / We know who’s really doing the planting.” With the rhyming word pair “ranting” – “planting,” Hamilton highlights the bad faith of pro-slavery politicians, like Jefferson, who would have nothing to object to the proposed plan if they did not practice slavery. “Cabinet Battle #1” sets

¹ *The Haunting of Lin-Manuel Miranda* was published as a book in 2020, but it was first performed in 2019 at the Nuyorican Poets Cafe.

² All quotations from *Hamilton* are from allmusicals.com.

up Miranda’s fictionalized Hamilton as an anti-slavery counter-voice against Jefferson, which the historical Hamilton was not.

“Alexander Hamilton” (Miranda 1.1), the opening scene of the play confesses, in passing, that Hamilton was once “placed. . . in charge of a [slave-]trading charter.” However, the lyrics are constructed so as to excuse him. The use of the passive voice and the emphasis on Hamilton’s young age at the time (he was “fourteen”) strip him of moral responsibility for trading slaves. In addition, the indications that he “struggled” to “ke[ep] his guard up” and was merely “longing for something to be a part of” draw attention to his vulnerability as a poor child constrained to emigrate (Miranda 1.1). So, the musical’s opening reference to slavery does more to frame Hamilton’s immigrant narrative than to critique slavery as problem inherent to the U.S.

Matt Stoller emphasizes that the historical Hamilton “married into a slaveholding family and traded slaves himself” (Stoller 2017, 38). Moreover, and more regrettably, the play’s diegesis does not include any enslaved people. Monteiro indeed insists on the absence of any characters who were racialized as black in the late eighteenth century, even though it would have been highly likely for enslaved people to permeate the background of the founding fathers’ daily lives. “During the Revolutionary era, around 14 percent of New York City’s inhabitants were African American, the majority of whom were enslaved” (Monteiro 93). Philip Gentry indicates that Miranda was aware that the real Hamilton “was not a clear-cut abolitionist” and that it therefore seemed “better to avoid delving into the subject in any substantive way” (Gentry 2017, 276). However, I agree with Monteiro that such an omission “erases the presence and role of black and brown people in Revolutionary America” (Monteiro 93). Moreover, Hamilton completely occults the historical Hamilton’s participation in the genocide of Native peoples (Hsu 2019, n. pag.). In “Take A Break” (Miranda 2.3), Elizabeth (Eliza) Schuyler, Hamilton’s wife, suggests they take a vacation to a family land “upstate.” In real life, that land had apparently been “the result of elder Philip Schuyler’s acquisition of Native American lands” (Gentry 276). The story of Hamilton markedly departs from the historical Hamilton’s participation in the cruelty which characterizes the Independence period.

That lack of revolutionary work at the diegetic level is not restricted to Hamilton’s involvement in slavery and genocide. Stoller argues that Hamilton’s vision for financial policy makes him the direct precursor of “big business” and Wall Street high finance (Stoller 37) and that the praise he is accorded in the play (even though the Hamilton of the play and the historical Hamilton are ontologically different) amounts to validating a political economy that supports the rich financial elite rather than secures the welfare

of the public. Stoller writes that “[o]ne of [the historical] Hamilton’s biggest fans is Tim Geithner, the man who presided over the financial crisis and the gargantuan bank bail-outs of the Obama presidency” (Stoller 43). Indeed, in the wake of the 2008 financial crash, the U.S. government rescued bankrupt banks using tax money, while many of the tax payers themselves saw their retirement funds and the value of their property reduced to nothing. In erasing this from Hamilton’s story, the musical further jeopardizes its own anti-establishment pretenses.

Hamilton’s dismissal of such problematic topics could seem understandable if one views the play as an allegory which foregrounds the historical Hamilton’s immigrant status, rather than as a ground-breaking historical document. Perhaps the play simply functions as a metaphor denouncing xenophobia in the present-day United States. Miranda’s Hamilton, like the real Hamilton and Miranda himself, is technically an immigrant from the Caribbean – although an internal one, since he comes from a then-fellow British colony. Miranda finds Hamilton “captivat[ing],” as well as “an inspirational” and “*aspirational*” figure (my emphasis; Miranda qtd. in Monteiro 95), even though his politics appear to have been xenophobic (Philip W. Magness 2017, 500) as well as authoritarian (Stoller 36-37). Thus, Miranda sees his personal experience of Latino Americanness reflected in Hamilton’s success, which he achieved “by working a lot harder” and “being a lot smarter” than white men born in the would-be U.S. As a poor internal immigrant, a “son of a whore [...] without a father,” Hamilton – as both real and fictional figure – indeed had to be “a self-starter” in order to become the first secretary of the treasury of the new-born nation (Miranda 1.1).

That meritocratic experience, rather than the details of Hamilton’s personality or political profile, informs the characterization of Hamilton in the play, as well as his conflictual relationship with fellow founding fathers. In “The Room Where It Happens” (Miranda 2.5), Aaron Burr, Hamilton’s main rival and ultimate killer, uses the periphrasis “[t]wo Virginians and an immigrant” to refer to Hamilton, Jefferson and Adams. He reduces the political debate over how to organize the nation financially to an opposition of old-money greed – in a probable allusion to the Republican party of the U.S. – versus an immigrant’s intuition to centralize revenue and redistribute it equally. Moreover, the reductive label of “immigrant” reflects the point of view of the musical’s main antagonist, Burr. This narratorial play allows Miranda to further allude to the virulent xenophobic sentiments of the contemporary U.S., especially in the Trump era. Donald Trump started planning his run for the 2016-2020 U.S. Presidency weeks after the debut of *Hamilton* and, according to Stoller, “after Trump won, *Hamilton* became a refuge” from the then-new president’s hateful politics (Stoller 36). Therefore, adapting the mythical

figures of the founding fathers in order to use them as vehicles for Miranda’s progressive message about migration politics is not, *per se*, reprehensible. After all, it seems legitimate to wonder why Hamilton has received less “credit” (Miranda 2.23) over the course of history than the likes of Jefferson and Washington.

However, Miranda at times manages his metaphorical treatment of immigrant experience in clumsy and therefore problematic ways. For instance, when the play compares Hamilton’s personality with the U.S. themselves, it ignores – if not condones – the damage done to Native and African American lives through American territorial and economic expansion. In the musical scene “My Shot” (Miranda 1.3), which dramatizes Hamilton’s decision to seize the opportunity to partake in the American Revolution, the protagonist proclaims: “Hey yo, I’m just like my country / I’m young, scrappy and hungry / And I’m not throwing away my shot.” The tenor of that simile is ambition or thirst for power, and its vehicle the “hung[er]” for land and profit which characterizes the early U.S. On the one hand, the simile valorizes Hamilton’s resilience as an internal migrant without a wealthy background and grants him unprecedented credit for his success. Implicitly, Miranda thus allows present day migrants in the U.S. or Americans with immigrant heritage to identify with the nation at its core, and to no longer feel excluded from it. On the other hand, celebrating megalomania sets an alarming discursive precedent and therefore impedes the play from qualifying as fully revolutionary.

The clumsiness of Miranda’s immigrant allegory recurs towards the end of Act One. At the beginning of “Yorktown” (Miranda 1.20), which depicts a decisive battle in the American Revolution, Hamilton has a brief chat with Lafayette, a character based on the French Marquis de Lafayette, a military leader who took part in the War of Independence. Hamilton and Lafayette, both born outside the nation which they are fighting to create, muse on how “Immigrants [...] get the job done!” In these lines, Miranda equates the contributions of Hamilton and Lafayette as migrants with the importance of the enslaved to both winning the war and sustaining a thriving economy. He undeservedly attributes the achievement of that “job” to characters who, despite their countries of origin, remain highly privileged figures. Overall, the immigrant metaphor is not a very convincing vehicle for Miranda’s message. Moreover, the experience of Lafayette, who seems to qualify as a temporary expatriate rather than an immigrant, is not comparable to those of modern-day migrants to the U.S. – nor to those of enslaved people and their descendants, some of whom make up the cast of *Hamilton*.

Miranda’s epitext, for example in the form the interviews he gave on the show, worsens the lack of an organic association between his metaphor’s vehicle (the fictional

Hamilton and his fight against the hypocrisy of rich enslavers) and its tenor (present-day progressive voices advocating for those disadvantaged by Republicanism and Trumpism). In his interview with the public radio podcast *Fresh Air*, Miranda claims that “[t]he fights we had at the [country’s] origin are the fights we’re still having. [...] I’ve always [...] said that slavery is the original sin of this country” (Miranda in Gross 05:05, 20:30). Again, since the diegesis of *Hamilton* addresses immigration and not slavery, Miranda seems to be misreading his own play, thereby inappropriately associating internal migration with slavery, and present-day African American as well as migrant experience.

This being said, while Miranda’s allegory is not fully convincing, the appeal of the other-than-white mediation of a white paternal mythical narrative has proven impactful. Monteiro quotes African American actor Leslie Odom, Jr., who portrays Aaron Burr: “[Hamilton] has been such a gift to me. [...] because I feel that [the history of the founding fathers is] my history, too, for the first time ever [...] I think this show is going to hopefully make hundreds of thousands of people of color feel a part of something that we don’t often feel a part of” (Odom, Jr. qtd. in Monteiro 97). Moreover, Miranda associates the founding fathers not only with African American faces but also with African American voices, via the use of rap. Gentry argues that “there is reason to believe that the Declaration of Independence was originally rapped” (Gentry 275). Miranda’s choice of such a technique thus sits neatly within his attempt to associate the U.S. founding narrative with marginalized voices, which he also achieves – though with problematic implications – in the figurative immigrant rhetoric I discussed above. Throughout the play, the text also alludes to many canonical African American rap titles in the text of the musical. “Cabinet Battle #1” (Miranda 2.2) at one point refers to “The Message” (1982) by pioneering hip-hop artist Grandmaster Flash. “The Message” famously denounces the poor living conditions of African Americans in New York as a result of racial socio-economic inequality. Thus, *Hamilton* indeed allows its audience a sense of national cultural belonging on the level of audio-visual mediation.

Despite the symbolic agency of form in *Hamilton*, the play’s later commercial life restricts its inclusivity even more than the story itself. Hsu writes in *The New Yorker* that Hamilton’s popularity makes it “an infiltration of the mainstream,” rather than “a disruption of it” (Hsu 2019, n. pag.). While Miranda claims to be bringing revolution to the American people, his work, rather than being easily accessible to all, has become a commodity or, in Hsu’s terms, an “ad [...] for capitalism” (Hsu n. pag.). Beyond the theatrical existence of the play itself, *Hamilton*, not unlike most blockbusters, is available for purchase in a variety of products. Along with theater producer and director Jeremy McCarter, Miranda published *Hamilton: The Revolution* (2016), a book

containing the play’s text and musical score, amongst other exclusive information about *Hamilton*. Moreover, the website hamiltongoods.com sells all sorts of merchandise, ranging from CD recordings of the soundtrack (which seems fair enough), through to T-shirts, pins, Covid face-masks, umbrellas, mugs, shot glasses in reference to the musical number “My Shot” (Miranda 1.3), and more.

What is even more threatening for the play’s revolutionary aim is that Miranda has profitably restricted access to the play. In 2020, he sold the rights to the filmed version of *Hamilton* with its original Broadway cast to Disney, for the film to be streamed on *Disney Plus*.³ Regrettably – though unsurprisingly – Disney Plus discontinued its offer of seven-day free trials ahead of its *Hamilton* release on 3rd July, 2020. Monteiro indicates that as of 2015, “the Broadway League [found] that about 80 percent of all Broadway ticket buyers [were] white” (Monteiro 97-98), although that percentage could conceivably be lower for *Hamilton*. Therefore, even the minorities whom Miranda addresses through *Hamilton* would not be able to access the film without financially promoting Disney, a company which, even in recent years, has never been daring in its diversity. For instance, despite its effort to foreground colored voices in its films, it restricts its non-white characters to geographically or discursively distant spaces like a Tahiti-based fictional island, Mexico, Columbia and the Southern U.S. (although this is a topic for a whole other discussion).⁴ In brief, Miranda’s collaboration with Disney makes him complicit in the company’s continuing effort to steer clear of any counter-discourse which actually challenges the U.S.’ racially, and socio-economically unjust status quo. Such a business decision on Miranda’s part does not, *per se*, prevent *Hamilton* itself from being subversive. Yet it is ironic, to say the least, for a subversive piece of work to enter the mainstream industry and sustain the system which belies the very inequalities the play is believed to critique. This is reminiscent of what journalist Julian Lucas described as Ishmael Reed’s “disgust at [Alice] Walker’s decision to let her novel’s *[The Color Purple]* narrative of rape and incest fall into Hollywood’s racist hands” (Lucas 2019, n. pag.).

The aim of this review was not to judge Miranda for not having written a musical criticizing Alexander Hamilton’s problematic legacy – from his perpetuation of slavery, through his involvement in the erasure of Native presence, to his elitist financial projects. The debate over whether artists have a responsibility towards activism is not new, and I do not have any definitive answer to it – except that artists who claim to

³ Miranda had a prior professional relationship to Disney. He namely co-composed the music to *Moana* (directed by Ron Clements and John Musker, 2016).

⁴ *Moana* (Clements and Musker); *Coco* (directed by Adrian Molina and Lee Unkrich, 2017); *Encanto* (directed by Byron Howard and Jared Bush, 2021); and *The Princess and the Frog* (directed by John Musker and Ron Clements, 2009), respectively.

make activist art and who have a wide audience, like Miranda, are impelled to provide an acceptable level of radical counter-discourse. While the performance through rap and a colored cast has proven to carry a symbolic force, the play's contribution to mainstream middle-of-the-road politics far outruns the concrete change it seems to make about how people remember the founding fathers.

I am nevertheless encouraging anyone who is interested in this discussion, as well as anyone who enjoys musicals, rap music, or both, to watch *Hamilton* – especially at the theater –, if you have the chance. From an aesthetic perspective, this show is absolutely breathtaking. The music is catchy, the choreography meaningfully aligns with the lyrics, and the story, however un-revolutionary, is touching, which I still appreciate in art. My conclusion is merely that we need to think critically through our enjoyment: not only about the play itself, but also about its promotional epitext.

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VARIA

Mind the Gap!

CICERO: FIRST SPEECH AGAINST CATILINE (63 BCE)
Translated by Charles Duke Yonge

WHEN, O (1) _____, do you mean to cease abusing our (2) _____? How long is that (3) _____ of yours still to (4) _____ us? When is there to be an end of that unbridled (5) _____ of yours, (6) _____ about as it does now? Do not the nightly (7) _____ placed on the (8) _____ — do not the (9) _____ posted throughout the city — does not the (10) _____ of the people, and the (11) _____ of all good men—does not the precaution taken of (12) _____ the senate in this most defensible place—do not the looks and countenances of this venerable (13) _____ here present, have any effect upon you? Do you not feel that your plans are (14) _____? Do you not see that your (15) _____ is already arrested and rendered powerless by the knowledge which everyone here possesses of it? What is there that you did last night, what the night before—where is it that you were—who was there that you summoned (16) _____ you — what (17) _____ was there which was (18) _____ by you, with which you think that any one of us is unacquainted? Shame on the (19) _____ and on its (20) _____!

1. Name:	12. Verb (ending in -ing):
2. Noun:	13. Noun:
3. Emotion:	14. Verb (past tense):
4. Verb (present tense):	15. Noun:
5. Noun:	16. Infinitive verb:
6. Verb (ending in -ing):	17. Noun:
7. Collective noun:	18. Verb (past tense):
8. Place name:	19. Noun:
9. Collective noun:	20. Noun:
10. Noun:	
11. Noun:	

Source: *The World's Famous Orations*, ed. William Jennings Bryan. New York: Bartelby. 2003 [Online]. <https://www.bartleby.com/268/2/11.html>

FROM *BEOWULF*
translated by Frances B. Gummere

(1) _____, praise of the (2) _____ of people-kings
of (3) _____ Danes, in (4) _____ long sped,
we have (5) _____, and what (6) _____ the athelings won!
Oft (7) _____ from squadroned foes,
from many a (8) _____, the mead-bench tore,
(9) _____ the earls. Since erst he lay
(10) _____, a foundling, fate repaid him:
for he waxed under (11) _____, in wealth he (12) _____,
till before him the folk, both far and near,
who house by the (13) _____, heard his mandate,
gave him (14) _____: a good king he!

1. Word of exclamation:
2. Noun:
3. Adjective:
4. Plural noun:
5. Verb (past tense):
6. Noun:
7. Famous person:

8. Noun:
9. Verb (ending in -ing):
10. Adjective:
11. Noun:
12. Verb (past tense)
13. Place:
14. Noun:

FROM *THE PRINCE*
Niccolò Machiavelli, translated by W.K. Marriott

As men judge generally more by the (1) _____ than by the (2) _____, because it belongs to everybody to (3) _____ see you, to few to come in touch with you. Everyone sees what you (4) _____ to be, few really know what you (5) _____, and those few dare not oppose themselves to the (6) _____ of the many, who have the (7) _____ of the state to defend them; and in the actions of all (8) _____, and especially of (9) _____, which it is not prudent to challenge, one judges by the result.

For that reason, let a (10) _____ have the credit of conquering and holding his (11) _____, the means will always be (12) _____ honest, and he will be (13) _____ by everybody; because the (14) _____ are always taken by what a thing seems to be and by what comes of it; and in the (15) _____ there are only the vulgar, for the few find a place there only when the many have no (16) _____ to rest on.

1. Body part:
2. Another body part:
3. Verb (present tense):
4. Verb (present tense):
5. Verb (present tense):
6. Noun:
7. Noun:
8. Animal:
9. Another animal:
10. One more animal:
11. Noun:
12. Verb (past tense):
13. Verb (past tense):
14. Noun:
15. Place:
16. Noun:

Source: Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince* trans. W.K. Marriott. Project Gutenberg, 1998 [online]. <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/1232/1232-h/1232-h.htm>

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A Gentle Grilling...

WITH DR. SARAH BRAZIL

*Dr. Sarah Brazil is a maître assistante in the English Department here at the University of Geneva, where she also received her doctorate (having previously completed her Bachelors and Masters degrees at University College Dublin). A specialist in the domain of medieval literature, her monograph *The Corporeality of Clothing in Medieval Literature: Cognition, Kinesis, and the Sacred* was published in 2018.*

*She is currently working on a project entitled *Holy Humour in Early English Drama*, in addition to teaching the seminar 'Sir Gawain and the Green Knight' and delivering the lecture course 'Medieval England'.*

When did you choose your academic speciality – and why?

It has taken me a long time for me to understand my choices! Most simply, I chose to pursue the literature that I enjoyed the most. Reflecting more deeply, however, it's because it took a larger effort to understand the language and context of a medieval narrative than a modern one. I've always enjoyed researching, and it was a requirement from day one with medieval texts. I think it was also an escape route from Irish literature, which I'd had just about enough of by the time I chose my MA!

If you could make the world read any book, which one would it be?

I don't think I'd make anyone read anything, but I do keep pressing Edno O'Brien's *The Country Girls* trilogy into the hands of anyone who'll accept.

What piece of advice, wisdom, or encouragement would you give to your first-year past self?

Know your rights.

What's your favourite French word or expression?

Either *tant pis!* or *je suis au four et au moulin* -- much more evocative than 'being in two places at once', which is quite clumsy in comparison.

Which fear have you successfully faced?

Mountains constantly test my fear of heights, but you can't really avoid them in Switzerland.

Musical theatre: art form or earache?

Depends on the show!

*Where do you stand on the movie *The Green Knight* (2021)?*

I see it very much as an adaptation that makes me question certain aspects about the 14th century text. I had never considered Gawain as a successor to Arthur, for example, and I found the more aged king and queen interesting in that it highlights their lack of children. Some departures make less immediate sense. It's definitely an odd film, and in many ways seemed to be made for a knowing eye. I do wonder what the director had in mind in relation to audience, as it does not seem to be bringing in people who do not know the Middle English text. I could be wrong, though! I loved the visuals too, and quite liked the rendering of the Green Knight.

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Contributions, comments, and suggestions are very welcome, and can be sent to noted-lettres@unige.ch

Thank you for reading *Noted*!

