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Abolish Shakespeare

A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

English

by

Amanda Lyn Riggle

September 2023

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The Dissertation of Amanda Lyn Riggle is approved:

Committee Chairperson

University of California, Riverside

Abolish Shakespeare is dedicated to my grandmother, Judy Rudisaile, my comrade, Mimi Soltysik, and my fellow COLA organizer here at UCR, Margarita Vizcarra. While you are no longer here, your words, works, movements, and momentum live on. I am lucky to have known you, to have organized with you, and to have rebelled with you.

Rest in peace and rest in power, my family, and my comrades.

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Abolish Shakespeare

by

Amanda Lyn Riggle

Doctor of Philosophy, Graduate Program in English
University of California, Riverside, September 2023
Dr. Heidi Brayman, Chairperson

Abolish Shakespeare offers an intersectional approach to the study of Shakespearean drama and the formation of Shakespeare studies drawing on abolition theory, critical race studies, and Marxist theory. In doing so, it emphasizes often neglected aspects of intersectional analysis to excavate the many facets and legacies of imagined white supremacy with regard to issues of gender, class, and religion. Imagined white supremacies are intertwined with the development of capitalism during its early formation, creating capitalism as a system not just with class structure at the root of its power, but one that clearly connects its alienation, exploitation, and oppression through these constructs of gender and race. Shakespeare and his contemporaries were products as well as producers of the society and culture in which they lived. One goal of this project is to advocate for the creation of a new knowledge commons and to envision a People's Shakespeare – one that aligns with Marx's description of self-clarification. A People's Shakespeare would be driven by current people's interests, wants, and needs rather than tied to a market for profit or an ideological system for imagined white supremacies.

My call to abolish Shakespeare studies is rooted in the way Shakespeare's works have been used to perpetuate both whiteness as a pillar of power within capitalism as well as that imagined white supremacy that still survives to this day. This dissertation begins with an overview of abolition studies and praxis. Chapter One uncovers how Shakespeare's *Othello* erases the Ottoman Empire's presence in Cyprus to promote European imagined white supremacies within an early colonial capitalist framework. Chapter Two explores Shakespeare's use of "fairness" in *As You Like It* to reveal the formation of early modern whiteness tied to class distinctions. Chapter Three examines the construction of fairness and the effect it had upon sexual violence directed at both literary women and actual women within the period. Chapter Four introduces Christopher Marlowe's anti-capitalist perspective in *Doctor Faustus* to illustrate resistance against capitalism's allure and its complex interaction with anti-Blackness. The final chapter explores current modes of abolition taking place in Shakespeare studies.

Contents

Introduction.....	1
Chapter 1: Shakespeare’s Reimagined Cyprus in <i>Othello</i> : The Erasure of the Ottoman Empire.....	28
Chapter 2: Shakespeare, Capitalism, and the Ideological Construction of Whiteness in <i>As You Like It</i>	53
Chapter 3: Enter Lavinia and Lucrece, Ravished: Women’s Bodies as a Site of Pacification	82
Chapter 4: Anti-Capitalism in the English Renaissance: Christopher Marlowe.....	123
Conclusion: Paranoid Shakespeare or Reparative Shakespeare: Contemplating the Future of Shakespeare Studies	159
Works Cited	178

Introduction

What does it mean “to abolish?”

My call to abolish Shakespeare studies is rooted in the way Shakespeare’s works have been used to perpetuate whiteness as a pillar of power within capitalism. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines “abolition” as (1a) “the action or process of abolishing something; the fact of being abolished or done away with; suppression, destruction, annihilation; an instance of this.” The first usage of the word “abolition,” according to the *OED*, occurred in 1529 in reference to “the clere abolycon of Chystys fayth” by Sir Thomas More in *The Supplycacyon of Soulys*.¹ While the etymology of the word traces it back to the early modern period, the definition and usage of the word itself has changed little – only later gaining application (but no change in definition) to the movement to end the African slave trade and, more currently, in the movement to defund and dismantle the police. For the work this project does, the *OED*’s definition of abolition falls short.

Scholars and activists who work within abolitionist movements like Dylan Rodríguez, in “Abolition as Praxis of Human Being: A Foreword,” define abolition as “a dream towards futurity vested in insurgent, counter-Civilizational histories – genealogies of collective genius that perform liberation under conditions of duress” (1575) that is “both a long accumulation and future planning of acts, performed by and in the name of

¹ According to *Early Modern Conversations*, while More’s “the clere abolycon of Chystys fayth” focuses on souls, it is not “a soul” but rather about the collective human soul and the “rising threat of heresy in England” due to King Henry VIII’s desire to divorce Catherine of Aragon. While this first usage of “abolition” appears to be rooted in Christianity and religion, because of the nature of church and state being united during this period in England, the term’s origin is more political than it may appear from this entry alone.

peoples and communities laboring for their own *physiological and cultural integrity as such*” as well as “a complex, dynamic, and deeply historical shorthand...in the work of constantly remaking socially, politics, ecology, place, and (human) beings against the duress that some call dehumanization, [and] others name colonialism” (1577). For Ray Acheson in *Abolishing State Violence: A World Beyond Bombs, Borders, and Cages*, abolition “is about rejecting the current structures as a source of, rather than a solution to, violence. It’s about building alternatives” (13).

Angela Davis, in the foreword and introduction to *Abolition. Feminism. Now.* reinforces the collective feminist roots of abolition and recognizes that modern abolition is “unimaginable without our radical, anticapitalist, antiracist, decolonial, queer feminism” (xii) because “abolition feminism is political work that...move[s] beyond binary either/or logic and shallowness of reforms” to build a “sustainable and long-term cultural and political” system-wide shift using “collective practices” to produce “new visions of safety” (3). Monique Tula in “People Power and the Original Harm Reductionists: The History of a Movement” recognizes the work Davis has done in abolition and abolition’s roots in Black women who have “stood in the face of the patriarchy as unapologetic Black women, committed to the total elimination of social and economic disparities and institutional violence perpetrated by a white, capitalist government” (43). This vision of the future touched on by Davis is often referenced in abolitionist works. In *Surviving the Future: Abolitionist Queer Strategies*, Scott Branson and Raven Hudson simply define the mission of abolition as “a means for surviving the future” (7). Abolition is not just about undoing active and ongoing harm; abolition is not

just about understanding past and current problematic systems and calling for their end; abolition is an active and ongoing project of building a future based on the lived needs of people – people who have passed, people who are still here, and people who will be born into the future we are trying to create.

Abolition, as I am defining it within this project both through the influence of academic works but also through praxis, is a twofold process: the first and most recognized step of abolition is the destruction of what currently is. Destruction is often seen as a negative force – but when the system in question is beyond repair or reform, then keeping any part of that problematic system intact rather than breaking away from it is the greater harm. It is my assertion that Shakespeare studies, as it stands today, is beyond repair or reform and needs to be broken down before a new system of study, one that fits our current society's needs, can be constructed. *Abolish Shakespeare* is concerned with first identifying points of imagined white supremacies within Shakespeare's works, then links between these concepts of superiority and the systems of class delineated under capitalism, and then the effect of these interlinked systems on an early modern audience, on later audiences (both globally and within American culture), and contemporary audiences. Through this analysis, this project hopes to illustrate what the historic lack of critical attention to imagined white supremacies, only gaining attention in the last thirty years through early modern critical race studies, and their links and formation under an early capitalist system has done to the cultural, social, and academic conversations around Shakespeare for the past four hundred years.

As an anarchist abolitionist familiar with both praxis and theory, I hear one counterargument time and time again that should be addressed: what if future societies and cultures want to abolish the work this project aims to do? The root of abolition recognizes the changing needs of people and their constructs of society. To abolish is to move forward while also understanding what has happened and what has been done in the past; it also recognizes the need to move on from such past structures and to focus on new ones that fit how culture and society currently functions. No system is universal and no system will completely meet the needs of past, present, and future humans and what societies they build. The project of abolition recognizes the need to constantly remake and reshape systems linked to power; otherwise, humanity serves a system rather than having a system serve humanity.

Abolition, Capitalism, and the Early Modern Period

Shakespeare and his early modern contemporaries were living through the transitional period from feudalism to capitalism. The early modern period in Europe is also the age of early mercantile capitalism which would, over time, evolve into the system we live under today. There wasn't a stark shift in economies from feudalism to capitalism during the early modern period; rather, it was a slow and violent transition that started with, as noted in *Caliban and the Witch*, the closure of the commons and, while capitalism is the dominant global economic system we live under today, there are still remnants of this transition period within modern capitalism such as the existence of landlords – a fully feudal concept tied to the land belonging to the crown rather than land

being an exploitable economic resource. Without access to common land, Europeans and, more specific to this project, the English, were forced to participate in the market or be marked as vagabonds and shunned or transported to colonies. While the concept of abolition originates in the early modern period per the *OED*, within the period, the concept was tied more to atheism or the absences of a Christian-based faith than it was to the definition I'm working with within this project.

The call to abolish Shakespeare is recognizing the early modern period as the period of early capitalism; when we call for abolition of capitalist systems and exploitation today, we are calling for the abolition of an early modern system that spread globally through mercantile capitalism and all of European colonialism by the 19th century. England holds a special place in the call for abolishing capitalism; the English once, well after Shakespeare's time, held an empire upon which, famously (or rather infamously) the sun never set. This global empire spread its economic system and ensured capitalism's global hold. England is no longer a country with colonies upon which the sun never sets; yet capitalism is now the economic system that drives the entire globe. Due to its exploitative and expansive nature, this spread of capitalism is directly linked not only to the exploitation and suffering of people but also to the destruction of the planet itself and all life on it. Through contemporary capitalists like Elon Musk, space has now become polluted from the sheer number of satellites and waste being jettisoned into our planet's orbit. Even modern-day Scandinavian countries that are billed as being

more socialist are, economically, still capitalist-based economies that just provide better conditions for their citizen-workers and deny the same conditions of their non-citizen workers.

Abolition doesn't happen in a vacuum – it is based on an understanding of the harmful nature of the thing being abolished. To understand the nature of and how to abolish capitalism (a system which many people like myself like to call a hydra² due to its plasticity, but more on that in the section below on reform), we must look back at the early modern culture that both incubated and spread capitalism across the planet. In understanding how capitalism transitioned into power, spread across the globe, and what ideological constructs the system became intertwined with, abolitionists are better able to remove all remnants of the harmful system before rebuilding something that meets the needs of the people. Feudalism was never abolished; indeed, the concept of abolition wasn't applied to economic systems at the time. In order to eliminate capitalism and the remnants of feudalism that are still intertwined within our economy, this project aims to examine the spread of capitalism through one of the period's most venerated, celebrated, and widespread authors – William Shakespeare, The Bard, also still billed as one of the greatest authors of all time by those outside of the field of English literature.³

² Linebaugh and Rediker in their book *The Many-Headed Hydra* highlight that “from the beginning of English colonial expansion...rules referred to the Hercules-hydra myth to describe the difficulty of imposing order on an increasingly global [capitalist] system of labor” (3) and that the legend of “the hydra myth expressed the fear and justified the violence of the ruling class, helping them to build a new order of conquest and expropriation, of gallows and executioners, of plantations, ships, and factories” (6).

³ While there are many things I could cite here, the one I find most interesting and relevant comes in the form of a popular YouTube channel called “The Try Guys” with 8.04 million subscribers who recently announced (June 3rd, 2023) that they are putting on a “Choose Your Own Shakespeare” performance of *Romeo and Juliet* June 21st, 2023 (which later got delayed until August 10th due to the unexpected demand

Shakespeare and his contemporaries were products as well as producers of the society and culture in which they lived. People in the early modern period “lived through, observed, and chronicled the social and psychological effects of a remarkably rapid, and historically unprecedented transition from one kind of economy to another” (Hawkes 1). Silvia Federici, in her now classic book *Caliban and the Witch: Women, the Body and Primitive Accumulation*, asserts that capitalism “was the counter-revolution that destroyed the possibilities that had emerged from the anti-feudal struggle” (21) which led Europe’s economies to re-engage in exploitation, alienation, oppression, and the destruction of life and land rather than turn against them in this new, but not so new economic system taking hold. Cedric Robinson notes, in *Black Marxism*, that “the creation of capitalism was much more than a matter of the displacement of feudal modes and relations of production by capitalist ones” and that:

the social, cultural, political, and ideological complexes of European feudalisms contributed more to capitalism than the social ‘fetters’ that precipitated the bourgeoisie into social and political revolutions. No class was its own creation. Indeed, capitalism was less a catastrophic revolution (negation) of feudalist social order than the extension of these social relations into the larger tapestry of the modern world’s political and economic relations (10).

While social, cultural, and political structures were an extension of feudalism into the capitalist system, with the closure of the commons, early capitalist material accumulation,

of the event), and cite Shakespeare as “the greatest author that ever lived” in their video titled “Try Guys Try Shakespearean Fashion” on June 3rd, 2023.

and the movement to a labor-based economy, conditions under this new order became brutally exploitative and dehumanizing.

Theatre was not (and still is not) an innocent artform; not only did it act as a means of pacification for the state, but it also helped to propagate nationalistic forms of propaganda. Pacification, as I'm using here, is defined by Mark Neocleous as an attempt to keep the façade of peace or justice or righteousness when, in actuality, there are great acts of violence taking place to keep a fictitious order, like capitalism and one of its interlinked systems in power. Neocleous argues through his works *Imagining the State* and *The Universal Adversary* that the act of pacification has both physical and conceptual aspects. With this theory of pacification, art and performances that seem factual but are, in actuality, fantastical take on the function of assuaging their audiences and creating a false sense of justice and appeasement where injustice and exploitation are still rampant. This theory of pacification is closely tied to modernity as a whole period as Neocleous's work goes back to early colonial exchanges and treaties with Native Americans and spans to contemporary critiques of police and state power.

Shakespeare: A Limited Economy

A 2001 book titled *Marxist Shakespeares*, edited by early modernists Jean Howard and Scott Shershow, offers the perspective of Shakespeare in terms of the economic, where Shakespeare's works in and of themselves are a sort of cultural economy – one which, because it is related to the economic, still generates wealth for participants in social, political, cultural, and monetary capital. This section aims to both

unpack and recognize Shershow's assertion of Shakespeare-as-economy because one of the arguments this project makes stems directly from Shershow's work. Shershow's essay within the collection titled "Shakespeare beyond Shakespeare" asserts that many Shakespearean scholars see this Shakespeare economy as "a general economy" (with the term economy standing in for both a capitalist and cultural market) – one in which anyone can participate because Shakespeare's works have a base appeal across all systems outside of capitalism, outside of the patriarchy, outside of the progress of time, etc., because, in the vein of Harold Bloom, Shakespeare is seen as having an appeal to people's shared humanity and touches on a universal human experience (262).

Shershow goes further to define a general economy as one that "assumes that the central economic issue is *surplus*; and therefore emphasizes gifts, sacrifices, and reckless expenditures, with the prospect of loss without return or reserve" and that a general economy focuses on "abundance," "infinite variety" and a "surplus of value that overflows any attempt to harness or contain in" (246). While the universal-appeal argument of Bloom has fallen out of favor with most Shakespeareans in the field today, this view of Shakespeare-as-a-general-economy persists and can be seen in classrooms, albeit not as much in contemporary scholarship, today. When I was earning my own bachelor's degree from 2012 to 2015 and my master's degree from 2016 to 2018, I was taught that Shakespeare had a universal appeal. Now, when I teach Shakespeare's works to a classroom, I always ask the question "Why do we study Shakespeare in general?" and I'm met with the fresh faces of 18-year-olds in the year 2023 repeating the same Bloom line – Shakespeare is universal and he appeals to our shared humanity.

Shershow challenges the notion of Shakespeare-as-general-economy by claiming the cultural and economic industry built around his works are, in fact, a limited or restricted economy. In general, a limited economy is one that functions only under certain conditions and, as the word limited suggests, is not expansive and timeless but rather has a built-in end. When writing about it in the essay “Shakespeare beyond Shakespeare,” Shershow states that Shakespeare’s limited economy is one “wholly bound within the horizons of early modern thought” where Shakespeare was a part of and wrote for an early modern audience (262). With this limited perspective, Shakespeare-as-economy is thereby more aligned with a “restricted” economy – one which “assumes that the central economic issue is *scarcity*, and thus emphasizes production, accumulation, and the profit or ‘return’ that may be expected from all economic practices” (246). Shershow summarizes these two economically diametric views of Shakespeare-as-economy as the universalist seeing Shakespeare’s economy as “broad” when it comes to appeal, interpretation, and the “whole field of theory is ‘narrow’” whereas Shakespeareans with the view of Shakespeare-as-restricted-economy see Shakespeare as narrow and theory as broad (246).

For *Abolish Shakespeare*, I view Shakespeare’s social, cultural, political, and market economies as potentially limited but not restricted to the early modern period; rather, the reception of Shakespeare’s works form their own economy that parallels in development to capitalism itself. Shakespeare’s economy, as of right now, is limited to modernity, from the early modern to our post-postmodern age. My rationale is simple; Shakespeare’s works are still prevalent in our culture and society. While this project

doesn't align fully with Shershow's definition of Shakespeare's limited economy, it does fully align with his work in pushing back against the universal argument that sees Shakespeare's economy as intrinsically unlimited. Framing Shakespeare's works as a limited economy tied to modernity is paramount in the work this dissertation does.

Why Abolish and Not Reform?

Our contemporary moment is, I would argue, similar to that of the early modern period – a time of system transition and of imminent change. The early modern was one bookend to the age of capitalism and we are, for better or worse (depending on what system takes hold afterwards), the other bookend in this metaphor. My argument here is not that we're perfect parallels but rather that we are linked through being the beginning and end of modernity, a period that encapsulates the capitalist system. With the end of capitalism at the very least looming and, at the worst, actively ending and taking our planet with it, we can see social unrest from all political spectrums, from the white nationalists marching on the White House to Black Lives Matter supporters protesting the death of yet another Black person at the hands of an ever-increasingly violent police force. In the introduction to *Surviving the Future: Abolitionist Queer Strategies*, Scott Branson and Raven Hudson write “with the pandemic, environmental collapse, and insurgent antiauthoritarian movements, state forces have used the opportunity to intensify both their explicit violence and their blatant disregard for most lives” (4). This increase in state-sanctioned violence can also be seen as a sign of impending system change – police are the foot soldiers of capitalism concerned with protecting investment and property

over the lives of people so this increase in police violence is an increase in the state waging war against its citizens who are crying out for a less alienating, exploitative, and harmful system.

Our moment isn't the only moment that has called for an end to the harms of capitalism nor are we the only moment that has recognized the need for abolition of both state sanctioned violence and an economic system based on exploitation, alienation, and direct harm to those not coded as cis-heterosexual white middle-class or wealthier Christian male presenting persons. What makes our moment unique isn't even the pandemic – Marx and Engels wrote *The Communist Manifesto* in 1848 and continued to publish works deconstructing the harmful ideologies of capitalism until their deaths. There was a global flu pandemic in 1918 which lasted three years. One of the reasons Franklin D. Roosevelt passed the New Deal in 1933 after the fall of the American economy (directly tied to the pandemic among other social and economic factors) was because there was such unrest; workers demanded change or they'd change the economic system. People were aware of the concepts of Marxism; there was a communist party in America founded on September 1st, 1919, after and influenced by the Russian Revolution and anarchist activism in the United States. The New Deal wasn't for workers – it was a reform to appease workers, stimulate the crashing economy, and keep an exploitative and harmful system in place. This is, yet again, just one of many examples I could include here to show that resistance to capitalism is an ongoing endeavor, one that has existed since the onset of capitalism, one that has spanned many individual people's lifetimes, and one that will exist as long as capitalism exists.

What makes our moment unique is that contemporary people across the globe understand the pitfalls of reform. Reform, under capitalism, does not work. Instead, reform under capitalism, due to capitalism's plasticity and ability to absorb reforms and remake and reshape itself to continue as an alienating exploitative system based in a myriad of imagined supremacies (white, gender, sexual orientation, religion, and so many more), acts as a way to reinforce and strengthen the system itself by allowing it to continue to exist with the veneer of change without actual, system-wide changes that address the underlying causes of harm to begin with. Acheson highlights that structures of state power and violence "do not live in isolation, they grow from and strengthen each other, like vines crawling a trellis for support" (6) and because of this interlaced and intertwined nature of violence and systems of power like capitalism, reform is "not just insufficient, it's counterproductive" (10).

Take, for example, police body cameras introduced as a reform within the LAPD in 2015 which were sold to the public as a way to ease police violence and hold police accountable. Per a 2015 report by the collective skid-row based abolitionist group *Stop LAPD Spying Coalition* titled "Body-Worn Cameras: An Empty Reform to Expand the Surveillance State," it is rare for police body camera footage to be used to indict an officer on the grounds of misconduct. When a member of the police has been found guilty of violent offenses, that camera footage comes from bystanders with cell phones that are recording the police. This might be due in large part to police body camera footage being stored on a TASER (the manufacturer of LAPD's body cameras in 2015) corporate cloud that only the state can view; police body camera footage, while it is

meant to hold the police accountable to the public, is not available for immediate public viewing and, depending on the area and if the footage is connected to an ongoing case, the footage might never be made available for public viewing.

It is not the intention of this project to suggest that Shakespeare's economies do as much harm as police, but both serve a function to uphold capitalism, albeit in different ways. Louis Althusser notes in his chapter "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses" from *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*:

But besides these techniques and knowledges, and in learning them, children at school also learn the 'rules' of good behaviour, i.e. the attitude that should be observed by every agent in the division of labour, according to the job he is 'destined' for: rules of morality, civic and professional conscience, which actually means rules of respect for the socio-technical division of labour and ultimately the rules of the order established by class domination. They also learn to 'speak proper French', to 'handle' the workers correctly, i.e. actually (for the future capitalists and their servants) to 'order them about' properly, i.e. (ideally) to 'speak to them' in the right way, etc... To put this more scientifically, I shall say that the reproduction of labour power requires not only a reproduction of its skills, but also, at the same time, a reproduction of its submission to the rules of the established order, i.e. a reproduction of submission to the ruling ideology for the workers, and a reproduction of the ability to manipulate the ruling ideology correctly for the agents of exploitation and repression, so that they, too, will provide for the domination of the ruling class 'in words' (109).

Capitalism operates both as an economic system but also as an ideological system that is kept in power through not just the boot (the police) and tradition (change is hard, after all) but also through self-imposed regulation, pacification, and silent underlying society-wide ideals that we are indoctrinated into from birth which are then reinforced in state apparatuses like school, churches, etc. in order to participate and perpetuate the capitalist system.

At the core of the critique of reform is a quote from Lenin. When asked about freedom, Lenin responded “Freedom yes, but for whom? To do what?” (Zizek 113). This concept of directions, what is a thing for and what is it meant to do, can be applied to the above paragraph’s example of body cameras for the LAPD. While the public were told that the body cameras were there for accountability of police actions, misconduct, and an increase in violence, the actual function of body cameras for the LAPD was to quell public outrage and to offer the appearance of change and regulation without any fundamental change to, or the abolition of, police and policing. This is one of multiple examples of the LAPD specifically implementing technology or training as a means to appease the public with no actual fundamental change in the violence of police; in the 1990s after the Rodney King beating by the LAPD we had the introduction of police car dashboard cameras, a reform that was easily countered by police mysteriously having their car hoods up during routine traffic stops when violence would take place.

Now, police body cameras “glitch” and are turned off when LAPD police head into situations where violence occurs. Even when there is actual body camera footage from a violent interaction by police, the police themselves are able to review the body

camera footage and the public is not. The police are able to construct a story for the court and the person who was assaulted only has their memory, not camera footage, to counter LAPD's story. When the footage is shown to a jury, the jury is shown the point of view of the police officer which already offers implicit bias where the jury then identifies with the person committing the violent act. We cannot rely on systems of power to accurately self-assess and offer reform as a means to continue to function. When we ask who the reform is for and what it does, police body cameras are for the LAPD, not the public, and they help to maintain police and help to justify their violent actions. While this dissertation is not about police abolition, the current field of police abolition is well developed and documented and can lend itself as a model to other forms of abolitionist studies.⁴ Likewise, as will be further explored later in the next section of this introduction, my personal work in abolition outside of academia is tied to police abolition.

It is not enough to say that Shakespeare studies *should* recognize the ways in which Shakespeare is used under capitalism to reinforce problematic ideological constructs like race and gender and that those problematic aspects of Shakespeare studies or, indeed, the multiple economies surrounding Shakespeare should be reformed; reform doesn't get to the root of the issue of systems of power. If Shakespeare's works are to be part of the cultural zeitgeist after the fall of capitalism, the current economies around Shakespeare must be abolished completely and remade in a way that doesn't serve the

⁴ Premodern conferences like RaceB4Race have also featured panels like 2020's "To Protect and Serve: A RaceB4Race Roundtable" where scholars of color "addressed the historical and contemporary lenses in which the phrase 'To Protect and to Serve' can be inspected, interrogated, and envisioned."

needs of a market and isn't based on either the assumption of surplus or scarcity; Shakespeare's works need to be based on the wants and needs of the people, for the people and to serve the people, a People's Shakespeare if you will. This idea of a People's Shakespeare, one that's outside of a limited and restrictive capitalist economy, will be explored in the conclusion of this dissertation. While this dissertation is not fully about mapping out and planning what the future of Shakespeare studies will look like, it does look at problematic ideological constructs of the body under capitalism that are captured in Shakespeare's early capitalist works and, in the conclusion, looks towards people- and culture-based Shakespeare adaptations that start to address what a people's Shakespeare movement might look like. *Abolish Shakespeare* is the start to a conversation about the future of Shakespeare – it is one voice in, hopefully, many to come if we, as a society, agree that Shakespeare's works are worth preserving after capitalism.

Rethinking what we accept as academic knowledge (or I am an abolitionist. I am an anarchist. I am an authority.)

In Silvia Federici's book *Re-Enchanting the World: Feminism and the Politics of the Commons*, Federici calls for academia to accept new forms of knowledge that were generated outside of the academy as not just valid within academia itself, but as equal. The goal of reimagining what we accept as academic knowledge is to, in her words, create a "knowledge commons" which plays into the larger project of re-establishing modern commons as a challenge to the capitalist system and capitalist order (101). While

I cannot argue that this dissertation cements my standing as an academic, my work within abolition is not purely academic; my work in abolition is also praxis. I submit to you, the reader of my dissertation, that the sources of knowledge I cite in the sections above are one form of authority but as an activist, anarchist, and abolitionist with twenty-three years of on-the-ground experience, I am also an authority on abolition and my praxis-oriented knowledge should be part of a new academic movement towards a knowledge commons.

While my activism officially began in 2001, growing up in and moving from a trailer park in the low-income and diverse area of Westminster in Orange County, California, to an unincorporated part of Yorba Linda, an extremely wealthy and white area of Northern Orange County while I was in high school, contributed greatly to my leftist and radical point of view before I was even aware of community organizing and politics outside of the electoral system. As I began community college at the age of 17, I participated in community protests focused on social justice issues such as police brutality, racial inequality, and anti-war movements. As a young activist, I was drawn to movements that sought to dismantle systems of oppression and injustice. My engagement with protest as a form of political expression and on-the-ground organizing has continued. Throughout my years, I have been an active member and participant in community protests, including BLM/Black Power Collective protests, Occupy protests, and anti-border detention camps protests.

In 2014, I became a member of The Socialist Party USA, working alongside well-known community activist, organizer, and 2016 Socialist Party USA presidential

nominee Mimi Soltysik in Los Angeles. The Los Angeles chapter of The Socialist Party USA was always one of the more radical, on-the-ground, anarchist leaning chapters of The Socialist Party USA. Through my involvement in socialist organizing, I found a space that aligned with my political beliefs and provided a platform for me to create change through collective action. From 2015 to 2018, I served as the Chair of the Inland Empire Socialist Party while also holding the position of Co-Chair of the State of California Socialist Party from 2017 to 2019. In 2017, I was also on the State Organizing Committee for The Socialist Party USA, the national leadership council that met and voted on party issues between party conventions. While the Los Angeles chapter of The Socialist Party USA was well established and widely known, the Inland Empire, the size of at least three New Jerseys, was one of the largest areas The Socialist Party USA had ever attempted to organize. We had a semi-successful run as a sector of the party but ended up dissolving in 2019 due to a shift in and disagreement with leadership at the national level of the party.

Starting in 2016, I worked as the coordinating editor for *The Socialist*, the Socialist Party USA's national magazine. During my time as the coordinating editor, I was in charge of and contributed an article to a special issue of *The Socialist* titled the "Anti-Security Issue" which featured known abolitionists and anti-security activists like Mark Neocleous, Tyler Wall, and Hamid Khan. In 2017-18, I served as the Editor-in-Chief of *The Socialist* where I worked on such issues as the "International Women's Day Issue" with contributions from leftist women around the world like Northern Ireland abortion activist Elaine Crory and coordinated special editions like "The Ecosocialist

Issue.” My dedication to community organizing and activism earned me recognition in 2016-7 when I received the Eugene V. Debs Organizing Award from The Socialist Party USA. This acknowledgment encouraged me to continue to work towards creating systemic change and social justice in my community. While I did, in the end, leave The Socialist Party USA because my beliefs were too radical to align with the theory-and-critique orientation the party was going after Mimi passed away, I still took the organizing lessons of the party to heart and learned, firsthand, the power of praxis and peoplepower.

During my time with the Stop LAPD Spying Coalition from 2016 to 2019, I worked alongside well-known abolitionists like Hamid Khan and Jamie Garcia. The collective, according to our own words, is a largely volunteer-based organization that “is accountable first and foremost to an organizing base made up of those who are most vulnerable to police violence, particularly in the Skid Row community where we are located. We work to build power among that base and across the city. We believe [that] creating a world without police surveillance requires uplifting the expertise and political power of the communities most harmed by policing. Collective study, community-based research, [and] direct action are crucial to our work [of] decolonizing ‘expertise’ about surveillance and policing and building a robust and responsive culture of resistance to police” (About Us). My collaborative and community-oriented organizing work with the coalition was featured in *The Guardian*, *Wired*, and *The Economist*. I was also the final editor and completed the layout for multiple community-written reports from the Stop

LAPD Spying Coalition like *The Drone Report*, *The LASER Report*, and our predictive policing report titled *Between the Bullet and the Body*.

In 2018, I was a guest on a British news talk show called *Roundtable*, where I critiqued the appointment of Brett Kavanaugh as a member of the Supreme Court. The episode, titled “Rape Culture: Has it become normalized in society” hosted by David Smith, also featured human rights activist Hillary Margolis and Dr. Shola Mos-Shagbamimu who co-founded London’s women’s march. While I think I did well at live television despite it being five a.m. Pacific standard time, this experience, though it went well, solidified that I do not desire to be a talking head but rather an on-the-ground and community-driven activist and student-oriented teacher.

2019 was the year I joined the Cost-of-Living-Adjustment, or COLA, group at UCR which is a UC-wide movement for graduate workers which, to this day, has three distinct goals; the first is the inclusion of a cost-of-living-adjustment in the wages area of our contract, the second is to pay for this COLA adjustment through the abolition of campus police, and the third was to readmit and wipe the record clean of COLA organizers at UCSC. The UC-wide COLA movement stems from COLA protests by graduate students at UCSC, a school in a high-cost area, where the graduate stipends were not enough for students to have shelter and food. Workers were asking for enough pay to stop living in their cars and, in response, UCSC worked with the Santa Cruz police which reacted violently to these underpaid student workers.

Not only were our fellow graduate student workers assaulted by the police for their nonviolent organizing efforts to afford housing, but they were also punished by

UCSC administration. When UCR's Chancellor Wilcox met with our group and stated in response to our demands that his hands were tied, we organized a rally in early 2020 where nearly four hundred students (some have said as many as five hundred), graduate and undergraduate, attended to support our demands and our cause. Dylan Rodríguez, a faculty guest speaker at the event, stated it was one of the largest rallies on campus in the last twenty years. While COVID sent us home shortly after our rally, the COLA movement lives on and was a key demand in our 2022 contract negotiations and is slated to be a continued demand for our 2024 contract negotiations.

Since 2020, I have been one of the founding members, cooks, and organizers for Riverside Food Not Bombs, and one of the founders of the free market in Riverside called Riverside People's Free Market. Food Not Bombs itself is an international horizontally run anarchist group which has local, self-run chapters that are dedicated to eradicating hunger and undoing the harm caused by capitalism's closure of the commons by providing vegan food to anyone in need. The ideology behind this movement is to do the most good possible while causing the least harm to the environment and to people as possible. Currently, I am a member of UCR's FTP, which stands for either For the People or Fuck the Police, working alongside well-known abolitionists (and member of my dissertation committee) Dylan Rodríguez. The goal of these abolitionist-oriented activities are not based in hate; we do not, per se, organize to feed the unhoused and to dismantle the police because we are driven by a hatred for hunger or purely a hatred for the police; rather we work to abolish systems that cause harm because we are driven by

the desire to rebuild the commons despite problematic structures and to eradicate injustice, harm, and the ongoing and continuous exploitation of people.

This dissertation project is a marriage – a marriage of my activist self and my academic self – a place where I can be whole instead of fragmented. I am driven as an abolitionist not by a desire to deconstruct, critique, or destroy, but rather to rebuild, rethink, and reimagine what culture, society, and Shakespeare can look like in order to serve the wants and needs of the people rather than preserving problematic ideologies encapsulated within the capitalist system. *Abolish Shakespeare* is, much like the Renaissance period imagined itself, about rebirth.

Chapter Breakdowns

This dissertation has four full chapters as well as a conclusion. The first three chapters of this project focus on identifying problematic features of Shakespeare's works that need to be addressed before we can rebuild Shakespeare studies. The fourth chapter of this dissertation examines Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* and explores the links between anti-capitalism and anti-Blackness. The conclusion focuses on the restoration part of the process, or a rebirth of Shakespeare studies. While it is in no way a complete roadmap for how Shakespeare studies should start to be rebuilt, it does highlight reparative reading strategies as well as self-clarified performances in addition to incorporating my personal experience learning, studying, and teaching Shakespeare as a speculative roadmap for what Shakespeare studies could become.

Chapter one, “Shakespeare’s Reimagined Cyprus in *Othello*: The Erasure of the Ottoman Empire” opens *Abolish Shakespeare* by analyzing the early colonial capitalist reimagining of the island of Cyprus in the play *Othello* and its relationship to the Ottoman Empire. During the early modern period, England was dependent upon the Ottoman Empire for trade when Pope Pius V declared Queen Elizabeth a heretic for her Protestantism and excommunicated her from the Catholic church in 1570. Venice and the Ottoman Empire often found themselves in escalating conflicts over trade and piracy on the Mediterranean Sea – and part of the disputes over piracy centered around the island of Cyprus which, prior to 1570, was under Venetian control. Spaces in the play like Cyprus had been Ottoman territory for over 40 years before the play was written and the island was labeled as Venetian. This rewriting of history heavily promoted European superiority and imagined white supremacies. This chapter reads *Othello* to show how its erasure of Ottoman presence in Cyprus reflects contemporary England’s growing investments in imagined white supremacy and its connections to early mercantile capitalism and commerce.

Chapter two, “Shakespeare, Capitalism, and the Ideological Construction of Whiteness,” focuses on how Shakespeare’s 1623 first folio edition of *As You Like It* contains tropes of imagined white supremacies explicitly aligned with systems of early capitalist accumulation. Developing upon the foundational work of Kim Hall, I argue that the use of “fair” to describe figures within the play speaks to the early modern formation of whiteness and white identity. Instances of the construction of fairness as distinct from “black” is, in this analysis, situated in relation to class status as an intersecting trope of

upper-class-as-white and poor-as-non-white. This trope can be seen in three distinct sections of the play: Orlando's lament for a "fair" mate in the opening act of the play, echoed directly by Rosaline in the following scene; Celia's use of a "kinde of vंबर" to "smirch" her face (I.iii.576) to appear to be of a lower class, and Duke Senior's ability to imitate a vagabond in the forest of Arden without facing consequences of vagrancy. Through these characters proximity to inherited "fairness," and thereby class status, they are left unmarred by laws and customs that would have affected people of a lower-class status or those coded as being non-white in the period.

Chapter three, "Enter Lavinia and Lucrece, Ravished: Women's Bodies as Sites of Pacification," develops upon this argument by examining how constructions of fairness impacted historical as well as literary women in the period. The chapter expands upon Silvia Federici's early observation, in *Caliban and the Witch*, that one major site of sacrifice from the transition from feudalism to capitalism was women's bodies and that "women's bodies, their labor, their sexuality, and reproductive powers [were]...under the control of the state" (170). It does so by examining a set of complex relationships between rape, whiteness, and class in *Titus Andronicus* and *The Rape of Lucrece* and argues for a striking disparity between representations of rape in Shakespeare's writing and actual rape being tried in his period. Shakespeare's rape-revenge plots do not reflect his contemporary reality but are constructed fantasies through which he and his audience could experience the horror of rape in ways that could enable a combination of projection and catharsis during a period when social identity and political power were being redefined. This chapter also lays out the framework of what pacification is, how it can be

used as propaganda, and the effect of pacification on the early modern construct of rape and ravishment.

“Anti-Capitalism in the English Renaissance: Christopher Marlowe,” the fourth chapter of *Abolish Shakespeare*, provides an example of an author that was critiquing capitalism during its formation. During the early modern period, mercantile capitalism was in the process of becoming the dominant economic system not just in England, but throughout Europe. To the people living through this transitional period, capitalism being a stable, expansive, and all-encompassing economic force was yet to be seen. Introducing Marlowe’s anti-capitalist perspective into *Abolish Shakespeare* helps to illustrate that the early modern English people were not a monolith: just as readily as there were authors who embraced capitalism, exploitation, alienation, and imagined white supremacies, there were authors who resisted and pushed back against capitalism and its temptations. While *Doctor Faustus* can be read as anti-capitalist, it is still intertwined with creating a white-identity and juxtaposing whiteness against Blackness. Capitalism and anti-Blackness are interdependent forces that build off of and rely on one another, but interdependent means that they can also act as separate structures of power and oppression. Anti-capitalism, in other words, is not always anti-racist and *Doctor Faustus* is a great early modern example of that.

The conclusion, titled “Paranoid Shakespeare or Reparative Shakespeare: Contemplating the Future of Shakespeare Studies,” looks towards self-clarifying performances and pedagogy as possible blueprints for rebuilding Shakespeare studies. I am using the term self-clarification with a specific definition in mind – one that comes

from Karl Marx in a letter from September of 1843 to his comrade Arnold Ruge. In this letter, Marx defines self-clarification as a mode of critical philosophy that highlights “the struggles and wishes of the age” and deems this struggle “a task for the world and for us. It can succeed only as the product of united efforts.” Likewise, in the preface to Frantz Fanon’s *Wretched of the Earth*, Jean-Paul Sartre wrote “the only true culture is that of the Revolution; that is to say, it is constantly in the making” (xivii). As society moves out of capitalism and modernism, and into a new economic and cultural system, Shakespeare studies can be reborn and reshaped under whatever systems we create. That is, after all, the intended purpose of critical theory – not simply to analyze and make what’s underlying and ideological visible, but by making it visible, make it something people can change.

Chapter 1: Shakespeare's Reimagined Cyprus in *Othello*: The Erasure of the Ottoman Empire

This chapter focuses on one of Shakespeare's most currently discussed tragedies, *Othello*, while also examining the plays reimagining of the island of Cyprus. During the early modern period, England under the rule of Queen Elizabeth I was dependent upon the Ottoman Empire for trade when Catholic nations like Spain stopped trading with them, under order of Pope Pius V who also declared Queen Elizabeth a heretic for her Protestantism and excommunicated her from the Catholic church in 1570. This ban on trade with Catholic nations led to a struggle for England, an island, to stay fiscally afloat and led to new trade arrangements being made with nations England had never before, and never since, had trade relationships with – The Ottoman Empire (Brotton 1).

But this entire history and England's interlinked commerce with the Ottoman empire is absent from *Othello*, a play written around 1603 – well past when England was trading with the Ottomans. Venice, the opening setting of the play, was one of the most fiscally secure city-states in Europe during the beginning of the early modern period due to its positioning on the Mediterranean Sea. While the Ottoman Empire was expanding to take over other Mediterranean ports, it left Venice alone as it was a good gateway to trade with the rest of Europe. Acting as a gateway made Venice not only wealthy but one of the closest European nations, both geographically and diplomatically, to the Ottoman Empire (Zarinebaf 99). Despite being trade partners, Venice and the Ottoman Empire often found

themselves in escalating conflicts over trade and piracy on the Mediterranean Sea – and part of the disputes over piracy centered around the island of Cyprus.

Shakespeare, like many Londoners at the time, would have known this history as London was, and still is, a trade hub for the island of England. The English, while geographically somewhat isolated from the rest of Europe, was still acutely aware and interested in events going on around the world outside of their borders. Many histories were written during this period about the Ottoman Empire by people across Europe, and many of these works and people found their way to England. Edward Hall, an English lawyer, for example, wrote many histories including one about Constantinople falling into Ottoman control, turning this once Christian city into an Islamic land (Hutchings 2). Since the city of London saw its parallel as a bustling trade port in Venice, this rewriting of history in the play *Othello* heavily promoted European superiority and imagined white supremacies. The Turks in the play were defeated by the sea before the second act of *Othello*, and the island of Cyprus was once again under Venetian control.

Likewise, the play also asserted imagined white supremacies in Iago's villainous antics and ultimate undoing of Othello. The play further sent the message that Moors were easily manipulated, controlled, and violent – and therefore made poor trade partners for England. After Queen Elizabeth I's passing in 1603, the second joint-stock company, the East India Company, returned to England with their spoils. King James I ended trade with the Ottoman Empire and continued to finance expeditions to India in order to obtain goods coded as exotic without engaging in direct trade with the Ottomans. As argued in Mark Hutchings work, Shakespeare reworked “the Turkish attack on Cyprus in 1570”

throughout the playtext of *Othello* (153). This chapter asserts that attitudes and rewritten histories in *Othello* towards members of the Ottoman Empire – from the Turks to Othello himself – reflect England’s early colonial desires, capitalism, and their connections to imagined white supremacies.

Savage Errors of Eloquence: The Theatre as Early Modern Propaganda

Shakespeare was not just a beneficiary of the new joint-stock system in England, but was also acutely aware of mercantile trade during his lifetime and within his literary works. Daniel Vitkus, in “How the One Percent Came to Rule the World: Shakespeare, Long-Term Historical Narrative, and the Origins of Capitalism,” notes that “Shakespeare began to write plays in a time and place where capitalism was first emerging and where feudalism was still well established” (165) and that his plays were entrenched in the capitalism taking hold as the economic system in Europe, often writing about “commercial and marital transactions” of the city of London (167). Moreover, while England was engaging in joint-stock mercantile companies to keep themselves fiscally secure while nations like Spain refused to trade with them, “the joint-stock theater companies [like the one Shakespeare was invested in during his time at the Globe Theatre] were some of the first capitalist undertakings in England” after the mercantile companies were established (167).

Shakespeare can be seen as being critical of England’s choice in trade partners, the Ottoman Empire, rather than through capitalism and trade itself. I argue that this is made apparent through his depictions of Moors in his works like *The Lamentable*

Tragedy of Titus Andronicus, first thought to be performed in 1594, to his later works like *The Tragedy of Othello, the Moor of Venice*, first thought to be performed around 1604. While trade with the Ottoman Empire helped to invigorate the English economy with the formation of the Levant Company (who's initial charter was approved by Elizabeth I in 1592), a precursor and model for The East India Company (Leinwand 111), many of the English had reservations about dealing with the Ottomans because of Christian Europe's long entanglement with the empire which ranged from The Crusades to the Ottoman takeover of Constantinople.

From mythical travel narratives that depicted the Ottomans as savage Turks that captured English traders to exotic tales of the seduction of good Christian women into eastern harems, there were plenty of nonsensical unsubstantiated tales that made the English wary; at the same time, Ottoman history, its conquests, and its prowess at expanding its empire was not unknown to the little island nation at the edge of the world either. I would argue that Shakespeare, profit-minded for his joint-venture company The Black Friars as well as their playhouse, used the English people's fascination with the Ottoman Empire as a way to seduce audiences into attendance at his performances; provocative titles like *Othello, the Moor of Venice*, provocative settings like Cyprus, and the provocative promise of the Turk-as-enemy onstage were all ways of using the Ottoman Empire and Moors as a prop for his own profit, thus furthering anti-Ottoman propaganda in England at the time.

Here, I'd like to focus on the stage as a vehicle for national propaganda by building upon Julia Ebel's work *Translation and Cultural Nationalism in the Reign of*

Elizabeth. Ebel asserts that translated works in early modern England supported patriotism, with translators reinforcing the version of England patronage aimed to establish, which “form to a cultural nationalism” (600-1). Put simply, the wealthy wielded literature to mold England’s national image during this era by financing works that fit with or could be easily translated and adapted into their point of view. I consider *Othello*’s relationship to its central source, the Italian short story “Un Capitano Moro” (trans. “A Moorish Captain”) by Cinthio first published in 1565, as a mode of nationalizing translation. While it is not a verbatim translation of the Italian short story, *Othello* is still a translation and adaptation from an original source into a new, target culture making it both a translation and an adaptation.

Drawing from my own experience as someone who works as part of a team translating classic Mexican and Spanish *Comedias* as part of the UCLA “Translating the Classics” group, translation heavily depends upon adaptation as most languages do not have direct translates for every word or concept in their vocabulary. Translation is more than the simple act of taking one word in one language and swapping it out for a new word in the target language; in order to translate, one must understand or attempt to understand the original culture and concepts of the work in its original language and communicate those ideas to a new, target language and culture. Because no two languages or cultures directly translate into one another, translation always involves adaptation to varying degrees. Shakespeare and his contemporaries were drawing on ideas outside of their own when it came to their works. A great example of this can be seen in the play *Menaechmi* by Plautus, a Roman playwright that lived from roughly 245

BC to 184 BC, that was adapted both into *Twelfth Night* by Shakespeare thought to be first performed around 1602 but also being translated before that into a popular Italian play called *La Calandra*, thought to be first performed in 1513, by Cardinal Bernardo Dovizi da Bibbiena. The early modern period named themselves the Renaissance meaning the period of rebirth which meant that, to the early modern writer, creativity did not stem from invention as we imagine it today; instead, creativity was found in retelling a story in a captivating and unexpected way. *Othello* is Shakespeare's translation, adaptation, and retelling of Cinthio's "Un Capitano Moro" which helped serve as a form of nationalistic propaganda when it first took the stage in England.

Within the play *Othello*, the term "Moor" is a perfect example of both a provocative draw for an Elizabethan audience but also a piece of nationalistic propaganda that helped to reinforce notions of white identity and denounce England's trade engagement with the Ottoman empire as dangerous and short sighted. "Moor" was, as many have discussed,⁵ not an innocuous term during the early modern period nor was it a fixed term, which is precisely why Shakespeare used it both in the title and throughout his play *The Tragedy of Othello, the Moor of Venice*. The *OED* defines Moor as originally meaning "a native inhabitant of ancient Mauretania, a region of North Africa corresponding to parts of present-day Morocco and Algeria" (N.1a) when the term was first put to use in 1393, but during the early modern period the term shifted to include "A Muslim, specifically a Muslim inhabitant of India or Sri Lanka" (N.1b). A Moor to an early modern English person could be a person from North Africa or India – two wildly

⁵ Ania Loomba, Ayanna Thompson, Geraldine Heng, Ian Smith, and Kim Hall all come to mind here.

different, geographically distant and diverse areas. Jerry Brotton, in his work *The Sultan and the Queen*, highlights the variety of understandings behind the term:

Various terms were used by the Elizabethans instead [of Islam]: “Mahometans,” “Ottomites,” “Saracens,” “Persians,” “Moors,” “Pagans,” and “Turks” – a catchall term for anyone who would be recognized today as a Muslim. These terms conjured a range of beliefs and assumptions, from horror and disgust to wonder and curiosity (5).

Within the original text of the first published folio of Shakespeare’s *Othello*, the word Moor appears to describe Othello multiple times both by himself and by other characters, equating the Moor with things such as blackness, baseness, darkness, the devil, and evil itself. Othello even calls himself a “Turke” (V.ii.3664) after he smothers his wife and then learns of her faithfulness. “Turke” is a term that Christian Europeans, like Othello himself who spoke of his conversion and baptism during the play in act II scene iii and is both a soldier and member of Venetian society, is associated with “traits of ambition, anger, hatred, and envy” (Brotton 283). In an email exchange, scholar Khadija Harsolia pointed out that within the confines of the play, Moor is equated not only to black as a color but that “black as a color is presented as something indisputably negative.” While Moor itself had a strong connection to being Islamic, and was synonymous with Turk, what’s most interesting about the usage of Moor in Shakespeare’s *Othello* is the lack of association with religion or nation of origin and more the association with Othello’s Black skin.

From woodcuts of Shakespeare's earlier tragedy featuring a Moor, *The Lamentable Tragedy of Titus Andronicus*, modern Shakespeareans know that Othello's Blackness would have been apparent on stage not because of the use of a Black or brown actor, but rather because the acting troupe performing the play used blackface, black stockings, and black gloves to mark the Moor on stage. The act of donning black cloth or animal skin by a white actor in order to perform as a Black character is termed "racial prosthesis" by Ian Smith in his article "White Skin, Black Masks: Racial Cross-Dressing on the Early Modern Stage." The Black-body-as-prosthetic "on the early modern stage reduces selfhood to an evacuated interior, or rather, an interior that is never his own but...exists *ex viro* – after man, after the white man" (39). In other words, a Black body on the early modern stage couldn't and wouldn't exist without the interiority of a white male actor donning racial prosthesis.

Actors would use "textile improvisations" and use "soot," "coal," and "jet" as "devices...by which white actors...impersonate[d] blackness on stage" (51) to render Black bodies as "physically absent but ideologically present" to reinforce "the normative functions of whiteness" upon the stage (60) or that being white in early modern society was seen as the default and any person coded as non-white had to be depicted through makeup, costuming, and animal skin on stage. While this blackface didn't yet carry the connotation of blackface in North America after the minstrel period of theater,⁶ this

⁶ In the collection *Multicultural Shakespeare: Translation, Appropriation, and Performance*, Ayanna Thompson and Coen Heijes note in the introduction that "Shakespearean performances have employed racial prosthetics since the Elizabethan period, but the intervening 400 years since Shakespeare's lifetime have seen the symbolic, social, and performance meaning of blackface and its relation to xenophobia, institutional racism and populism change" (9).

depiction was nonetheless not meant to be flattering to Moors: it was a visible mark of difference that used the painted face and black stockings of Shakespeare's lead actor, Richard Burbage, for the audience to differentiate the character of Othello by color alone.

Jack D'Amico in *The Moor in English Renaissance Drama* argues that of all the insults Iago throws Othello's way:

Shakespeare chose not to have Iago exploit anti-Islamic prejudice; Iago's focus is the black barbarian whose nature must be more animal than human, the neighing of his offspring a sign of subhuman utterance, his behavior dominated by the most primitive drives and needs (180).

While Iago betrays, lies, mocks, racially insults, manipulates, and has the ultimate hand in Othello's downfall by the end of the play, most of Iago's stated motivations originate from a class or race position rather than from a religious position. The play itself, as noted above, clearly states that Othello is a Christian convert. But I would argue that Othello's Christian conversion and Iago's choice to focus on Othello's Blackness rather than direct anti-Islamic prejudice is a purposeful move. Rather than having Iago be outright prejudice based on religion, Iago's insults of Othello's Blackness and subtle jabs at Ottoman territories, the term Moor which was associated with both Blackness and Islam, and Othello's own stories that connect his mother to parts of the Ottoman Empire like Egypt make Iago's anti-Blackness expressed within the play anti-Islamic and anti-Ottoman without having to directly insult religion.

Because the term Moor was used in the early modern period to describe people from all over the Ottoman Empire, both Black and Islamic, Othello's characterization as

a Moor leaves him without a fixed nation of origin within the text. While Othello is called a “Barbary horse” by Iago (I.i.124-5), a horse originating in Barbary or modern-day North Africa which would encompass places like Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, and Libya, Othello himself tells a story of the origins of his mother’s handkerchief in Egypt:

That Handkerchiefe

Did an Ægyptian to my Mother giue;

She was a Charmer, and could almost read

The thoughts of people. She told her, while she kept it,

‘T would make her Amiable, and subdue my Father

Intirely to her loue: But if she lost it,

Or made a Guift of it, my Fathers eye

Should hold her loathed, and his Spirits should hunt

After new Fancies. She dying, gaue it me,

And bid me (when my Fate would haue me Wiu’d)

To giue it her. I did so; and take heede on’t,

Make it a Darling, like your precious eye:

To loose’t, or giue’t away, were such perdition,

As nothing else could match. (III.iv.2203-16)

Even with Othello’s story of his mother’s “subdue[ing]” handkerchief and Iago roughly placing Othello as African from the North, there is no confirmation of Othello’s nation of origin within the story itself. The excerpt from the play is a story told by Othello, suspicious of his wife’s fidelity, that he tells in order to test her. Othello does not label

either of his parents as Egyptian within the tale; rather, he names the origin of the handkerchief as Egyptian and attached a kind of magic or mysticism to it and to his mother by labeling her as a “Charmer” that “could almost read/The thoughts of people.” For the purposes of this argument, the reference to the handkerchief as an object of enchantment and to his mother as a “Charmer” does two things; one, it acts as a call back to Act I scene ii where Othello is accused by Brabantio of bewitching Desdemona in order to secure her love, and two, it plays into yet another disdain held by the early modern English people: the disdain for magic and witchcraft. By having Othello, the Moor, affiliated with magic and witchcraft, Shakespeare’s play is associating Othello’s Blackness with yet another negative attribute.

To be accused of witchcraft or being a magic-user was to be accused of a crime not just in early modern England, but throughout early modern Europe. When Brabantio is accusing Othello of enchanting Desdemona in Venetian court in Act I scene ii, he is accusing Othello of a capital crime for “the charge of witchcraft performed a function similar to that performed by ‘high treason’” and it was “punishable even in the absence of any proven damage to persons and things” (Federici 170). The investigation of the crime itself “was made a *crimea exceptum*, that is, a crime to be investigated by special means, torture included” (Federici 170). Patricia Akhimie, in *Shakespeare and the Cultivation of Difference*, names this specific accusation of witchcraft in court during Act I scene ii as the moment Desdemona’s reputation starts to fall, which makes it easier for Iago to plant and sow further seeds of doubt about Desdemona’s faithfulness. Brabantio is essentially accusing Othello of being “a practitioner of dark magic in the trial-like scene” and

enchanted Desdemona to go against her father's wishes (61). Desdemona defies Venetian norms by speaking out and saying she fell in love with Othello through his tales of travel and shocks the Venetians listening when she declares she will go with Othello to Cyprus (Akhimie 62-3). The early modern period was one where women were to be chaste, silent, and obedient to first their fathers and then their husbands – husbands that were, in the case of women of Desdemona's class, usually picked out by their fathers.

According to Barbara Harris in "Aristocratic and Gentry Women, 1460-1640," "patriarchal institutions – political, legal, familial, and material – effectively oppressed and subordinated...Early Modern aristocratic and gentry women" (668-9). This means that Desdemona's defiance of her father to marry Othello, since it was not an act of witchcraft or magic as Brabantio is accusing, is a mark against her character as she is defying the social expectations for early modern women of her station at the time. Othello knows he did not enchant Desdemona so he should have no doubts of her defiance of the social expectations of her station and gender. And yet, Othello in Act III scene iv invokes magic when speaking with Desdemona about the handkerchief and, moreover, associates it with his family through his mother and through the favor he was passing along to Desdemona.

The gift-giving sequence and the history of the handkerchief is one where Shakespeare included "an important description of the handkerchief's fabrication" ("Othello's Black" 15). This origin story marks the handkerchief "as foreign and unique in its exceptional Moorish design" which would make such an item "one of those foreign curiosities that were such sought-after commodities in England" ("Othello's Black" 15).

This “dyed in mummy” handkerchief not only reinforced the origins of the handkerchief as Egyptian and thus reinforces the play being set after the Ottoman Empire conquered Egypt but before they reclaimed Cyprus, but also the fact that the action of dying a cloth, even if “mummy” is unclear as far as a coloring goes, “points directly to the addition of color, not the neutral or natural white of the cloth” but a “mineral pitch” used in “the eastern Mediterranean” (“Othello’s Black” 18). If the handkerchief is a representation of Othello, in other words, it would make sense that it was made from the same manmade textiles manufactured to act as his Black “skin;” this would serve as a visual representation of Othello’s Blackness as it passed through the characters on the early modern stage and could easily be associated with Othello when he gives it to Desdemona as a gift.

The handkerchief also serves as an important symbol of gift-giving and solidification of Othello and Desdemona as family as “gift-giving was a significant aspect of Elizabethan...social intercourse” and “helped to establish the newly formed family” (Newman 24). To early modern audiences, this visual representation of Black skin from an actor dressed in racial prosthesis was being passed onto his white paramour, having Desdemona literally carrying Othello’s Blackness with her, and passing it along, on stage. Kyle Grady notes in “Emphasis and Elision: Early Modern English Approaches to Racial Mixing and their Afterlives” that not only is there an over-representation of interracial relationships that were Black man and white woman in early modern English literature, but that this over-representation was tied to white anxieties over white masculinity, white futurity, and white women’s virtue (596). Othello’s handkerchief was

not a symbol of Desdemona's sexual purity to an early modern audience – it was a symbol that she was touched by Blackness and carried Othello's Blackness with her, reinforcing white anxieties about Black men's interracial relationships with white women.

By Othello doubting his own reality and introducing magic into his bloodline, he's reinforcing English beliefs of Moors being pagan entities incapable of being Christian and, moreover, affiliated being Moor with everything a Christian was not. While Islam and pagan are not equivalent in modern concepts of religion, to the medieval and early modern Protestant watching *Othello*, Moors were idolaters and did not share the same God as the Christians (Tolan 105). If Othello here really does believe that he could have accidentally charmed Desdemona, he is also admitting that he is guilty of a capital crime – witchcraft. By painting his bloodline as one with the magic of a "Charmer," Othello effectively also communicates to an early modern audience that a Moor cannot even trust themselves and that, intended or not, his words could have enchanted Desdemona unbeknownst to him because of this inherited-by-blood magic just as easily as he passed his black handkerchief along to her as a keepsake.

Since Iago has been working on further corrupting Othello's image of his wife Desdemona within the play, and the audience has witnessed this and knows of Othello's suspicion and his motivation for telling this story, Othello's story here could be entirely fictitious and constructed as an expression of Othello's fears and doubts rather than the actual origin story of the handkerchief, Othello's mother, Othello's father, or Othello himself. While it could be the case that Othello is Egyptian or part Egyptian the text itself

leaves no solid confirmation of that reading. Smith, in his article “Barbarian Errors: Performing Race in Early Modern England” argues there is a further meaning to Iago’s utterance of “an erring barbarian” in Act I scene iii. Smith notes that not only would “erring” and “barbarian” be somewhat redundant, for to be a barbarian would be to make “savage errors of eloquence” (169), but that a lack of eloquence, or rather a lack of eloquence so great that it needs to be duly emphasized, “is a direct function of being an outsider whose very presence constitutes a transgression of social order” (169). During this period of the mid-seventeenth century, English as a language had just succeeded in shedding its own barbarous label and had become a poetic and eloquent language.

This national concern with eloquence and language was a racialized marker that situated “the writing of the nation-race” as a “racial unconscious” that made racial difference material not just in “essentializing biology” and within “the language of skin color” but within rhetorical production of the English language itself (171). When Othello speaks within his play, he is not just displaying linguistic eloquence and rhetorical awareness of the English language, he is also “performing race” to “attempt to neutralize or even counter the reiterative, doubly *verbal* process of social abjection to which, as a Black outsider, he is subject” (177) because “speaking English amounts to a performative act of being English, a performance of the nation” (172). Within the play *Othello*, Othello starts off as eloquent but through Iago’s manipulations, Othello’s “ability to produce images within a cultural dialogue...[are] rendered rhetorically non-persuasive” (186). This loss of eloquence renders Othello as a full outsider and a stand-in for “the imperial fantasy that has characterized subsequent relations between Europeans

and blacks” in which Iago plays the role of “a racial Empire of the Selfsame” and the English desire for “territorial and erotic consumption” (186) that turns bodies labeled as barbarous outsiders into objects of and for this consumption. *Othello*, as a form of nationalistic propaganda translated from “Un Capitano Moro,” with the provocative word “Moor” used in the title to draw in audiences, reinforces not just anti-Blackness, anti-Islamic, and anti-Ottoman attitudes of the period, but attempts to justify the ideology of colonial expansion and reinforces the idea that lands occupied by bodies labeled as barbarous are fit for territorial consumption.

Mercantile Trade and Piracy: Capitalism on the Mediterranean Sea

While *Othello* is often thought of and played as a Black man, there are modern interpretations and arguments for playing *Othello* as another form of Ottoman subject – a converted Muslim or someone from what we would now term the Middle East rather than from Africa (Battels 160). I would argue that this lack of fixed national background of *Othello* within the play feeds on early modern English fears of Ottoman expansion. In *Mapping the Ottomans*, Palmira Brummett highlights that early modern England had an abundance of accurate and inaccurate information around the Ottomans through travel literature, which led to “old tropes [being] preserved and new ones [being] added” (46). England’s mindset was set in a rhetorical dialectic of “Asia vs. Europe, Islam vs. Christendom, and the senselessly violent Oriental barbarian against the thoughtfully violent Western knight” (Brummett 46). Events like the Ottoman Empire rising out of Asia and conquering areas like Constantinople in 1453 and Hungary in 1541 instilled fear

in some in England (Brummett 43-48): the fear that the Ottoman Empire would reach their shores and that their nation would be assimilated into the empire. In “Turning Turk in *Othello*: The Conversion and Damnation of the Moor,” Daniel Vitkus names this fear as the fear of conversion (145), but I would say that the English feared more than just losing their religion: they feared losing their emerging sense of a white nationality which was heavily tied to their emerging sense of identity as Protestants. Othello’s own unfixed nationality came from being part of a conquered people (even if we read Othello as Egyptian, Egypt was taken by The Ottoman Empire in 1517) and once assimilated into the empire, enslaved, and escaped, he could no longer express a singular national identity.

The setting of Cyprus further reinforces this non-readability of Othello’s Moorish identity. Venice was one of the most fiscally secure city-states in Europe during the beginning of the early modern period due to its position on the Mediterranean Sea. While the Ottoman Empire was expanding to take over other Mediterranean ports, it left Venice alone as it was a good gateway to trade with the rest of Europe. Acting as a gateway made Venice not only wealthy but one of the closest European nations, both geographically and diplomatically, to the Ottoman Empire (Zarinebaf 99). For Europe, Venice had a comparatively welcoming policy for Jewish and Ottoman subjects, allowing them to reside in housing inside of religion-affiliated ghettos within the cities themselves, to participate in the main part of the city during the day, and to engage in trade during times of peace.

But this relatively welcoming policy for Jewish and Ottoman subjects is still, well, *relative* or in relation to the rest of Europe. Geraldine Heng, in “Religious Race: Racializing Jews in the Twelfth- and Thirteenth-Century European West” notes that the rest of the west during the Medieval and into the early modern period “identified, measured, scaled, and assessed, as modalities of racial form worked, with a near-monomaniacal attention, to congeal Jews as figures of absolute difference” (5). Most places in Europe not only made Jewish people wear badges to mark themselves as non-Christian and different, but also excluded them from owning businesses, barred them from living within cities without being registered, openly spied on Jewish people within their borders, and banned Christian-Jewish interreligious marriages. Europe ended up using religious differences to “define...[and exclude] an entire community” (8-12). Europe’s treatment of Ottomans was no better. Even with the most welcoming attitude of any European nation towards Ottoman subjects (for the empire was not just Muslim and had people of all faiths – including Christians and Jews – as part of their empiric identity) Venice, “during times of war between the two states, Muslim and Jewish merchants were subject to abuse, arrest, and threats of expulsion” and these threats increased after 1556 (Zarinebaf 103).

The Ottoman Empire and Venice enjoyed a long trade history, but for the purpose and scope of this chapter, I’ll look at trade and war between the two kingdoms as it relates to the island of Cyprus starting around the same time as England’s Renaissance period – 1450 – in order to offer contextualization for the intersections of race and mercantile trade on the Mediterranean sea. In 1451 and 1454, Sultan Mehmed II

affirmed and reaffirmed that merchants from both Venice and the Ottoman empire would honor reduced trade rates and both nations would offer protections against ships and their cargo from acts of piracy. But peaceful trade between the two nations was not long lasting; starting in 1464, the Ottomans started a campaign to take piracy strongholds down – by conquering Venetian posts on the Mediterranean and bringing them under Ottoman rule. Morea fell in 1464, followed by Negroponte in 1477, Lepontana in 1499, and by 1502, Navarino, Corona, and the Peloponnesia Peninsula were lost to Venice (Zarinebaf 100-1). This succession of losses cost Venice, making the city-state fall from its wealthy perch atop European trade into a second-rate player on the world stage.

Cyprus was left alone at this time, with Venice making specific promises in 1513 and 1517 through trade agreements called *ahdnames* to fight piracy and pledged that the island wouldn't be a stronghold for pirates. While peace between the two worked and the *ahdnames* were renewed in 1521, 1535, and 1540. The *ahdname* of 1540 included a new pledge between Venice and the Ottoman Empire which included the punishment of pirates caught by either nation. After Venice allied itself with Spain, a nation known for its negative treatment of Moors and anti-Ottoman stance,⁷ Sultan Salim II ordered three hundred Ottoman ships to invade Cyprus in 1570. In response to this attack, Venice's Senate issued (but had trouble enforcing) an edict of expulsion to kick all Jews from Venetian territories no matter what their status or citizenship. This was seen as a blow to the commercial interests of the Venetians (which is probably why they had issues

⁷ Spain historically has forced Muslims to convert to Christianity within its history. Some acts overlapping with the period I'm looking at here include a 1502 order from the Spanish crown for Muslims to convert to Christianity. Between 1609 and 1614, Muslims were evicted from the country.

enforcing this edict) but also as a blow to The Ottoman's trade interests. By 1572, Cyprus was lost and the island belonged to the Ottoman Empire (Zarinebaf 101-3).

This erasure of Ottoman military victory is nothing new to England and other European nations; John Tolan in *Saracens: Islam in the Medieval European Imagination* states, western Christians tended to ignore Islamic military victories “rather than anathematizing it” (103) in the eighth through twelfth centuries and as Europe moved into the crusades, ignoring Islamic peoples and military victories transitioned into “vivid and hostile terms” within the western imagination where crusaders needed to manufacture a “colorful enemy, one against whom war was just and victory was glorious” (109). By the time England entered the early modern period, the west's views on Moors were solidified: Christians saw the “role of Muslims” as an “insult to God” (174) which affirmed “Roman imperial power” and “the illegitimacy of all Muslim rule” while also reinforcing the role of the Moor as an outsider or “other” (193). This purposeful historic oversight underscores the enduring power of a narrative to manipulate and shape perceptions of identity and of victory.

As far as the placement of Shakespeare's *Othello* within this timeline, the play would probably be set between the conquering of Egypt (for Othello does say he was captured by Turks and speaks of at least his mother being around Egypt) in 1517 and the beginning of hostilities and seizure of Cyprus in 1572. Likely, *Othello* is meant to be understood by an early modern audience as taking place around the time of the 1540 *ahdname*, where an update to that *ahdname* would suggest that trade between Venice and the Ottomans was not going smoothly and that piracy was a problem that was causing a

rift – a rift that might tempt the powerful Ottoman Empire to send ships over to Cyprus, and for Venice to send soldiers over to the island to prepare for a possible attack. What is most telling about Shakespeare’s rewriting of history here is the lack of pirates in the Mediterranean or on the island of Cyprus. Without the piracy threat, the Ottoman motivation to take the island disappears from English memory. Instead of a justifiable defense of trade with who was supposed to be an allied city-state that encouraged piracy and kept their pirates protected on Cyprus, the taking of Cyprus by the Ottomans is reduced down to the same dichotomies Othello is facing in the play: white vs. Black, Christian vs. Moor, and good vs. bad where being white and Christian, and therefore Venetian in nationality, was good and being Black automatically made one both a Moor and bad, or, in the case of the Ottomans, being Moors made them bad and Black.

Conclusion

England, while geographically somewhat isolated from the rest of Europe, was still acutely aware and interested in events going on around the world outside of their borders. Since London saw its parallel in Venice as European port cities at the heart of trade for their nations, this rewriting of history was not only to reassure England that they would not fall like Venice did if faced with the Ottoman threat, but also to warn that, unlike the Venetians, the English should not trust Moors like Othello in their society for it’s the infiltration of other, non-white European, even if Christian, cultures that cause the downfall of strong European nations. While England was removed and isolated on the world stage under Elizabeth I, England took this anti-Ottoman message to heart when

King James I took the throne in 1603 after Queen Elizabeth I's death and England was once again able to open up to mercantile global trade and, soon, global exploitation. Shakespearean scholars like Jonathan Bate suggest that *Othello* was inspired by a visit of an Ottoman ambassador to the Queen in 1601 and that he began his adaptation of the Italian short story that inspired *Othello* at that point in time. While Shakespeare was not the period's most prolific writer, his plays usually did not take three years of writing before they reached the stage. This possible delay in performance could be read as a deliberate move by Shakespeare – a move that would draw a fascinated English audience to a play with a provocative title, main character, and setting (both Venice and Cyprus) thus driving up Shakespeare's profits as a partial shareholder of the Globe Theatre without offending the person currently occupying the English Throne.

King James I harbored no inclination to continue trading with the Ottoman Empire once he took over the throne of England. Instead, King James I put his sights on both the Americas and India and contributed to mercantile capitalists setting sail. The East India Company took its first voyage shortly before Queen Elizabeth I's death in 1601 and returned with their cargo after King James I took the throne. While King James I continued to finance expeditions to India in order to obtain eastern goods without engaging in direct trade with the Ottomans, he also invested in the first charter of the colony of Virginia in 1606. In order to colonize, King James I granted the Virginia Company of London exclusive rights to settle what is considered the first successful English colony in the Americas. King James I continued England's protestant separatism, but with new tradelines opened to the east through India and the successful colonization

of what would become Virginia, James did not find himself in need of aid from a 400-year-old empire in the same way Queen Elizabeth I did. It is thanks to the Ottoman Empire that England survived its original separation from a strongly Catholic Europe, but England's own biases, illustrated well in Shakespeare's plays like *The Tragedy of Othello, the Moor of Venice*, were one factor that kept King James I from continuing to trade with the Ottomans. Instead, James I used England's newfound sea-bound mercantile and military strength to begin the age of colonization by England across the globe, starting in India and Virginia.

While the term "imagined white supremacies" was first applied to German medieval literature and scholarship to specifically interrogate imagined "militaristic prowess, female chastity and purity, and the concepts of miracle and destiny" (Merritt). The English version of imagined white supremacies intertwined with the development of capitalism during its early formation, creating capitalism as a system not just with class structure at the root of its power, but one that clearly connects its alienation, exploitation, and oppression through racial, religious, and gender constructs. Throughout capitalism's development in the early modern period in England, Shakespearean drama captured and illustrated shifting English opinions of the economic system:

Initially, capitalist practices and effects were blamed on outsiders – Jews and Italians, for the most part. This perception was based on a longstanding tradition of anti-Semitism and ethnocentrism...[but i]n the work of Shakespeare and other London playwrights, the commercial life of the city grew to become a persistent point of focus...The critical, satirical note is very strong in these plays; their plots

were structured around commercial and marital transactions, and the main male characters are obsessed with the pursuit of wealth, and often with the goal of securing a lucrative marriage to an heiress (*How the One Percent* 167-8).

By the time Shakespeare was writing *Othello*, England was no longer blaming capitalism and its negative effects on outsiders; rather, they were fully entrenched within the system and were actively celebrating it. Capitalism, as a system, was slowly transitioned into being the dominant economic system by the early modern period in England but pro-capitalist and pro-mercantile economic movements started well before feudalism relinquished its grasp on Europe. Capitalism and racism did not originate in the west nor in the early modern period alone but they were spread and maintained through English colonization.

Before the Atlantic, the Americas, and Africa became the site of mercantile capitalist profit, due in no small part to the Transatlantic Slave Trade, the most profitable trade enterprises were that between European nations touching the Mediterranean Sea and the northern tip of Africa and parts of the Middle East that border the same sea which were eventually conquered and held by the Ottoman Empire. In *Black Marxism*, Robinson highlights that “the development, organization, and expansion of capitalist society pursued essentially racial directions, so too did its ideology. As a material force, then, it could be expected that racialism would inevitably permeate the social structures emergent from capitalism” (2). It is no coincidence that concepts of religious, gender, and racial superiority developed alongside early pro-capitalist ideologies and became mechanisms of imagined white supremacies. The erasure of the Ottomans from *Othello*,

of their mercantile history on the Mediterranean, and of their hand in propping up England until it too could become an empire, erases part of the origins of mercantile capitalism and trade so that the power structure known as whiteness could claim capitalism as a system of their own that helped reinforce their imagined supremacy.

Chapter 2: Shakespeare, Capitalism, and the Ideological Construction of Whiteness in

As You Like It

This chapter explores the ways in which imagined white supremacies and capitalism manifest within Shakespeare's comedy *As You Like It*. Often, the construction of race in Shakespeare's works is designed to a select few plays and focuses on Black and Brown characters, ignoring whiteness as a construct all together until quite recently with the works of scholars like Ian Smith, Emily Bartels, and Justin Shaw, to name a few.⁸ Whiteness, within many of Shakespeare's works, is a trope (which I use here more with a modern rhetorical understanding of trope being related to figures of speech as well as these figures of speech being part of recurring themes associated with said figure) that contains within it a multitude of hidden meanings. Here, I'm thinking of imagined white supremacy as a synecdoche – or one symbol (fairness, as it relates to skin color, specifically within this play) that represents a larger concept around whiteness as a symbol of both cultural power and protection as well as an expectation of class station.

In order to unpack the trope of whiteness in *As You Like It*, this chapter breaks down capitalist privileges and social expectations surrounding “fair” figures within the play. There is a problem within Shakespearean studies in which some plays are deemed

⁸ There is a current critical conversation happening around the need for more critical race interventions, such as the Arizona State University's Center for Medieval and Renaissance's Studies reoccurring conference RaceB4Race, David Sterling Brown's 2019 keynote address at the American Shakespeare Center's Conference calling for other scholars to acknowledge Shakespeare's “other race plays,” and upcoming special editions, slated for 2022, titled “Shakespeare's Other ‘Race Plays’” from *Shakespeare Studies* that include articles like Andrew Bozio's “Whiteness as Property in *As You Like It*.” This chapter joins in this conversation and argues that there are multiple points of imagined white supremacy within the play *As You Like It* which can be linked to the development of tropes related to whiteness.

as “race” plays because we modern academics and readers can explore the concept of Blackness and indigeneity within them yet there is a distinct separation between how we analyze “race” plays for “otherness” and our lack of interrogation against the asserted white supremacy in other Shakespearean works. Fair, as Kim Hall notes in *Things of Darkness: Economies of Race and Gender in Early Modern England*, was first used according to the *OED* in the 1550s and was used in binary opposition to Black, creating a fair/Black dichotomy for the English to start creating a unified national identity around. Fairness, as the word is used by the early modern English, is a synonym to whiteness as we think about it today. In his book *The Wages of Whiteness*, David Roediger calls one of these hidden meanings of whiteness as a “wage” for the white working class so they could use the “status and privileges conferred by race” to make up for their own exploitation under a capitalist system (13). While this chapter focuses on literary figures from early modern England and not 19th-century workers, this concept of a hidden status and privilege-related wage due to whiteness is found within the play *As You Like It* in multiple forms.

As You Like It also sits nearly in the middle of Shakespeare’s list of works by performance date which makes the play’s production fall in between several plays that are often studied for their depiction of race; it comes after *Titus Andronicus* and *The Merchant of Venice* and before *Othello* and *The Tempest*. *As You Like It* has been studied by multiple critics through a Marxist lens,⁹ for the play’s investment in capitalism is

⁹ Andrew Barnaby's “The Political Conscious of Shakespeare’s *As You Like It*,” Angel Flores's “Shakespeare: A Marxist Interpretation,” and even *The Guardian* has an article talking about *As You Like It* through a Marxist lens.

readily apparent in its court versus pastoral settings, or courtier versus shepherd dynamic. While class dynamic and the pastoral setting play a huge part in the play itself, I argue that the construction of class and the setting of the pastoral are linked to imagined white supremacies within the period. *As You Like It* is a play where multiple anxieties of the time like gender, race, and class come together and lend themselves to critique. In *As You Like It*, these anxieties manifest as tropes linked to imagined white supremacies.

This chapter looks at three specific cases of whiteness, or fairness, as a trope that relies upon the hidden association of status and privilege. The first instance is Orlando's assertion in the opening of the play that, because of his status as the son of Sir Rowland de Bois who passed with a sizeable estate, he is entitled to a "fair" mate. Along this vein, Rosalind, the main love interest for Orlando, echoes his want for a fair mate in Act I scene ii of the play which is also in association with her status as the former duke's daughter and niece of the current duke. The second instance of whiteness as a trope related to class comes in Celia's idea to classdress (a term I'm using to mean dressing outside of one's expected class station) as a peasant, rather than as a Duke's daughter, and to escape to the pastoral setting of the forest of Arden with her cousin Rosalind. In her plot to escape court, Celia says she will "smirch" her face with a "kinde of vंबर" (I.iii.576) in order to pass as being less fair, and more poor, than her current complexion would suggest. The final trope of whiteness this chapter explores is that of Duke Senior, the former and, by the end of the play, current duke and the privilege he executes while living like (and I use the word like here as a simile purposefully) a vagabond. This is something Duke Senior himself recognizes in the play, when he turns to a fellow

inhabitant of his forest court and states “hath not old customes made this life more sweete/Then that of painted pompe?” (I.ii.608-9). Through multiple political edicts issued by Henry VIII and Elizabeth I, Duke Senior’s way of living is outlawed and only his class privilege and, thereby established by Celia, proximity to fairness protects him from the consequences of his actions.

Breed Mee Well: The Intersection of Race and Class

The 1623 first folio edition of *As You Like It* opens with Orlando lamenting over his class position and, in his laments, he exposes some of the ideological constructions of whiteness and class intersecting in the early modern period. As the son of the late Sir Rowland de Bois, Orlando expects his previous class and income level to be unchanged despite his brother Oliver inheriting the estate because the deceased de Bois charged Oliver with the task of breeding Orlando “well” (I.i.7). The conflict of this play arises in that Orlando feels he is not getting what he is owed as the son of the late de Bois and that Oliver only “speakes godenly of his profit” and keeps Orlando “rustically at home” and out of court where he might find a mate equal to him in status (I.i.9-11). These opening expectations of Orlando’s establish that once someone is born into wealth, the expectation is that they will hold onto this station and to deny “a gentleman of [Orlando’s] birth” a wife and access to court is a villainous act (I.i.12). This expectation of Orlando’s ignores the primogeniture problem that second sons face; Orlando is not alone in his lack of inheritance as the second son to a wealthy man. Louis Montrose, in “‘The Place of a Brother’ in *As You Like It*: Social Process and Comedic Form” notes that

“the tense situation [created by primogeniture] which begins *As You Like It* was a familiar and controversial fact of Elizabethan social life...by the gentry and lesser landowners, as well as the aristocracy” (31). But Orlando and the play itself seems to believe that his class rank trumps his social status as a second son. Orlando’s brother Oliver is treated as one of the play’s antagonists until later in the play when Orlando saves Oliver’s life from a lion, thus changing his brother’s heart in Act IV scene iii. It is this act of nobleness and self-sacrifice, which is linked to heroic figures within an imagined white supremacy in medieval and early modern figures, which convinces Oliver to find love for his brother instead of the hatred he’s harbored throughout the rest of the play. Likewise, Oliver only finds love himself with Celia after he learns to uphold established class boundaries by allowing his brother Orlando to claim his birthright in status and in wealth.

There is an interesting link here between Oliver and the merchant class – in that both are often depicted as only caring about money rather than about class rank or breeding that appears as its own trope within the period. In *As You Like It*, Oliver recognizing his brother Orlando’s status changes him from a profit-only driven figure into one that once again respects the hierarchies of court and inheritance. The merchant class operated because they were permitted to; capitalism meant money for the merchant class but this capital did not inherently come with power or political influence (Jonathan Harris 143-50). *The Merchant of Venice* is a play in which Shakespeare readily illustrates the conflicts between the falling aristocratic class and the rising merchant class and, as Ralph Berry argues, the play goes “much further, treating class in its relation to money” (43). *The Merchant of Venice*, set in a world occupied by merchants, fallen lords, proper

ladies, and money lenders, does not take place in court but displays “an embarrassment of socioeconomic riches” (Cohen 72). *The Merchant of Venice* features the wealthy but the play divorces wealth from status: Antonio is rich but not part of the ruling class, Portia is rich but also a woman who lacks the ability to fully control her own estate since her father left his marriage test behind, and Shylock might have more capital than Antonio and Portia combined yet lacks the status of citizen and speaks of the poor ways he is treated by Christians. The only person with status within the play, Bassanio, mismanages his estate and is so in debt that he cannot go to lenders himself for a loan so instead, he asks his friend, Antonio, for money.

The separation of capital and status caused an odd tension where some merchants were then financially on equal or greater footing than the aristocratic class which held power and sway over them. And while this tension and separation is more apparent on the surface of a play like *The Merchant of Venice* and has been studied by multiple scholars like Walter Cohen and Ralph Berry for those tensions, they are still present and a driving force of conflict within *As You Like It* and have been left unexplored. To be a villain during this transitional period between economic structures is to deny the link between wealth and status or to act as if wealth alone conferred status instead of royal titles and lineages. Oliver is a villain for denying Orlando the status inherent with his birthright bequeathed upon him by his status; Antonio, on the other hand, is depicted as being obedient to the class structures in place when he aids Bassanio in obtaining a loan. For this selfless service in which he asks for nothing in return, Antonio is depicted as being a good friend and is offered love by Bassanio and Portia for his service. Oliver’s shift from

villain to brother only occurs after he reinforces the class status of Orlando. In exchange, he is granted friendship and love after his transformation – a payment, of sorts, for upholding the social status of lords, aristocrats, kings, and queens.

These two plays help to form a larger picture of a dichotomy taking place during the transition from feudalism to capitalism; the quest for wealth alone corrupts but helping someone hold onto inherited wealth and social status is a benevolent act. Cedric Robinson notes, in *Black Marxism*, that “the creation of capitalism was much more than a matter of the displacement of feudal modes and relations of production by capitalist ones” and that:

the social, cultural, political, and ideological complexes of European feudalisms contributed more to capitalism than the social ‘fetters’ that precipitated the bourgeoisie into social and political revolutions. No class was its own creation. Indeed, capitalism was less a catastrophic revolution (negation) of feudalist social order than the extension of these social relations into the larger tapestry of the modern world’s political and economic relations (10).

Silvia Federici, in her book *Caliban and The Witch: Women, the Body and Primitive Accumulation*, asserts similar in that capitalism “was the counter-revolution that destroyed the possibilities that had emerged from the anti-feudal struggle” (21), keeping those in power still within the realm of power. While the central conflict of *As You Like It* is Oliver denying Orlando his status, right to marry, and access to their deceased father’s wealth, that conflict is overcome and Orlando has his status not just restored but elevated by marrying Duke Senior’s daughter, Rosalind, by the end of the play. Much the same

can be shown in relation to Bassanio: he starts off in so much debt that he's afraid to go to a money lender on his own, but he has a plan to marry the beautiful and rich Portia which succeeds thanks to Antonio. Both men had their status challenged or outright denied, but both men, because of their links to feudal structures, were kept in power despite their lack of capital.

While *As You Like It* lacks a Jewish character to villainize like Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice*, the play still contains problematic constructs of race related to class status and wealth. In the same opening speech of *As You Like It*, Orlando sets up a juxtaposition between how his brother treats him, and how his brother treats the animals under his care. Orlando claims that while both he and his brother's animals like "oxe" and "horses" are "as much bound to him [Oliver] as" Orlando is (I.i.18), Oliver's "horses are bred/better," and these animals are "faire with their feeding" (I.i.13-4) whereas Orlando is neither bred nor as well fed as these animals. While Orlando's main lament seems to be that he is kept from his station, it seems that a compounding complaint is that Oliver's horses get to breed and are "faire" animals. The use of faire here, especially in conjunction with the juxtaposition made by Orlando of himself to the animals on Oliver's estate, can be read in a way that suggests that Orlando isn't just lamenting that the animals are treated better than he is, but that the animals are bred in such a way in which they contain a closer proximity to whiteness than Orlando does in his "seruitude" to his brother (I.i.25). Kim Hall, in *Things of Darkness: Economies of Race and Gender in*

Early Modern England highlights the problematic uses of the term “faire” in early modern England to mean a “white, European” subject (2) from its problematic first use in 1550.

But this use of “faire” to stand in for “white, European” is further complicated, for the term was connected to more than a white complexion – it was situated as “being a dichotomy to [B]lack” (3). In Zakiyyah Iman Jackson’s book, *Becoming Human: Matter and Meaning in an AntiBlack World*, she highlights the problematic way Shakespeare’s works depict Black and indigenous subjects “under the sign of ‘the animal,’” specifically when talking about Caliban from *The Tempest*, and ties this symbol of the Black or native body into a projection of “white anxieties [that] imposes an image of [B]lack(ened) men as bestial sexual threat[s]” (13). With this added context, Orlando’s lament over the breeding of animals and the connection with his use of the word “faire,” adds a racial connotation to his utterance that plays into the ideological formation of whiteness as a race as well as a source of power, making the period’s understanding of race an ontology where birth status and nobility were coded to naturally belong to whiteness. In other words, the higher one was in social status, the whiter, and more deserving they were of said status. Orlando’s lament becoming racialized also connects these imagined superiorities of whiteness to class as well; Orlando deserves a fair mate, and to be bred well, because of his inherited status as well as the wealth his father accumulated during his life.

This is an early formation of the idea that whiteness came with social benefits that often contributed to fiscal wealth. While capitalism and imagined white supremacies

were forming alongside each other during early capitalist development, the early modern period is where those benefits were being worked out and the idea of white was being solidified into a capitalist structure of power. David Roediger's book, *The Wages of Whiteness*, highlights that whiteness has a hidden "wage" associated with it, one that made later workers in the 19th century seek the "status and privileges conferred by race" (13). But this concept didn't just appear in the 19th century; it developed within early capitalism. Early concepts of whiteness as a wage can be seen in works like *As You Like It* and contribute to the construction of imagined white supremacies. Given Orlando's speech, a fair mate was a hidden wage of whiteness being solidified during this period. But this benefit was both racialized and gendered where fair breeding was the entitlement and expectation of white men of the period, not white women nor nonwhite men. Federici highlights that "women's bodies, their labor, their sexuality, and their reproductive powers [were] under the control of the state and transformed into economic resources" (170) that directly benefited white men during the transition from feudalism into capitalism. With the closure of the commons, or the loss of open land and forests that anyone could hunt on, harvest from, sleep on, and more, women's bodies, wages, production, and reproduction were given over to the control of the men within their lives; first a woman's father would be in control of her, then her husband, and then her son, or some other male family member failing any of those outliving her.

Shakespeare, being part of the early modern and thus subject to the ideological social forces at play, creates the perfect fair mate for Orlando in Rosalind who is introduced in the very next scene. In Act I scene ii, the word "faire" is used a total of

seven times, with three of those utterances being from Orlando to describe both Rosalind and her cousin, Celia. There is a single utterance of the word *faire* by Le Beau, a courtier in Duke Frederick's court, which recognizes Celia's status as "Princesse" (line 264). The last three of those instances of the word *faire* are uttered by Celia, but the one use I most want to note here is her use of the word *faire* back at Orlando, when she and Rosalind recognize his status as one of the sons of Sir Roland and refer to him not just as fair, but as a "faire Gentleman" (line 414). With all of Orlando's uses, Le Beau's use, and Celia's recognition of Orlando's status then use of *faire*, this scene illustrates that fairness yet again as a class component, one in which class is visibly recognizable in some, like Rosalind and Celia, but must be confirmed by class status for others, like Orlando. In the early modern period, being white was not singularly about outward appearances but about class status as it is defined by proximity to power and lineage.

Celia's other two uses of *faire* within Act I scene ii are likewise linked to the construction of white identity and supposed traits of whiteness within the period. Rosalind and Celia devise a "sport" to discuss something instead of lamenting over Rosalind's unclear status in court. When Rosalind asks Celia "What shall be our sport then?" (line 199), Celia responds with mocking "the good housewife *For-/tune* from her wheel, that her gifts may henceforth bee/bestowed equally" (lines 200-2). This passage personifies the concept of fortune while also gendering it and assigns it a domestic role – the role of a housewife. This wheel of fate, also known as the Rota Fortune or Wheel of Fortune, is a symbolic trope used in many of Shakespeare's works to symbolize the changing of fortune from one at the top of the wheel, or one higher in status, having the

ability to fall to the bottom of the social order simply by Fortune changing the orientation of the wheel. It is often used, as it is being used here, to mark that social statuses will be disordered and rearranged by the hand of Fortune within the play.

Both Celia and Rosalind continue with this game and expand upon this personification to clarify the gifts that Fortune and her wheel may grant. Celia notes such gifts as ones that “makes faire” (line 206), but can also make one “honest” and, thereby, “very illfauouredly” (lines 207-8). The Wheel of Fortune is almost seen as having fixed diametrically opposed points on the wheel so that no two opposed things can exist at once in a person. Here, Celia is setting up “faire” as diametrically opposed to being “very illfauouredly,” or unattractive in this likely context. This use of “faire” once again correlates to Hall’s observation in her work that “faire” at the time was used to not just mean white and diametrically opposed to Blackness, but to also mean beautiful in addition to moral (9). Rosalind pushes back against her cousin’s pairing and states that it is Nature who decides traits.

Nature, unlike the Wheel of Fortune, did not contain diametrically opposed points that could not coexist; rather, there was the belief in the Great Chain of Being, a concept borrowed from Aristotle that was reworked in the Christian European imagination and was a central part of early modern English culture, as being the natural order of the time. If the debate had ended with fairness being assigned to Nature rather than Fortune, it would suggest that fairness and unattractiveness would be ranked in a hierarchical fashion, with links in between the two extremes, rather than being in complete opposition to one another. While Rosalind asserts that Nature assigns traits and Fortune decides fate,

Celia argues that Fortune can take away what nature grants before cutting off the debate, indefinitely, to address the Clowne. Celia, having the last word in the exchange, seems to have won the debate: fairness is in binary opposition on the Wheel of Fate to unattractiveness, and likewise affiliating other terms in opposition to fairness to exist with unattractiveness on the Wheel of Fate, like Blackness, feeding into the imagined white supremacy of the period.

Ile Put My Selfe In Poore And Meane Attire, And With A Kinde Of Vmber Smirch My Face: Cross-Racial Class-Dressing

The intersections of whiteness and class, in addition to gender, are further expressed within the play throughout cross-dressing and a term I'd like to call "class-dressing." According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the term cross-dressing wasn't introduced into our collective lexicon until 1911, but the concept existed in the early modern era and appeared often on stage as young men and boys played women on stage. Many of the heroines from Shakespeare's comedies cross-dressed; for example, Viola in *Twelfth Night*, Portia in *The Merchant of Venice*, and Rosalind in *As You Like It*. While modern queer theorists and society in general are pulling away from a binary gender model, the concept of cross-dressing in the early modern period heavily relies on clothing defined by gender and power dynamics where women were literally seen as undercooked men and therefore, always less than and subservient to men. Jean E. Howard in "Crossdressing, The Theatre, and Gender Struggle in Early Modern England" argues that "the Renaissance needed the idea of two genders, one subordinate to the other, to provide

a key element in its hierarchical view of the social order and to buttress its gendered division of labor” (423). Class-dressing, which I’m defining as the ability for one to dress and to perform a persona outside of their class station temporarily, likewise, depends upon a hierarchy – but one based on income and class level (those with resources and capital versus those who are workers) rather than on supposed gender dress codes and sumptuary laws.¹⁰ Louise Schleiner in “Voice, Ideology, and Gendered Subjects: The Case of *As You Like It* and *Two Gentleman*” highlights the connection between cross-dressing and class-dressing in the early modern period:

In Elizabethan England the gender roles performed and the psychic functioning not visible behind them...[were] mapped onto class more than onto gender: the glittering, puff-plantalooned, and bestockinged courtier was quite as spectacular as the aristocratic lady in winglike shoulder decor and ballooned, bejeweled skirt, and was no less masculine for being so. It was merchants and servants, male and female, who had to be unspectacular. Thus boys playing women onstage could not do it, *per se*, merely by dressing up...[but] rather...they used gestures, a mincing gait, makeup, and 'puling' or other feminine mannerisms. [This created an] image of a bi-positioned female subject...constituted through a certain technology of gender. She stood in a boy's body but spoke the new wit and spunk of euphuist court lady, admired yet firmly managed" (300-1).

¹⁰ There are many works that cover the gender dress codes, crossdressing on the early modern English stage, and sumptuary laws, but a great source for all three is *The Routledge Reader in Gender and Performance* ed. by Lizbeth Goodman and Jean de Gay which features chapters from Jean E. Howard, Barbara Smith, and Alison Oddey.

Cross-dressing, I would argue both in the early modern period and in our contemporary culture¹¹, is about more than just the donning of clothes: cross-dressing is about embodying a performed persona that is affiliated with one's state of dress, be that a gendered persona or a class persona. In *As You Like It*, there are two distinct classes being represented: that of the court, or the upper class, and that of the pastoral, or countryside workers.

The concept of class-dressing is first introduced in Act I scene iii lines 575-578 by Celia as a means to protect herself and Rosalind when they leave court for the forest of Arden to find Rosalind's father, Duke Senior:

Cel. Ile put my selfe in poore and meane attire,
And with a kinde of vंबर smirch my face,
The like doe you, so shall we passe along,
And neuer stir assailants.

Celia recognizes their class position as one that leaves them vulnerable outside of the court – vulnerable to kidnapping, ransoming, ravishing, or just plain old robbery. In Act I scenes i and ii, Orland, Rosalind, and sometimes even Celia are almost compulsively talking about their want for fairness, and each other's fairness, as it relates to their class position. In the above utterance by Celia, she yet again links fairness and class by recognizing that, in order to pass for someone of a lower-class station, she must "smirch my face" with "kinde of vंबर" in order to appear darker, linking darker skin with being

¹¹ Meg Wesling, in "Queer Value" notes that modern day drag performances are "ritualized, disciplined, and highly invested forms of labor" (108) which have an element of "play" and "camp" "in each spectacle" (111).

lower class and fairer skin with a higher class. In Ian Smith's chapter in *The Oxford Handbook of Shakespeare and Embodiment*, "The Textile Black Body: Race and 'shadowed livery' in *The Merchant of Venice*," he notes the methodology of cross-racial performances, where "white actors impersonat[ed] African or [B]lack characters" (171), as being similar to what Celia proposes for dressing herself up as lower in class. Not only did white male early modern actors strap animal hide and black cloth to their skin in order to appear Black (a term Smith calls racial prosthesis), but they also used other means like Celia's proposed "kinde of vंबर," specifically that of burnt cork in plays like *Othello* (171-2), to darken their face in order to portray a Black character.

While it can be argued that Celia did not intend to perform full-on blackface, I think this is an incorrect assumption for a modern reader or critic of Shakespeare. Shakespeare and his actors knew of the staging techniques used to have white male actors portray Black and Brown skin types; as Smith further highlights, the early modern and later theaters had "a variety of colorants used to mimic varying shades of blackness" and that burnt cork was specifically associated with blackface because of the blackness of the soot left behind from the burnt cork (171-173). Likewise, as Hall argues in the opening of *Things of Darkness: Economies of Race and Gender in Early Modern England*, "early modern literary criticism remystifies the appearance of [B]lackness in literary works by insisting that references to race are rooted in European aesthetic tradition rather than any consciousness of racial difference" (1-2). Whiteness, like other concepts of race, is a construct and one that needs to be interrogated. To be a responsible scholar studying Shakespeare is to read race where it is apparent, not to deny or shift the meaning of

something like Celia's utterance to one of ignorance rather than one purposefully associating fair skin with affluence and dark skin with labor or Orlando lamenting that his class position entitles him to a fair, or white, wife.

Class-dressing, then, has a racialized component in one instance of this play, but not every character that classdresses also darkens their face. Rosalind, like her cousin, decides to classdress but additionally dons the extra disguise of cross-dressing because she is "more than common tall" for a girl (I.iii.580). Rosalind's cross-dressing is a source of comedy-with-warning within the play, as is her class-dressing. When Rosalind-as-Ganymede comes upon Corin and offers to buy his pastures in Act II scene iv, she is yet again showing how she does not understand the rural setting she finds herself in – something both the audience and men would have recognized as a mistake on Rosalind's part. At the time of *As You Like It's* production, likely in 1603, Shakespeare's society was concerned with "the cultural struggle over agrarian rights, the conversation of woodland to arable land, and the broader movement of a regulated to a market economy" (Barnaby 378) that came along with the closure of the feudal commons and the expansion of private property under capitalism. Rosalind's ignorance of who owns pastoral land and how to purchase pastoral land would have been a significant betrayal of the fact that she was in disguise and from a different class station than her appearance suggested.

Furthermore, in Act III scene ii, Rosalind encounters Orlando again and upon seeing him while in her disguise as Ganymede, asks Orlando "what is 't o'clocke?" to which Orlando replies "You should aske me what time o'day: there's no clocke in the Forrest" (1490-2). Rosalind, disguised as a shepherd, betrays her actual class and status

as a person of court, but Orlando isn't astute enough to pick up on it by this point because he is not aware of the proper way a pastoral-dweller would ask for the time of day. While the play is a comedy and the cross-dressing and class-dressing generate jokes within the text itself, the two states of dress are reflective of conflicts happening within Shakespeare's society that a modern reader would more than likely not be aware of.

As Howard points out in her article "Crossdressing, The Theatre, and Gender Struggle in Early Modern England," "crossdressed figures were prominent both in carnival [during the Early Modern Era in England] – where gender and class boundaries were simultaneously tested and confirmed – and in food riots, demonstrations against enclosures, and other forms of lower-class protest" (428). While Howard focuses on cross-dressing within her work as a means of gender struggle and political protest, the fact that the costuming related to class as well as gender shows that class-dressing was also a popular form of protest in the Early Modern era and one that the lower class used in conjunction with cross-dressing.

While the style of class-dressing within the play is unique, Rosalind's cross-dressing is a common trope within Shakespearean comedies. From her first encounter with Orlando in her masculine guise as Ganymede in Act III scene ii, she convinces Orlando to "call me Rosa-lind, and come eerie day to my Coat, and woe me" (line 1603-4) as a way of curing Orlando of his intense love for Rosalind. Orlando obeys Rosalind-as-Ganymede, and in Act IV scene i, she gets carried away with her emotions around Orlando and agrees to a mock-marriage ceremony. When Orlando's brother finds Rosalind-as-Ganymede and tells her the story of Orlando's bravery in saving him from a

lion and of Orlando's blood being spilled in Act IV scene iii, Rosalind goes pale and Orlando's brother thinks she-as-he might have fainted. Oliver is confused by her feminine reaction. By taking on the submissive role as Orlando's practice lover, Rosalind's inability to control her emotions when he is present, and her inability to handle the sight of blood, Rosalind's cross-dressing proves ineffective as a means of hiding her gender identity. This same inability to hide one's gender is present within *Twelfth Night* when Viola cannot control her feelings for Duke Orsino despite her disguise as Cesario and in *The Merchant of Venice* where Portia can't help but to test Bassanio's love by asking for her ring back while disguised as a lawyer. Shakespeare's works clearly depict cross-dressing women as unable to hide their gender despite their costuming.

By having Rosalind break character and constantly display feminine characteristics, *As You Like It* shows its audience that, while women of the period may cross-dress as men, they don't have the mantle to keep up the disguise. This is not just a jab at women's ability to take on the mantle of masculinity but a threat to women – depending upon their socioeconomic status that threat could be anything from a whipping that could lead to one's death to destroying one's credibility and social status (for a merchant, especially in the early modern era, reputation was tied to livelihood). These were real threats to women of the time who might not have liked their social place and could have been looking to or were already participating in cross-dressing as a means of escape. Rosalind's constant break of character is there to relieve male anxieties about women cross-dressing and posing as men without being exposed or facing punishment.

Likewise, class-dressing demonstrates that despite the upper class falling from power, despite capitalism being a system that could knock nobility down, nobility will find a way to climb back up and regain power. Thus, class-dressing in *As You Like It* reinforces a rigid class and rigid gender structure that could not be challenged nor changed despite the introduction of capitalism.

Cross-dressing and class-dressing within the play are used to make social commentary on contemporary concerns of the early modern era; as Leah Marcus notes in her book *Puzzling Shakespeare: Local Readings and Its Discontents*, “Poets and dramatists looked for ways to regularize and elevate topical issues so that they could be linked with more abstract moral concerns” (41), while Martha Ronk in her essay “Locating the Visual in *As You Like It*,” argues that “The eye was also a political tool for those in positions of authority, who used it to dazzle, to consolidate power, to urge a particular way of being seen” (260). Howard’s work sheds light on the prevalence of the practices of cross-dressing in the Early Modern period when she notes “that actual women of several social classes did crossdress in Renaissance England” (421) and that this was a concern for the period because “of social dislocation in which the sex-gender system was one of the major sites of anxiety and change[,]...female cross-dressing in any context had the potential to raise fears about women wearing the breeches and undermining the hierarchical social order” (428).

These cross-dressing women were from multiple class stations, and as such, their punishments varied by their socioeconomic status due to the fact that privileges and protections of class extended to forms of punishment. For women in the period: “lower-

class women were pilloried and whipped and merchant wives were hanged from the pulpit for doing it” (Howard 421). Howard further ties this anxiety of women and power to a fear that “when women took men’s clothes, they symbolically left their subordinate positions. They became masterless women, and this threatened overthrow of hierarchy was discursively read as the eruption of uncontrolled sexuality” (424). Within the early modern theatre, having young men and boys perform as women on stage was seen as less of a threat to their master-subservient gender binary than having women portray themselves on stage. Going one step further, having a woman cross-dress as a man was seen as an active and ongoing harm to their established gender hierarchy. The threat to women of this period for cross-dressing was very real and fed off of anxieties centered around women seizing control which was allotted only to white men at the time.

Hall further contributes to the understanding of why there were anxieties tied to gender and race while clarifying that there is a link between the two within the period:

The economic expansion of England was a linguistic and, ultimately, an ideological expansion in which writers and travelers grappled with ways of making use of the foreign *materia* “produced” by colonialism. Tropes of blackness were discovered by white English writers (both male and female) to be infinitely malleable ways of establishing a sense of the proper organization of Western European male and female in the Renaissance: notions of proper gender relationships shape the term for describing proper colonial organization. Further, the English/European division of beauty into “white” or “black” not only served

aesthetic purposes but supported an ideology that still continues to serve interests of white supremacy and male hegemony (4).

This anxiety of power and control, an anxiety closely tied to class and gender, plays further into this construct of imagined white identity and white masculinity: white masculinity was something that could not be performed nor imitated, at least not for long, by women of the period and that the inherent strength and nobility associated with white men of status within this play, like Orlando and Duke Senior, was something women like Rosalind were not equipped to perform.

Hath Not Old Custome Made This Life More Sweete: The Political Pastoral

In Act II scene i, we meet Rosalind's father, Duke Senior, who is openly wandering through the Forest of Arden without a fixed home. This fits well with the description of a vagabond, or, according to the *OED*, "one who has no fixed abode or home, one who wanders from place to place; *spec.* one who does this without regular occupation or obvious means of support" (B.n.1a). This usage has been part of the English lexicon since 1485, and later usages of the word in the late 1800s became linked with skin color, or "vagabond's discoloration, vagabond's disease, or vagabond's skin" (*OED* B.n.1c) which is further shown in its 1899 usage to be linked to "brown, lather-like condition – the so-called vagabond's skin seen in tramps." While the noun 1B usage of the word does not contain a direct correlation between skin conditions nor color, it is interesting to note that later uses of the word do change to include such a meaning, especially given Celia's call for blackface to transform herself into a member of the lower

class. Not only does Duke Senior lack a fixed home and a fixed source of income, his opening line betrays an awareness of multiple Vagabond Acts in the period that modern readers might miss but an early modern patron of the play would surely catch.

While the early modern period is painted as one of transition, the transition was performative for some and detrimental for others; those who already had wealth and power continued to hold onto their assets during the shifting economy and those without, the peasants that, as both Robinson and Federici note in their works, were rioting and uprising during the feudal system and were fighting for food, water, land, and leisure, among other rights, were left with a system that closed off the commons and forced them to participate or die. Suddenly, a peasant's ability to live off the land was taken away: there was no open land to graze on, no open land to sleep on, no open land to hunt on, no open land to collect firewood from, and no open land to build on.

While capitalism was already taking hold before the first official act of enclosure, the Enclosure Act of 1604 marked the end of that way of life for many (Carroll 34-5). Now, what used to be freely available had to be purchased. Those without the means to purchase had to find an alternative to England's old open field system which meant they had to find a way to earn an income in this new system or go without. And to reinforce this new system, Queen Elizabeth I passed The Vagabond Act of 1572 (which reinforced one of her father's, King Henry VIII's 1530 Vagabond Act which made being a vagabond or beggar a punishable offense) which now subjected those marked as vagabonds or beggars to "views and searches" from overseers and made a Justice of the Peace able to "place and settle to work the rogues and vagabonds" or remove them from

the streets and put them into workhouses in exchange for excess food (Slack 18-19, 60). These workhouses were a commercial means of replacing Catholic monasteries which used to feed and house the poor who were not making use of the commons. Henry VIII issued The Dissolution of the Monasteries in 1536 which not only aimed to close down the monasteries but also confiscated the lands of monasteries in England and Wales. As England was pulling away from Catholicism and was establishing itself as a protestant nation, it was also laying the groundwork for the spread of capitalism.

Vagabonds and beggars were required to be licensed and, if one was caught without such a license, they were subject to punishments such as being whipped and burned on the ear. Each English parish could only have so many licensed vagabonds and beggars, once again determined by the Justice of the Peace in that parish, so the threat of bodily harm for not finding a workhouse or a living on their own was real and pressing for those caught in this period of transition. Queen Elizabeth I's push for vagabonds and beggars to be licensed, sent to workhouses, and assimilated into the new system of capitalist power wasn't isolated to just one act – it was a precursor to an early modern shift in values towards commercialism. Some of these poor laws were designed to offer relief to those temporarily out of work or people deemed too ill or old to work, but others were there to punish paupers, vagabonds, and beggars into leaving the parish. This was especially the case if they were unable to become licensed or move into an alms house. If they were deemed able-bodied and able to work but refused to participate, they would find themselves in the House of Corrections or physically beaten for their lack of participation. The physicality of the punishments here served twofold; one, punishments

like whippings and burnt ears were visible, which meant that the vagabond would bear a physical mark of their lack of assimilation into capitalism; second, it acted as a deterrent for those that would purposefully resist joining the labor force.

When Duke Senior turns to his “Coe-mates” in the forest of Arden, his second line uttered is “Hath not old custom made this life more sweete / Then that of painted pompe?” (II.i.607-9), which can easily be read as a critique of court life in comparison to life in the forest. But I would also argue that it is an utterance meant to recognize that the “old custom” of vagrancy, and open common land for people to hunt on, camp on, and set up their own forest-court on, as Duke Senior does in this play, has been made illegal and has real consequences for those who do not share Duke Senior’s class status. While the play *As You Like It* is thought to be first performed in 1603 and the commons weren’t fully closed until 1604, vagabond acts and a slow closure of the commons started back in 1572. Likewise, edicts and acts from the crown didn’t come out of nowhere; advisors, parliament, the court, lords, and servants of court, among others, would all be aware of the formation of such edicts and acts as they would have been discussed and debated and part of the cultural consciousness of the period. At no time in the play does Duke Senior show fear for his status as a vagrant despite this nod to recognizing how his actions were illegal. Indeed, during his next speaking part, Duke Senior asks the Lord of Amiens if they should go “kill vs venison?” and then laments the necessity of their death so he and his forest court, made up of himself and the lords that chose to follow him into exile, may eat (627-31). Duke Senior’s status, and proximity to fairness as established by earlier exchanges in the play between Rosalind, Celia, and Orlando, grant him the ability to bask

in yet another hidden trope of imagined white supremacies: protection from the consequences of the law that others, of lower status or less of a proximity to whiteness, would face in the same situation. Rosalind, Celia, Duke Senior, Orlando, and Touchstone fall in status not from their own mistakes but from the mistakes of others in their lives or to protect others around them, making their fall in status a noble one.

Barnaby highlights this, saying these characters are not responsible for their fallen circumstances – therefore there is no moral failing associated with this fall in status nor “a lapse in personal ethical responsibility,” but this loss of status is used “instead to mark a political and economic awareness of social mechanisms that lead one into such penury” (383). Rosalind must hide from Duke Frederick after his change of heart about having Rosalind stay in the kingdom. Celia flees with her cousin out of love. Touchstone, the fool, cares for Celia, calls her friend, and leaves to keep the two women company for their safety and care. Orlando is denied his rightful place by Oliver and must flee to protect his life. Even Duke Senior, the displaced duke of the land, is shown to be good in character: he shares what he has left with those around him, he makes merry with his exiled men, he aids Orlando and his servant when they are in need, and he acts as a good father to Rosalind even from afar. These characters are good – inherently so, and their drop in socioeconomic status marks a social problem rather than a moral failing that is corrected when Duke Frederick steps down and Duke Senior is restored to his former position. This reinforces one of Merritt’s recognized frameworks of imagined white supremacies, “a quality or trait that presupposes the quality of superiority,” which here takes the form of moral virtue.

Conclusion

The early modern era being a period of socioeconomic instability for the nobility informed the creation of *As You Like It*. Nobility, once profiteers of the feudalist system, could, like Bassanio in *The Merchant of Venice*, find themselves at a loss for income or, like Orlando, could be denied by their eldest brother or, like Duke Senior, could be displaced for reasons not brought up in the play itself. Status, which was more of a fixed station outside of the king or queen's direct intervention, was no longer tied to income. *As You Like It* plays off these fears and offers up a solution for the nobility watching: be good, be kind, be courageous, and let the systems in place take care of you for it is your inherent nobleness that will alleviate the burdens of capital and capitalism which was displacing the feudal system. *As You Like It* conflates capitalism and whiteness to where one's proximity to whiteness grants them capitalist power and the ability to rejoin the aristocratic ranks from which they originally fell. Duke Frederick steps down from his position giving Duke Senior the power to restore everyone to their rightful place. Oliver and Orlando fall outside of this dynamic for it is Orlando's bravery which earns him the love and respect of his brother and leads to a restoration of status; however, with Orlando's marriage to Rosalind, this restoration would have happened with or without Oliver's support. Here it is the trope of nobleness being linked to goodness, not effort or work or even violent protest against wrongdoings, which restores these fallen characters to their original social roles and income levels. Duke Senior, like his daughter, and like Orlando, are in no danger of being persecuted nor punished for their antics in the pastoral because they were never part of the pastoral; their whiteness set them apart from the

peasants and shepherds working the land. Whiteness was imagined as a class of its own and one that could not be shaken by the shifting economic system of the time.

There is an interdependent trope of class that hinges on fairness within Shakespeare's works which, in this chapter, I've highlighted within *As You Like It*, but this is related to the bigger project of imagined white supremacies within early modern English literature and culture. Shakespeare captured the emerging sense of identity as white and the ties whiteness had to imagined supremacies, both cultural and sexual. Whiteness as a trope within Shakespeare's works has largely gone unexamined because whiteness in western culture has considered itself the default and, in Shakespeare studies, studying the construction of race and tropes about race has been limited to a handful of plays with Black, Jewish, and Indigenous characters in plays like *Othello*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *The Tempest*, and *Titus Andronicus*. These examinations of the construction of whiteness as an imagined source of supremacy, one that developed alongside early capitalism to become an inherent feature of the economic system we globally exist under today, are paramount to ending whiteness as a source of cultural, political, and even economic power.

But what does it mean to end these imagined white supremacies in Shakespeare's works and the link between imagined white supremacies and the capitalist system we live under, globally, today? What was imagined by a society struggling to catch up and establish itself as equal during the Renaissance, to exist as an island independent of the Catholic nations of Europe, and to form a national identity and define what it meant to be English under this new system of capitalism has now become an integral part of modern

culture and society and has been propagated by Shakespeare studies itself. What Roediger terms the “wages” that come with a proximity to whiteness have roots in the early modern. These imagined supremacies, while still functioning on the level of imagination, have become an actualized cultural source of status under capitalism.

It is also no accident that what our modern society calls “privilege” encapsulates many of the same aspects as imagined white supremacies found within the play *As You Like It*. The ideal capitalist subject is white because the system of capitalism was developed alongside European white identities and was exported across the world during colonialism and the capitalist acquisition of goods, land, and forced labor. There is no reformation of a system based in imagined white supremacies that spread across the globe and forced colonized peoples to adhere, culturally and economically, to the British. The only way forward is to abolish these systems of supremacy and start Shakespeare studies anew. Unraveling these deep-rooted systems requires more than intellectual inquiry; it necessitates a radical rethinking, a seismic shift in the way we approach Shakespeare studies and, by extension, our own understandings of the societal constructs we have inherited.

Chapter 3: Enter Lavinia and Lucrece, Ravished: Women's Bodies as a
Site of Pacification

In the early modern era, while not outright stated, it was certainly implicit that rape was only a crime when it violated women that belonged to property owning males because of aristocratic concerns over lineage and inheritance. Court cases like this as well as plays like Titus Andronicus and poems like The Rape of Lucrece “participate in the ideological exclusion of women and lower-class males from the execution of justice.”

- Karen Robertson, “Rape and The Appropriation of Progne’s Revenge in Shakespeare’s *Titus Andronicus*, or ‘Who Cooks the Thyestean Banquet?’”

Her name is Cyntoia Brown. At the age of 15 in 2003, she found herself on the streets of Tennessee and was the victim of sex trafficking. At the age of 16, still on the streets and still being trafficked, she met a man named Johnny Allen who brought her home for the night. According to Brown, Allen had purposefully intimidated her and reached for a weapon multiple times during the encounter which led her to fear for her life. She shot Allen in self-defense and fled with the money Allen had promised her for the sexual encounter (which she would have to give her pimp/abuser Kut-Throat) and the gun. Despite her claims, the Tennessee officers and court that investigated the killing of Allen charged her with homicide, aggravated robbery, handgun possession, and criminal impersonation in 2004. Despite being tried while being a minor at the age of 16 and

multiple pleas from the Tennessee community and Brown's lawyers, she was tried as an adult and sentenced to 51 years in prison. The Tennessee courts did not seem to recognize her as a victim of rape despite her age and inability to consent as someone being trafficked, as a girl defending herself, and as a young Black girl forced into sexual servitude to the white man she killed – a 43-year-old from Nashville who was her rapist and threatened her life. The courts sided with Allen being the victim, despite two other underage victims of Allen testifying at Brown's trial that he intimidated and raped them as well. While Tennessee's governor Bill Haslam pardoned Brown after 15 years in prison, Brown should have never been tried nor convicted in the first place.

It's no secret to feminists and non-feminists alike that state apparatuses like the legal system, from the police who enforce the laws to the courts who interpret them, are not on the side of any person identifying as a woman. As Federici argues in her work, early formations of capitalist society during the early modern period held a firm interest in women's bodies and reproductive rights. In this chapter, I'm asserting that this interest in women's reproduction extends into the ideological construction of what constitutes as a rapable body under the law. In her article "800 Years of Rape Culture" on *Aeon*, Carissa Harris highlights that while "rape was categorized legally as a property crime" at the time, "convictions for rape were very rare, since all-male juries were reluctant to condemn their fellow man to such harsh penalties on the basis of a woman's claim." In this chapter, I aim to explore whether legal rape culture underwent any kind of significance changes during the transition from the medieval period to the early modern

period. This legal distinction is important because without the ideological construct of the rapable body being backed up by law, there is no way for the raped to seek legal justice.

In her chapter “Fighting Bodies, Fighting Words: A Theory and Politics of Rape Prevention,” Sharon Marcus highlights the importance of establishing a language around rape for “a feminists politics which would fight rape cannot exist without developing a language about rape, nor...without understanding rape to be a language” (387). For this chapter, I will use the following terms: rape to write about the act of unwanted sexual contact, rapist to write of the one committing sexual acts without consent, the raped to write of the person having unwanted sexual contact forced upon them, and rapable to write of the ideological construct of what constitutes a body that can be penetrated without permission or, to put it more plainly, who society believes can be raped. I think it’s important to note here that rape is not an easy thing to write about nor an easy word to repeatedly read, and the word choice here is to be consistent with scholarship cited in this chapter like Sylvia Federici, Karen Robertson, Sara Quay, Robin Bott, Sharon Marcus, and Deborah Burks. Going one step further, the term rapable appears in the *OED* and is defined as “of a person (occasionally also of a thing): able to be raped; regarded as suitable for rape; (sometimes also in weakened sense) sexually desirable” and originated in 1963 but started to be used in more of a legal sense in Catherine Burn’s *Sexual Violence and the Law in Japan* in 2005.

While this chapter will focus on the early modern period and its links to early capitalist ideological formations that can still be found even to this day in cases like Cyntoia’s, the patriarchal concepts being addressed here started well before capitalism;

unfortunately capitalism, as a system of power, linked itself to other systems of power of the time like patriarchy and race to create an intersectional system of oppression that continues to oppress based on gender, class, race, and more to this day. The case of Cyntoia Brown is a continuation of the social norms of raped women not getting justice despite what ideological constructs like *Law & Order: Special Victims Unit* perpetuate: that there is a dedicated team of justice-seekers out there looking out for women, and, most of the time, they'll get justice. According to RAINN, the Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network, out of every 1000 rapes that happen in the United States, 995 perpetrators will walk free.

A pop culture fan site, *Overthinkingit.Com* by Matthew Belinkie, calculated the guilty, plea bargain, and implied wins of *Law & Order* and found that over 35% of those portrayed on the show were found guilty, about 34% took plea bargains, and 11% of those arrested had an implied guilty verdict by the end of the show. In total, that makes 80% of those arrested on the show sentenced to jail for their crimes – a hugely unrealistic number. Yet this wildly successful show, which has had three different spin-offs and has been on the air for over 30 years in one form or another, has been influencing and shaping public understandings of laws and their executions in the U.S. As Jocely Catty points out in her book *Writing Rape, Writing Women in Early Modern England*, writing about rape “inscribes rape into culture, imparting it both ideological and narrative functions” (9). While Catty is thinking about the early modern era, depictions of rape on

screen, in literature, on stage, and in other forms of medium readily made for public consumption go beyond having a narrative function and influence social ideological constructions about rape.

Early capitalism didn't have *Law and Order* around to help create a shared ideological construct of what rape was, who fits the construct of a rapist, and who fits the construct of the raped; instead, other cultural influential figures of the early modern period like Shakespeare addressed rape both in his poetry and in his plays. It is my hopes that this work will be a continuation of early modern feminist dialogs around the concepts of rape in the period. This chapter is focusing on two specific works of Shakespeare's for analysis when it comes to what constituted early modern concepts of rape and the rapable body: the poem *The Rape of Lucrece* and the play *Titus Andronicus*. The construction of the rapable body as being female presenting, being affluent, being white, being above the age of procreation, and being subject to scrutiny about purity and desire (as two opposing forces) are concepts being played out both in Shakespeare's society and reflected within Shakespeare's works; worse, ideological constructs of the rapable body such as these persist to today and can be seen in the legal cases of those like Cyntoia. In order to argue this, I will be dividing this chapter up into three sections; the first section looks at the construction of the patriarchy through *The Rape of Lucrece* and *Titus Andronicus*, the second section looks at the construction of the rapable body in the early modern period, and finally, the third section focuses on how these constructs under the formation of early capitalism manifest in the early modern society as well as today.

The *OED* defines patriarchy as “a form of social organizations in which the father or oldest male is the head of the family, and descent and relationship are reckoned through the male line; government or ruled by a man or men” originating in 1626 but notes that the Church used the term patriarchy going back to 1561. It wasn’t until the 1970s that the term was more politicized. While the idea of patriarchy wasn’t put into formal words until the 17th century, patriarchal structures fill the early modern era and both *The Rape of Lucrece* and *Titus Andronicus*, two plays set in Rome but filled with early modern ideological constructs around male honor and female rape. The English at the time of the early modern period saw themselves as the descendants of the Romans, inheritor of their arts, and as a period of rebirth of Roman classics.¹²

Lisa Starks-Estes in *Violence, Trauma, and Virtus in Shakespeare’s Roman Poems and Plays: Transforming Ovid* recognizes that “for early modern writers, Rome often became the metaphor for these debates that reside within complex, often conflicting discourses of Renaissance thought” (116). Shakespeare didn’t set his two works heavily depicting rape in Rome arbitrarily; the construction of the raped body within these texts reflects early modern thoughts on the subject of rape. Fredric Jameson highlights in chapter one of his book *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* that texts, consciously and unconsciously, capture the material, social, and political conditions in which the text was constructed (17-20). The interactions between the state,

¹² Rome was also had a patriarchal imperialist structure and a rigid system defining who could be a Roman citizen and who would be enslaved.

capitalism, race, the patriarchy, the rapist, the raped, and the construction of the act of rape itself within Shakespeare's works are reflective of early modern ideology.

Patriarchy and the Anxious Early Modern Male Gaze

The patriarchy in *The Rape of Lucrece* is, to put it lightly, extreme – so extreme that Lucrece, unlike Lavinia who is killed by her father Titus in *Titus Andronicus*, takes her own life because of her internalization of patriarchy rather than remain a raped body that shames her husband and her father through her continued existence. *The Rape of Lucrece* is, as Catty points out, a favorite of early modern critics to analyze when they are looking to understand rape in an early modern context because “Lucrece’s story...exemplifies the attitudes of early modern writers towards rape” (12). Sara Quay in “‘Lucrece the chaste’: The Construction of Rape in Shakespeare’s *The Rape of Lucrece*” argues that the poem is especially important for early modern feminist scholars to analyze “because of the extent to which Shakespeare develops Lucrece and explores the impact the rape has on her” (3). When critics look to Lucrece as a model for the construction of raped women in the early modern period, they are capturing aspects of the patriarchal structure surrounding her rape as well.

Indeed, within the poem bearing her name, Lucrece is the only aristocratic woman and the only woman besides her maid within the work. It's also important to note that both of these women were exposed to rape: Lucrece was raped, but it is her maid who finds her after her rape. As the only woman of the aristocratic class within the poem, she is the subject of the male gaze. Her husband, Collatine, brags about her virtues which is

what first attracts Tarquin to her as a sexual subject. Catherine Belsey, in her article “Tarquin Dispossessed: expropriation and Consent in *The Rape of Lucrece*” highlights early modern notions of ownership of women’s chastity and virtue – the patriarchal ideals that put Lucrece in danger once Tarquin is made aware of them:

We cannot understand a term or recognize a condition without an implicit awareness of its differentiating other. Joy in ownership, the pleasure of possession, depends on the possibility of loss or dispossession. Collatine’s treasure is precious precisely to the degree that it can be stolen; his happiness, intensified by the sharing it with his friends, is thereby put more thoroughly at risk (318).

Lucrece was the property of Collatine as his wife and as his property, all of her virtues were his possessions – possessions that should not have been shared. Once Lucrece’s virtues and chastity were known, they came under threat. While male honor, as Mark Breitenberg explores in his book *Anxious Masculinity in Early Modern England*, depended upon female chastity. Female chastity was something that shouldn’t be advertised to the wide-world or it could come under threat from other men. Male concepts of honor “as indicated and defined by chastity was of primary interest to those of property, and it functioned to distinguish [affluent male] status from non-propertied classes during a period of increasingly perceived (and actual) threats to status boundaries” (104). Men were insecure about their status and their control of state power and that fear manifested through the control of women’s bodies and ability to procreate.

The male power structures in play here, from the militant order of Roman soldiers to educated mercantile, professional, and aristocratic men reading the poem in the early modern period, had created an oxymoron made apparent within the poem: male honor was dependent upon female chastity thereby making it so that female chastity had to be known in order to uphold male honor while simultaneously showing that exposing female chastity and virtue made these possessed women the target of other men and should thus not be brought to light else the woman's virtue would be under threat. The patriarchy needed female chastity in order to perpetuate male honor and power yet female chastity should be kept secret to keep men's property safe from violation. *The Rape of Lucrece* offers a solution to this dilemma under patriarchy when Lucrece takes her own life. Her death ends up both motivating the founding of Rome and helps her to reclaim her virtue by bleeding out the impurities Tarquin's rape deposited within her body. Catty highlights that Lucrece is written as a martyr throughout the poem about her rape, sacrifice, and founding of Rome (17).

Sarah Carter, in her book *Ovidian Myth and Sexual Deviance in Early Modern British Literature*, not only has a chapter titled "'Chastity's first martyr': Lucrece," but also argues that Lucrece and her rape act as "stock signifier[s]" widely used in early modern theater as "an exemplar of chastity" (53-4). Her martyrdom, like her rape, is a construct of the patriarchy and is there to fulfill male ideals about chastity and purity. Deborah Burks sees Lucrece as "the model wife who took her own life rather than allow any doubt that her loyalty and her [potential] children belonged solely to her husband" (146). After her rape, Lucrece bids her maid to get her paper and pens a letter to her

husband in which she labels herself in both patriarchal and economic terms, calling her husband “worthy” (1303) and herself “unworthy” (1304) – as if all of her value as a person and as a piece of her husband’s property has been lost to her upon her rape.

Upon speaking of her rape, she calls her tongue a “poor instrument” yet again using value-laden language to bring to light her loss of worth as a wife after her rape (1464). Lucrece, living under patriarchy – a system in which her only measurable value is as a chaste wife, has internalized its value system: her chastity was her most valuable asset to her husband, and with its loss, she saw herself as having little value left. Backed by her passionate accusations of Tarquin as her rapist, the last valuable thing Lucrece has under this patriarchy is her life and she knows, as a violated woman, as a woman who has just admitted publicly to violation, that the last honorable act available to her to prove both her sincerity and that she can still serve this patriarchal order and her husband is through her death. *The Rape of Lucrece* is an example of extreme patriarchy because of the illustration of internalized power structures and value systems: both women in the poem, Lucrece and her maid, are there to serve – the maid serves Lucrece, but Lucrece serves her husband and the patriarchy, giving her life to uphold patriarchal security and notions of honor.

There were challenges to the patriarchy in the early modern period and anxieties around its power structure that Shakespeare captured in *Titus Andronicus* through the rape of Lavinia as well as the character of Tamora and Arron’s cuckolding of Saturninus. While I argue that the patriarchy in *The Rape of Lucrece* is extreme because of Lucrece’s internalization of value-laden language when it comes to her own body, I would contest

such a reading of the dominance of patriarchy in *Titus Andronicus*. The character of Tamora undermines male authority within the play, acting both as Titus's nemesis as well as the usurper of her husband Saturninus's authority. Within the play, Titus and Saturninus are the two reigning patriarchs (Bott 205); Titus is first introduced as a fierce military general who has the hearts of the Roman public for his military victories and sacrifices of sons in the heat of battle and Saturninus is the Emperor of Rome, selected not by the people nor by his station as the eldest son of the last emperor, but is granted the position by Titus's refusal to take on the position for himself and his subsequent support of Saturninus as ruler. Tamora, a captured goth queen that has not only been conquered by Titus but also has her eldest son killed by Titus after the goth captives were brought to Rome, immediately recognizes the patriarchal power structures in Rome. This could very well be read as an allusion to Boudica and the rebellion and rape of her daughters.

In Samantha Fr nee-Hutchins work "*Boudica's Odyssey in Early Modern England*," she not only highlights that an early modern audience would have been familiar with Boudica's story, but that she was readily used as a counterexample of the ideal of womanhood which expected women to be a "docile, obedient daughter or wife" as her story openly displayed "a powerful, decisive and intelligent woman...a liberated widow and avenging mother" (5). In Tamora's very first speech on stage in Act I scene i, she appeals to Titus as a "Gracious conqueror" (104), highlights Titus as "Victorious" (105), identifies herself as a "captive to thee and to thy Roman yoke" (111), and asks for her first son to be spared his fate through an appeal to "country" (112), "king" (114), and

“commonweal[th]” (114). These appeals to both military prowess and state structures fail for Tamora and her eldest son is taken by Titus’s sons and the first of many bloody murders takes place upon the stage. Being unable to exercise power enough to save her son’s life under the current order in Rome, Tamora instead resituates herself as a challenge to the patriarchal structures of the state through the manipulations of her new husband and new emperor of Rome, Saturninus, in order to have her revenge upon Rome’s ultimate patriarch within the play: Titus.

With her marriage to one figurehead of state patriarchal power in Rome taking place in Act I scene i of *Titus Andronicus*, she makes her intentions to control Saturninus clear both to him and the audience from the very start when she states:

My lord, be ruled by me; be won at last.

Dissemble all your griefs and discontents.

You are but newly planted in your throne.

[...]

I’ll find a day to massacre them [the Androinci] all

And raze their faction and their family,

The cruel father and his traitorous sons,

To whom I sued for my dear son’s life,

And make them know what ‘tis to let a queen

Kneel in the streets and beg for grace in vain (450-464).

Saturninus indeed yields to Tamora, proving himself to be a weak male figure that is ruled not by his masculinity but by his unchaste wife. Tamora, who I would argue is the

play's principal villain, not only rules over her husband but usurps any kind of authority a man is granted over a woman under the patriarchy of the early modern period by keeping her lover, the Moor Aaron, in her bed and baring Aaron's child. This is not only an interruption of Saturninus's lineage through Tamora's bearing of an illegitimate interracial heir, but a violation of his property since Tamora is his wife. Tamora, as Karen Robertson highlights in her contribution to *Representing Rape in Medieval and Early Modern Literature*, is a "monstrous feminine [character], the figure of horror that justifies masculine control of state systems" (220). Indeed, it is not Titus, nor Saturninus, that puts Lavinia's rape into play on the stage; it is an order from Tamora towards her two remaining sons, under the watchful eye of her lover Aaron, that Lavinia's rape takes place in an act of vengeance upon the Andronicus household.

Power in the hands of women within *Titus Andronicus* not only makes a monarch into a cuckold but is also a threat to the bodies of other women in the name of revenge upon the men of their household. The responsibility for Lavinia's rape is orchestrated by an openly unchaste woman upon the stage and, her lover, Aaron, a Moor, is the one who helps to frame the rape within the play. Returning to Kyle Grady's work in "Emphasis and Elision: Early Modern English Approaches to Racial Mixing and their Afterlives" mixed-race children on the early modern stage are tied to white anxieties about white women's virtues (596). Tamora and Aaron's mixed race child, as well as the horrific rape they orchestrate, compounds this racially driven anxiety: it's not just Saturninus's property (wife) that is being violated (consensually) legally by the Moor and producing offspring, their union is also causing other men's property to be devalued (raped). This

tangled web of power dynamics and racial anxieties illustrates how the play explores the intersections of race, sex, and property, highlighting the complex ways in which these issues intersect and intertwine in the early modern context.

Titus Andronicus is one of Shakespeare's bloodiest plays as well as one of his earliest tragedies – one that puts the usurping of male authority and the undermining of male power structures as the rationale behind the gore on stage. Writers like Shakespeare in the early modern period “linked women’s sexual continence and their submission to the authority of their fathers and husbands not only to the well-ordering of family life, but to the preservation of social order” (Burks 145) and any violation of that authoritative order was a disease upon the honor of the family as well as the social fabric that made up society. Bott’s work looks at the notion of rape and the violation of women’s bodies as “analogous to attitudes towards disease or diseased tissue – the damaged body part must be excised in order to prevent further harm to the whole” (190).

In *The Rape of Lucrece*, Lucrece excises herself through her suicide and subsequently has her body purified upon death as she has two rivers of blood flowing from her breast from her fatal wound: one stream of her unviolated chaste blood and one stream that contains Tarquin’s taint. I think it’s important to note here that the “tainted” blood is “black” and “watery” whereas Lucrece’s “blood untainted still doth red abide,/Blushing at what is so putrified” (lines 1746-50). While Lucrece and Tarquin are both coded as Roman and, therefore, as white within the context of the poem, Tarquin’s rape of Lucrece left a black mark within her body and within her blood – a mark that her purity and goodness are able to overcome by her suicide which was seen as a self-

inflicted honor killing to an early modern audience. Even when a work is not overtly racially coded, this affiliation between Blackness and a despicable act like rape can and should be read as anti-Blackness in the early modern period.

Lavinia, lacking the hands to take her own life or a tongue to make moving speeches to identify her rapists, cannot take the same actions as Lucrece to remove herself as a contagion to the body of her family's honor. When Tamora sets Lavinia's rape into motion, Lavinia pleads for death instead because she "understands her function as a chaste woman in the patriarchy...she voices that the ideological tenant that rape is worse than death, and murder an act of mercy" (Bott 200). Instead of murder at the hands of Tamora or her sons, instead of Lavinia taking her own life, it is the patriarch of her family that must set things right and end Lavinia's life in order to save Andronicus honor and restore order to Rome. On stage, a weak patriarchy manifests in a bloodbath, playing into societal fears of weak masculinity of the era – a fear brought about by the transition from feudalism to capitalism. Queen Elizabeth I was also discussed as a source of male anxiety during the period. She not only refused to wed and produce an heir for the throne, famously declaring herself married to England, she was also a feminine figure occupying a patriarchal space as the ruler of England. Breitenberg highlights this threat:

Older status distinctions were under siege, including the increasing wealth and social mobility of mercantile and professional classes and, beginning in 1603, James's liberal conferring of new titles...women's marriages and sexuality served to ensure endogamous marriage and to symbolize class purity...Older status distinctions were under siege, including the increasing wealth and social mobility

of mercantile and professional classes and, beginning in 1603, James's liberal conferring of new titles...women's marriages and sexuality served to ensure endogamous marriage and to symbolize class purity (108-10).

The unstable aristocratic class, destabilized by the rising incomes of the mercantile and professional capitalist classes as well as the falling of feudal structures of land lordship and titles from the crown as a means of wealth and income, held tightly onto the idea of inheritance and bloodlines which made this anxiety over women's fidelity, chastity, and sexuality increase. Instead of capitalism being a threat on *Titus Andronicus*'s stage, Tamora takes over as a threat to order and acts as a destabilizing force in Roman society much the way capitalism threatened the aristocratic state in early modern society.

This destabilization of the state is represented in *Titus Andronicus* through the horrific dismembering of Lavinia's body from her hands being cut off to her tongue being cut out (Bott 192). These physical manifestations of social anxiety come in the play in Act II scene iv and come in the form of possibly one of the strangest stage directions included in Shakespeare's original folio:

Enter the Empress' sons, with Lavinia, her hands cut off, and her tongue cut out, and ravished.

As a reader, this stage direction is striking but to a viewer of the play, the command of rape by Tamora in Act II scene iii where she tells her sons to "use [Lavinia] as you will" and that "the worse [they use] her, the better loved of me" (906-7) and Lavinia's return to the stage in the next scene, mutilated, implies that the act has been done. These horrific alterations to Lavinia's body are manifest for the world to see: even without knowing of

Lavinia's rape, her uncle, brothers, and father mourn for the violation of her body and the loss of her ability to communicate. In Marcus's speech in Act II scene iv, where he is the first to encounter Lavinia after she is raped, he takes an index of her visible wounds. The first thing he notices is what is lacking; in line 12, he asks "where is your husband?" followed by a question of:

What stern ungentle hands

Hath lopped and hewed and made thy body bare

Of her two branches, those sweet ornaments

Whose circling shadows kings have sought to sleep in (lines 16-20).

After his inspection of her hands, and multiple references to the fact that Lavinia is silent, Marcus notices "a crimson river of warm blood" (line 22) that "like to a bubbling fountain stirred with wind,/Doth rise and fall between thy rosèd lips" (lines 23-4). What is unseen as well as unseeable is the act of rape itself, happening offstage, yet it is included in the list of alterations to Lavinia's body when she retakes the stage when Marcus claims that, after indexing her bloody lips, that he was "sure some Tereus hath deflowered thee" (line 26) as if her chastity was an appendage as apparent as the bloody stumps where her hands once were or her blood-soaked maw where her tongue once resided.

The idea that female chastity was something visible plays into an anxiety about lineage, legitimacy, whiteness, and inheritance in the early modern period. Chastity and female honor of the period were constructed into three distinct categories: maid (or virgin), wife, or widow (Bott 190). Falling outside of these sexual constructs of women's

identity made one a fallen woman and destroyed her claim as well as her family's claim to honor until the woman's taint was rectified. As Bott suggests through her medical analogy for rape, raped women were to remove their taint as Lucrece did to herself or Titus did to Lavinia: through the death of the raped woman. Within the play itself, Saturninus endorses this interpretation of female violation staining family and male honor; when Titus recaps the story of Virginius and Virginia (one of the stories which *Titus Andronicus* is based upon) to Saturninus and asks if Virginius was right to kill his daughter "because she was enforced, stained, and deflowered" (V.iii.38), Saturninus replies "it was" (39) and offers the rationale that "the girl should not survive her shame/and by her presence still renew [her father's] sorrows" (41-2). Historically, looking at Barbara Baines's work in the period, there was another alternative for raped women: for the women's families to convince the rapist to marry the woman, but this only works if both the rapists and the raped are able to wed and not tied to others (70). But there is a third option for raped women of the period that is not manifest in Shakespeare's works on stage but was a fear that early modern affluent men held onto: that women could be violated and keep their lack of honor secret from their fathers and husbands.

Both Lucrece and Lavinia embody a form of relief for this particular point of male anxiety of the period for both, even though it leads to their deaths, uphold the notion of female honor on stage and tell the men in their lives of their violation. Lucrece and Lavinia were both married women, which means that, despite the stage directions in *Titus Andronicus*, neither woman were virgins nor would show a loss of maidenhead after their

rape for their maidenheads were taken by their husbands. Without the physical markers of Lavinia's hands being cut off or her tongue being cut out, she could have stayed silent about her violation and her father and brothers wouldn't have been the wiser. Likewise, Lucrece's rape had no witnesses outside of her rapist Tarquin yet she calls her maid, writes a letter alluding to her sorrow, and declares her rape to the future state of Rome and calls for action against her rapist before her suicide. It is possible that both women could show physical signs of tearing and vaginal bleeding if they were real women being violated and not characters on the page, but many women regularly bleed and without a confession from the violated women themselves of their violation, husbands and fathers could be suspicious but would have no affirmation of the violation of female chastity and honor through their raped bodies. Affluent women in text were shown to uphold their honor even after the violation of their chastity against their will. The upholding of women's honor translates into male honor being restored through the honesty and eventual deaths of the raped women's bodies within these texts. The upholding of male honor through women's bodies and women's sacrifice is the ultimate ideal of early modern patriarchy that manifests in *The Rape of Lucrece* and *Titus Andronicus*.

Noli me Tangere, For Ravished I Am

With the ideals of patriarchy in place and permeating early modern society as well as the early construction of the capitalist system taking place in the era, ideological constructs of the rapable body in the period began to manifest both within textual works like Shakespeare's plays and within the legal framework of early modern England. While

The Rape of Lucrece is a poem and *Titus Andronicus* are a play, the construction of their raped female characters in both works offer a vivid picture of what constituted a rapable body in early modern society. On the surface, Lucrece and Lavinia share some obvious traits: they are women, they are married and take their chastity and family honor seriously, they are resistant to their violation, they are determined to shed light on the rape of their bodies, they are treated like property by the men within their lives, they are affluent women in Roman society,¹³ and they are Roman – a lineage the English identified with and identified as white. This construction of the rapable body: one that is gendered female, chaste and honorable, resistant to violation, affluent, and white is an unfortunate construct that leaves many actual raped bodies outside of the socially acceptable notion of who is able to be raped. This doesn't stop rapes on bodies that don't fit this construct from happening; rather, this keeps raped bodies that do not fit the ideological construct of rape from being able to obtain social support or legal justice in early modern courts and, as I argue, today in cases like Cyntoia Brown's. Shakespeare's construction of rape on the stage, much like I argue about *Law & Order* above, hides the realities of the legal system of his time.

Jocelyn Catty highlights this ideological construct of rape as an ideologically feminized construct that extends not just to “the rape victim [who] is always symbolically female, even in cases of male rape” but also states that “the argument can be extended to allegory, in which a ‘raped’ country, for instance, is by definition female”

¹³ Which means that, legally, they are considered property and if they are violated, their husbands could sue in court. Roman slaves would not have the same legal protections despite also being considered property.

(21). Quay argues that this construction of the rapable body as feminine is completely “social, not biological” because “gender categories [are] socially produced” and that understanding the rapable body as a social construct “shifts the focus to how woman is constructed as able, even meant, to be violated” rather than just assuming it’s a natural part of being gendered female (3-4). Tarquin’s desires for Lucrece, for instance, do not stem from her biological body: he does not lust after her secondary biological sexual characteristics of her breasts nor her first sexual biological characteristics of her labia or vaginal opening, but rather the ideological construction of her chastity and virtue that Collatine describes that drive Tarquin’s lust. Tarquin lusts to violate what Collatine holds dear: the honor and purity of Lucrece. Honor and purity are again social constructs of the early modern era used to assign worth to male ownership of women and thereby women’s reproduction. While Tarquin rapes Lucrece’s body, unlike Lavinia, she shows no physical signs of this violation until she kills herself at the end of the poem and her blood runs in two streams: Lucrece’s violation isn’t something that can be seen upon her body, nor is her violation driven by her physical body; rather, it is the social construct of her chastity and the desire to obtain it that is both lusted after and violated within the poem which Shakespeare manifests in the bleeding of Tarquin’s taint from Lucrece’s body upon her death.

Before their respective violations, both Lucrece and Lavinia are chaste and loyal women despite Lavinia’s initial resistance to her father’s pairing of her with the would-be (at the time) emperor of Rome, Saturninus. While Titus does not wish to rule the Roman state and steps down to prop Saturninus up as emperor, the first thing Saturninus asks of

Titus is the hand of Lavinia – which Titus gladly gives only to find resistance from both his daughter Lavinia and his sons. It's important to note here that Titus was away at war and in his absence, the head of the patriarchy in the Andronicus household fell to Lavinia's uncle Marcus and brothers. While both Marcus and Lavinia's brothers defend her betrothal to and preference to marry Bassianus over Saturninus, Titus takes some convincing from the other patriarchs of his family but eventually comes to terms and accepts Lavinia's marriage to Bassianus and Saturninus's subsequent decision to marry Tamora. Further, because of Lavinia's betrothal to Bassianus in Titus's absence, her chastity and loyalty would be divided to both her Andronicus household and to the household of her future husband.

Chastity, as a concept in the early modern era, had more to do with obedience than outright virginity: women were to be obedient first to their fathers, which included their virginity staying intact for their future husbands. After their betrothal and marriage, however, this concept of chastity was redefined and virginity became sexual loyalty to one's husband and to fulfill the need for an heir to inherit. Lavinia's betrothal was known by the men of her household who weren't away at war – and approved. Before Titus's return to Rome, her chastity was intact and her honor was unquestioned. Despite her resistance to marry Saturninus at the will of her father Titus, she is still an honorable woman onstage and one that is loyal to both her household and her future husband by refusing to marry Saturninus and instead to honor her agreement to marry Bassianus.

The defense of female chastity, loyalty, and honor in rape cases in early modern courts became an extremely important fixture of the rape cases. Legally, women had no

standing to even bring a case to court (though they could have cases brought against them by men) and had to arrange a hearing through the violation of property laws through their fathers or husbands to be able to bring a rape case to court (Burks 158). If a woman was found morally deficient in any way by the courts even after finding standing through a male relative, she could be denied the ability to bring her case to court. If Lavinia's case were to be brought to a legal court rather than acted out in Roman royal court, she could be denied legal standing because of the appearance of violating her father's wishes despite upholding the deal made by the temporary patriarch of her household in his absence at war. Yet again, the early modern construct of a woman as chaste, silent, and obedient appears as if it were Cerberus itself: the same ideological construct that made Othello think that Desdemona was disloyal and leads to her demise at his hands places Lavinia in danger. This association is further complicated as Othello, the Moor of Venice, and his jealousy are what cause Desdemona's death and Aaron, also a Moor, helps to plan Lavinia's rape at the behest of his lover, Tamora.

But on stage we are given, albeit filled with gore and resulting in the death of the raped Lavinia, "justice and restitution – of property and social order" but, as Burks emphasizes through multiple legal cases of the early modern era "in reality, things were not so simple" (176). Baines highlights that rarity of rapes coming to courts in the early modern period; even while the period was moving towards separating out ravishment laws which conflated kidnapping and rape (83), women were still considered property and had to prove their chastity and honor before being granted a day in court if they had a male in their life willing to risk his honor in order to give her legal standing. Even in the

rare case that a rape was brought to court for women outside of the aristocracy or children (defined as, depending on the time period, under 12 from 1275 under common law until King James's reign in which the legal age of consent became 10 years of age) (Burks 158), the woman's honor was heavily questioned and became the thing of gossip for early modern society well into the 1800s.

In the case of "The arraignment and acquittal of Sir Edward Mosely, baronet," Anne Swinnerton became just that: a woman whose honor was questioned by her husband even after he brought her to court for a legal hearing, and one that gossip chapbooks focusing on true crime wrote about from "1676...[to] the mid-eighteenth century" (MacMillan 1). In her own husband's testimony in the case recorded in 1647, her violation is described as violent:

Coming home to my Chamber, about six of the clock in April 1647, I found Sir Edward Mosely came rushing out of my Chamber, and I entering saw my wife throwne upon the ground; with all her cloathes torne, the Bed-cloathes torne and hanging halfe way upon the ground, my Wife crying and wriging her hands, with her clothes all torne off her head, her wrist sprained, Sir Edward Mosely having throwne her violently upon the ground, where upon (seeing her in this condition) I asked her what was the matter, shee said Sir Edward Mosely had Ravished her (2-3).

Sir Mosely was not found guilty, however, and he entered in testimony stating that Anne was his mistress and that their sexual liaison described by her husband as violent, leaving her with a broken wrist, was consensual. As Baines highlights in her work, the history of

rape is the history of the same old story from rapists: she wanted it rough and it was consensual (73). In one of the chapbooks passed around at the time by an anonymous reporter in London, reduces Master Swinnerton's testimony and defense of his wife, the first testimony in the court case, to later sections of the account and instead opens with Sir Mosely having scandalous information and backers to say that Anne was his mistress, further stating that Sir Mosely claimed to have "twenty more" men that "lawfully do [believe] it could not possibly be a rape, having had intelligence of some former passages in it" (MacMillan 127). The record also emphasized the fact that Master Swinnerton was, as a lawyer of the court, representing his own wife in the case and giving testimony as he couldn't find another man who would grant her standing and defend Anne in court (MacMillan 126). The violence of the exchange, as witnessed by someone part of the professional, rising class of the period, still didn't hold weight in court against a baronet and the words of his friends. Honor, as a concept, was tied not just to the female body but to a class of bodies: an affluent man like Sir Mosely would never find justice in court for violating a woman's body below his class standing for the mercantile and professional classes didn't hold the same sway over the courts as affluent bloodlines and noble titles did.

Not only are the "women on stage that are targets of rape in the period...conventionally aristocratic or noble" (Catty 95), but they are also the vast majority of women being depicted as rapable in early modern culture with "eighty references [to rape] amongst gentry [women] and only two among non-gentry [women]...on public stage...[between] 1611-1620...and those numbers remain fairly

stable” (Breitenberg 104). Women and men of the lower class were rarely shown in depictions of rape that did not feature an aristocratic woman because they couldn’t afford to go to court. Court cases like “The arraignment and acquittal of Sir Edward Mosely, baronet,” became a focal point for gossip within English society not just because of the possible scandal but because it was rare for non-aristocratic women to have their rapes brought to court (Baines 72). The construct of the rapable body, both on stage and in court during the period, pushed the narrative that women’s bodies only mattered in regards to their ability to generate offspring that had a legitimate claim to aristocratic inheritance; outside of propertied classes, wherein women were also treated as a piece of property where their ability to procreate was commodified, a woman’s body was not valued and therefore not rapable. The reason affluent or aristocratic women are the target of cultural productions of rape both in poems and in plays aids in the ideological construction of the rapable body as female, chaste, affluent, and, as will be expanded upon shortly, white.

While the scenes depicting Lucrece’s rape and ultimate suicide within the poem illustrate instances of the extreme patriarchic structures at work within this piece, there are other, more subtle (at least on the surface) moments that are laced with patriarchal rape ideology as well. One of the foremost constructs of rape ideology in the early modern period I hope to bring to light in this section is the idea of a man’s desire, in this case, Tarquin’s, overpowering the wishes or consent of his object of desire, Lucrece. As Federici argues in her book *Caliban and the Witch*, “women became...the substitute for

the land lost to the enclosures" meaning that in the early capitalist system (97), women's bodies and procreative rights became property for men to buy, sell, trade, and covet.

As argued earlier in this chapter, it is not Lucrece that first raises desire in Tarquin but Lucrece's husband Collatine's words that set Tarquin down his path of rape. Collatine was treating Lucrece as a piece of property – one that he “unwisely...praised” publicly exposing her “pure aspects” which first made Tarquin dream of Lucrece and her chasteness as “priceless wealth” that could (Stanza 2-3), like other commodified goods, be stolen. By rendering Lucrece as a piece of property that could be debased rather than an autonomous being capable of giving consent, the poem both figuratively and literally mutes Lucrece and renders her unable to use any form of rhetoric to stop Tarquin's advances even before she can cry out a reply to Tarquin's declaration of intent. Through a close reading of Stanzas 78 of *The Rape of Lucrece*, a narrative moment between Tarquin's declaration of intent to rape Lucrece after sneaking into her bed chamber and Lucrece's reply, this section of my argument hopes to illustrate just how deep these patriarchal structures go within the poem.

Here with a cockatrice' dead-killing eye
He rouseth up himself and makes a pause;
White she, the picture of pure piety,
Like a white hind under the gripe's sharp claw,
Pleads, in a wilderness where are no laws,
To the rough beast that knows no gentle right,
Nor aught obeys but his foul appetite. (Lines 540-546)

The transition from Tarquin's declaration of rape quickly shifts from the realm of the verbal to the realm of the physical due to, in this stanza, his aroused state being made apparent through the use of "cockatrice" in line 540. The use of a word with "cock" within the line is a purposeful choice by Shakespeare, a writer who has, in other of his works, readily embraced double entendre and body humor in the form of puns based on word choice. For example, in his play *Love's Labour's Lost*, there is an entire scene (Act V scene I) of butt jokes that are double entendre from the character of Don de Armado with lines such as "the posterior of the day" and "with my excrement" being used to make Don de Armado a clown to be laughed at, not with, within this scene (lines 94 and 108). Another instance of Shakespeare's base body humor comes in Sonnet 20 where Shakespeare writes that "Nature...fell a-doting" upon the young man being addressed within the poems and because of this doting, "prick'd" the young man "out for women's pleasure" or, to put it in unpoetic terms, chose to make him male by giving him a prick. To really drive this point of something extra being added, Sonnet 20 is written in iambic pentameter but each line has an extra beat (not a complete foot), essentially giving the entire poem a metaphorical prick much like nature gave the youth being addressed in this poem an actual prick. The choice of "cockatrice" and, in the fuller context of the line "a cockatrice' dead-killing eye," is intended to bring forth imagery related to an aroused, and fear-inducing, cock.

Further, cockatrice, according to the *OED*, is a "mythical reptile with a lethal gaze or breath, commonly said to be hatched by a serpent (or toad) from the egg of a cockerel or rooster." The fact that cockatrice within the poem has its singular "dead-killing" eye

fixed upon Lucrece further deepens the way a reader is supposed to interpret this scene as one where Lucrece is under immediate, and deadly, threat. The *OED* also highlights that later uses of cockatrice have more to do with “a mythical monster combining, or resulting from the combination of, a cockerel or rooster and a serpent (or, occasionally, another animal).” Coupling – or an unholy union, is also part of the threat to Lucrece and her chastity here. The word choice of cockatrice then is playing not only with Tarquin’s aroused state but the danger Lucrece is in from an unholy union.

This idea of an unholy union impregnating Lucrece is made apparent upon her suicide, where, from a self-inflicted stab wound in her bloody breasts, two streams of blood form: one made up of her fair and pure red blood and one filled with Tarquin’s black taint. Despite it being Tarquin’s aroused penis being metaphorically described as the cockatrice within the poem, the death stare coming from his cockatrice is fixed on Lucrece and she would be the one that would carry his unholy taint after Tarquin completes his declared task of rape. This would make the cockatrice not just a metaphor for Tarquin’s aroused state, but, within the context of “cockatrice’ dead-killing eye,” a metonym for the perilous and ultimately deadly situation Lucrece is put into: both the cockatrice’s stare can kill, as can Tarquin’s aroused state. The mythical perils that the cockatrice brought with it were Roman in origin, much like Lucrece and Tarquin’s nonconsensual union act as the motivation to found Rome. Likewise, this poem depicting the founding of Rome clearly equates what it depicts as an unholy union through a mythical beast as one associated with the black taint that Tarquin leaves in Lucrece’s body after he rapes her.

The *OED* highlights that the Latin root “calatric-” and “calatrix” used within cockatrice also means “person who tramples upon” or “to tread.” The full meaning of this root might not have been well known to Shakespeare, but the parallel between Tarquin’s earlier silent stalking, or treading, into Lucrece’s bed chamber to commit a rape, or (and I am aware that this is somewhat of a stretch but I’m going to go there anyway) trample upon her body. While the violation or rape can take place off stage or off the page, the effect upon the woman’s body must be made somehow apparent and cannot remain hidden. Through the meter of the first five-footed line (choriamb-iamb-spondee-iamb), there is a double emphasis within the word “cockatrice” where “cock” and “trice” come in stressed quick succession with only a minor in unstressed “a” standing between the two syllables or phonemes.

Likewise, “dead-kill” finds itself stressed with “-ing eye” falling back into the pattern of the iamb which the next two lines continue to execute perfectly. The word choice, metaphor, metonym, etymology, and now meter found within line 540 are meant to illicit the image of danger on multiple fronts in relation to Tarquin’s trampling of her bedchamber and his arousal: her imminent rape, the offspring that might occur from it, and a taint on Lucrece’s virtue upon Tarquin’s completion of the act. This almost acts as an anti-blazon, a poetic convention that Nancy Vickers likens to literarily a way to “see women who are not to be seen,” and, through having an exaggerated inventory taken of their body, “are torn to bits” (269). This inventory isn’t of a woman’s features, but is rather an inventory and exaggeration of what’s driving Tarquin’s lust – his cock.

Indeed, with the rhyming of “eye” at the end of line 540 with “piety” found at the end of line 542, Shakespeare is once again drawing a reader’s attention to the juxtaposition happening between the two figures in the poem – one who is on the hunt and one who is hunted, one that lacks morality and one that is virtuous, and one that is a threat and one that is in jeopardy of being “torn to bits” (269). There are multiple instances of hunt imagery coming up in this stanza within *The Rape of Lucrece* as well with word choices like “hind,” “wilderness,” and “beast” accompanied by phrases like “under the gripe’s sharp claws,” “a wilderness where are no laws,” and “the rough beast that knows no gentle right.” This imagery of the hunt in relation to sexual conquest was nothing new within the early modern period and early sonneteers like Sir Thomas Wyatt (1503-1542), when Englishing (an act separate from but similar to translating) Francesco Petrarch’s Italian sonnets, would often employ hunt metaphors. With the imagery of the “white hind” being specifically invoked within this poem, most early modern readers would be quick to recall Wyatt’s sonnet “Whoso List to Hunt” and compare Lucrece’s situation to that of the other hunted hind appearing in the earlier work of a well-known poet:

Whoso list to hung, I know where is an hind,

But as for me, *helas*, I may no more.

The vain travail hath wearied me so sore,

I am of them that farthest cometh behind.

Yet may I by no means my wearied mind

Draw from the deer, but as she feelth afore

Fainting I follow. I leave off therefore
Sithens in a net I seek to hold the wind.
Who list her hunt, I put him out of doubt,
As well as I may spend his time in vain.
And graven with diamonds in letters plain
There is written, her fair neck round about:
Noli me tangere, for Caesar's I am,
And wild for to hold, though I seem tame.

“Whoso Lists to Hunt” has a weary hunter as the speaker of the sonnet who has been chasing a deer, that, once caught, has a Latin phrase “graven with diamonds in letters plain” written on “her fair neck:” “*Noli me tangere*, for Caesar's I am,/And wild for to hold, though I seem tame.” The Latin here translates to “touch me not.” Because of both the chase and the warning, the speaker of the sonnet has abandoned the hunt, leaving the hind to be wild, free, and the property of another man, Caesar. It's important to note here that the deer is not just the property of another man, but is coded as “fair” or white. As touched on in my previous chapter, Kim Hall, in her work *Things of Darkeness: Economies of Race and Gender in Early Modern England* states that the early modern audience would associate the word fair with white, but specifically a “white, European” that is situated as “being a dichotomy to [B]lack” (3). Both Lavinia and Lucrece are being coded as white throughout their rapes and, for Lavinia, the person who helped orchestrate her rape, Aaron, is coded as a Moor and black and, for Lucrece, Tarquin leaves a black watery taint within her body after her rape. It's no accident that at the time England was

forming its racial identity of whiteness in direct contrast to Blackness that both an orchestrator of rape and a rapist are being affiliated with Blackness.

Turning back to Federici, this idea of a deer as property tied to a man, in the case of Wyatt's poem Caesar's property through the label on the collar and in the case of Shakespeare's poem Collatine's property through marriage, entered into the 16th century much in the same way women were used as substitutes for the land that had been enclosed: through the loss of the commons. Where once there were open forests and common lands for villagers to forage and hunt on, "the fencing off of the commons" closed off "customary rights" to "large tracks of land" where "deer parks" were created for the wealthy to own and hunt on (69-70). To hunt for a deer within one of these deer parks was to violate the property laws of another man from the aristocracy. Wyatt's hunter, I would argue, recognizes this change in enclosure laws and, once seeing that the deer is property and not wild, abandons his hunt. Tarquin, unlike the speaker in Wyatt's poem, has no such thoughts of abandonment. The two men, while both hunting women for sexual conquest, have differing moral codes and levels of respect for other, more affluent men's property. The tactile is invoked within the phrase "under the gripe's sharp claw" within Shakespeare's work which directly contrast the Latin found within Wyatt's poem "*Noli me tangere.*" While Wyatt's hunter does not touch the hind belonging to Caesar, Tarquin's plan is to not just touch, but to fully penetrate Lucrece. The word choice of "sharp" invokes not just images of a beast's claw holding Lucrece down but also images of stabbing, penetration, and pain – or, in other words, images associated with the act of rape. This reading is further reinforced through the word choice of "gripe"

which, in its first noun form according to the *OED*, is “the action of griping, clutching, grasping or seizing tenaciously, *esp.* with the hands, arms, claws, and the like” further noting that the phrase “to come to gripes” means “to come to close quarters *with.*” This means that “gripe’s sharp claw” can be read almost as a double emphasis of a dangerous touch occurring within the poem.

The hunter, in Wyatt’s work is depicted as a mortal man who enjoys the act of hunting, one recounting his story of a white hind he abandoned hunting and why he abandoned this particular chase after learning he cannot touch his prize while the use of “gripe” within *The Rape of Lucrece* suggests something other than Tarquin’s humanity is driving his lust. The *OED* has multiple entries for the word “gripe,” and the third noun form lists “gripe” as another name for “a griffin” or “a vulture.” Similar to my earlier argument centering on the deadly cockatrice, yet another mythical animal associated with danger is being likened to Tarquin and his actions in Lucrece’s bedroom. In Zakiyyah Iman Jackson’s book *Becoming Human: Matter and Meaning in an AntiBlack World*, she highlights that “white anxieties impose images of black men as bestial sexual threat[s]” and while Tarquin is not physically racially coded as Black within the play, his semen or ejaculate into Lucrece’s body is. The lust that is driving Tarquin is inhuman or bestial and, unlike other hunters, he has abandoned his human logic and has given into his base desires of sexual gratification over the property laws of man. The “gripe’s sharp claw,” in my reading of this stanza, is a synecdoche for Tarquin’s whole inhuman body, a body made up of griffin or vulture claws that has a deadly cockatrice between its legs.

Other senses are invoked within the poem outside of the tactile. Throughout Stanza 78 of *The Rape of Lucrece*, bilabial sounds, or sounds formed by the closing of the lips (/p/, /b/, /m/, and /w/), in the form of /p/s, /w/s, and /b/s abound starting with the word choice of “pause” in line 541. Others include the words “while,” “picture,” “pure,” “piety,” “white,” “gripe,” “sharp,” “pleads,” “wilderness,” “where,” “beast,” “obeys,” “but,” and “appetite,” in order of appearance within the poem itself. The sound pattern here of /p/-/w/-/p/-/p/-/p/-/w/-/p/-/p/-/p/-/w/-/w/-/b/-/b/-/b/-/p/ and the nature of bilabial sound production produces the image of someone attempting to speak but at a loss for words and is also indicative of stuttering. In Stanza 82, Shakespeare outright states what the sound pattern in Stanza 78 suggests: that during this “pause” after Tarquin’s declaration of intent to rape, Lucrece is attempting to find words but cannot speak for she twice tries to speak before she can find her voice (lines 566-7).

In Peter Stallybrass’s work “Patriarchal Territories: The Body Enclosed,” he argues that women’s open mouths are seen as wonton when they are speaking and that “silence, the closed mouth, is made a sign of chastity” (126-7). Lucrece’s stuttering, in this context, then, can be seen as a sign of her struggle to maintain her chastity. It is not until she finds her voice that Tarquin continues with his plan, ultimately creating an oxymoron: Lucrece’s silence in this instance would have reinforced the early modern understanding of her chastity but, at the same time, would have left her resistance to Tarquin’s stated desires to rape her unchallenged. Yet by finding her voice and articulating her lack of consent, she was opening her mouth and, to the desire-driven Tarquin, was further tempting him with her wonton display of bilabial movement.

This closing of the mouth and short, stressed, bursts of sounds are first set off by the word “pause” which, as one of its noun form definitions states, means “a break or rest made for effect.” Physically, the speaker of the poem must do the opposite of a rest in order to make the bilabial sound production happen – action, for both lips must come together then part with a burst of air being exhaled in order for these short morphemes to take on sonic meaning. This might make the sound production of the word “pause” seem oxymoronic, but the bilabial sounds act as a sonic pause for they introduce a break in sound within the poem, usually acting as the stressed morpheme within a phoneme followed by a softer, unstressed morpheme before a new phoneme begins. A pause, according to the verb 1 form within the *OED*, doesn’t just mean a break but to “interrupt an action (esp. movement or speech) for a short time; to stop temporarily.” Much like in the sound production of the bilabial within Stanza 78, a pause is only a temporary deemphasis or interruption of the movement happening within the sentence or, indeed, within the rape scene taking place in *The Rape of Lucrece*.

While Lucrece is marked as property through her marriage much like the hind in “Whoso List to Hunt” is marked as property by her diamond studded collar, unlike Wyatt’s hunter who stops, Tarquin only pauses. Before Lucrece begins to speak six stanzas later, the use of the word “pause” here denotes that her fate is already sealed and no actions she can take can stop Tarquin from his course of action. Lucrece’s virtue, from the moment Collatine spoke of it, was made common knowledge and, like the closed-off commons of the past, then became a communal good for other men to desire outside of the chastity of their marriage. Likewise, the rhetorical transformation of Tarquin from

man to mythical lust-driven beast within Stanza 78 fixated on sexual release through rape or, as the poem puts it “the rough beast that knows no gentle right,” further seals Lucrece’s status as a raped body without the power to consent for Tarquin-as-beast removes the ability to appeal to human logic to prevent the heinous act from occurring. Lucrece’s rape was put into motion not through her own actions, but through the actions of her owner, her husband, and Tarquin’s violation of Lucrece isn’t a violation of her consent but rather an act of property crime against Collatine. Not only does Lucrece find herself without words during this pause, but any words she later finds are rendered useless under the constructs of women as property without rights within a patriarchal early modern society.

Women’s Bodies as Sites of Pacification in Early Capitalism

On the page of Shakespeare’s poem as well as on the stage, we see vengeance taking place when in actuality justice for rape was rare in the early capitalist system. Textual representations of rape in the era, much like the television show *Law and Order* functions today, offered an escape from a dim reality: that the rape of women is something happening that is being ignored by the courts, leaving women both without defense against their rapists and without justice after their rape. The spectacle of justice found in entertainment acts as, I would argue, a form of pacification as defined by Mark Neocleous in his work “War as Peace, Peace as Pacification.” Peace within a capitalist system is not an actual peace; rather, peace under capitalism is a constant war for resources and the maintenance of social order. Capitalism functions as both an economic

framework and an ideological structure, sustaining its dominance not only through coercive measures like law enforcement and the inertia of tradition but also through self-imposed regulations, pacification, and deeply ingrained societal ideals and silent cultural assumptions that are instilled in us from early on and reinforced through institutions such as schools and churches. These mechanisms aim to ensure our participation and the perpetuation of the capitalist system.

Here I argue that literature and performance, while coded as catharsis under capitalism, can also be used as a form of ideological pacification. Play (as in play-ing, not as in a play-as-performance), or “every activity which is not necessary either for life or for the individual or for the life process of society is subsumed under playfulness” (Wesling 110), offers an outlet for the social frustration and fetters felt under the exploitation of capitalism (Wesling 109). This is also known as catharsis. In the early modern era, the rape-revenge plots found in *The Rape of Lucrece* as well as *Titus Andronicus* are not reflective of actual rape and court cases of the period but rather function as a form of social relief for alienation men felt during England’s transition from a feudal system to a capitalist system where order was under threat and male anxieties manifested as concerns over property, inheritance, and the ownership of women’s bodies. In *The Wages of Whiteness*, David Roediger argues that whiteness has a hidden wage associated with it. While he articulates this for a 19th century worker I argue that in addition to this wage being “status and privileges conferred by race” (13), entertainment acting as a release for alienation for male anxieties is another such hidden wage of whiteness.

Federici argues that capitalism, emerging from feudal worker struggles during the middle ages, not only represented the least progressive system but was intentionally designed to reinforce the positions of the powerful while reorganizing society for others through the enclosure of common lands, the subjugation of women, and the perpetration of "large-scale violence and enslavement" (6). Federici notably highlights that not only were women's bodies a significant locus of sacrifice during the transition from feudalism to capitalism, but emphasized that "women's bodies, their labor, their sexuality, and reproductive powers [were]...under the control of the state" (170). This "new social-sexual contract" is where "proletarian women became for the male workers the substitute for the land lost to the enclosures...a communal good anyone could appropriate and use at will" (97). While Shakespeare's works do not depict the rape of proletarian women, his audience was a mixture of classes.

By depicting aristocratic women as victims of rape, it first presents that rape is not a class-specific problem to his mixed-class audience and second makes the aristocratic vulgar, or common, and relatable. Federici highlights that proletariat women were exposed while aristocratic women were "privatized by bourgeois men" and weren't "a communal good" where proletariat women's labor became "a natural resource, available to all, no less than the air we breathe or the water we drink" (97). Proletariat women were exposed and treated more like communal property while bourgeois men were able to lock their property, in this case, the women in their lives, away. While aristocratic or bourgeois women were most certainly raped within this time period, they were more likely to get legal justice as their lineage mattered more than that of the proletariat man's

wife, and, moreover, they were less exposed to physical threats due to their status. For better or worse depending upon her circumstance, aristocratic women's isolation left them less exposed than common or proletariat women.

Literary depictions of rape, the honor of affluent white women, the rapists and orchestrators of rape coded as containing a Black taint or themselves being Black, and the validation of white male ego and honor alleviated these misplaced anxieties of system change, solidifying the catharsis of spectacle as an alleviation to alienation – a construct very much in play in our late modern age in the form of popular syndicated shows like *Law and Order: Sexual Victims Unit* but is, as noted by Sarah Projansky in her book *Watching Rape: Film and Television in Postfeminist Culture*, “naturalized in the U.S. life” because of “the ubiquity of representations of rape, even someone who is a moderate consumer of mass media would have difficulty spending a week (possibly even an entire day) without coming across the subject” (2). The stage and page (and today, the screen) provide a façade of peace and order which allowed white men to feel satiated while the rape of women's bodies continued to take place in the period and was widely ignored by the culture as well as the courts. The dissonance between depictions of rape in Shakespeare's writing and actual rape trials in his era demonstrates that his rape-revenge plots are not a reflection of contemporary reality but rather fabricated fantasies.

These fantasies made the bourgeois woman vulgar, gave the men in their lives a chance for vengeance, depicted perfect female fairness, chastity, and obedience to ensure their husband's honor and lineage, illustrated that men could not be cuckolded (willingly or unwillingly on the part of the woman) without some sort of physical visual change that

marked the woman as impure, and reinforced the notion that women were happy to live and die as property. These narratives provided Shakespeare and his audience with a cathartic experience of implied rape, often presented off stage in plays or through poetic works. This catharsis served two purposes: firstly, it solidified socially approved "play" as a means of alleviating the systematic alienation caused by the early stages of capitalism intersecting with patriarchy; and secondly, it functioned as a mechanism of pacification during the early modern shift from feudalism to capitalism where women's bodies and autonomies not only became the new commons but became metaphorical battle grounds during early capitalism. This ideological construction of the rapable body as female, able to procreate, affluent, and white is still a construct that exists in our contemporary late-capitalist society and can be illustrated through the case of Cyntoia Brown. The Tennessee courts fail to recognize her status as a raped woman who was defending herself against her rapist because she does not neatly fit into the same categories as Lucrece and Lavinia when it comes to the rapable body; while Cyntoia is recognized as being gendered female and being old enough to procreate at the time of her rape (she was sixteen years old), she is a poor person of color. Without lineage, inheritance, whiteness, or even family standing, Cyntoia fails to live up to what the patriarchal Tennessee courts construct as a rapable body.

Chapter 4: Anti-Capitalism in the English Renaissance: Christopher Marlowe

While this dissertation is titled *Abolish Shakespeare* and my past chapters have focused on his works, this chapter aims to introduce one of Shakespeare's peers, Christopher Marlowe, into the conversation around early capitalism, abolition, and early modern literature. Shakespeare did not write in isolation, nor did Marlowe. Through offering a varied viewpoint of the past and of capitalism's reception within early modern England, I am trying to argue that Shakespeare's point of view and reinforcement of social, cultural, and ideological constructs that support capitalism were not just viewpoints that are being challenged now or in the recent past but were challenged by his peers as they were being created. While Marlowe, who died in 1593, was not directly writing against Shakespeare, his critiques of capitalism and the macroeconomics of mercantile trade and intrastate commerce directly counters the pro-capitalist concepts found in Shakespeare's mid and later plays.

This could, in part, be because Marlowe died merely five years after England defeated the Spanish Armada at sea (or rather, a storm did) and started to engage in inter-imperial¹⁴ expansion. If Marlowe had lived past the age of 29, perhaps his catalog too would have become less critical of capitalism as time passed and as the system became more stable in England. In addition to macro and microeconomic critiques, analyzing Marlowe's work illustrates capitalism's interdependent relationship with racism; in other

¹⁴ Laura Doyle coined the term inter-imperiality and defines it as "encompass[ing] a political-economic field of several empires operating simultaneously in every period since ancient eras, and in relation to capitalist formations" (3).

words, this chapter highlights that while capitalism and racism are closely connected and reinforce one another, they can, did, and still do operate as separate systems of power. Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*, while critical of capitalism, is subtly yet clearly anti-Black and demonstrates that being anti-capitalist is not always being anti-racist.

Capitalism's transition into power wasn't one that went unnoticed by the people of the early modern world; indeed, Shakespeare's early works were often critical of capitalism and the risk involved in mercantile capitalism but later shifted to be less critical of capitalism as a system.¹⁵ But Shakespeare wasn't the only playwright or poet in the early modern period to begin to critique capitalism and, while Shakespeare's early works critiqued or, at least were wary of capitalism, many of his works embraced the system and many of his plays, as referenced throughout this dissertation, reinforce problematic cultural and ideological constructs that support capitalism as a system of power. According to Daniel Vitkus in "How the 1% Came to Rule the World, Shakespeare, Long-Term Historical Narrative, and the Origins of Capitalism," "in Shakespeare's drama, the onset of capitalism was often identified with transnational entities and exchanges: initially, capitalist practices and effects were blamed on outsiders...[but] the work of Shakespeare and other London playwrights [shifted as] the commercial life of the city grew to become a persistent point of focus" (166-7). While a range of playwrights participated in early modern capitalism and seemed to embrace the economic and ideological paradigms brought on by capitalism, there were others that saw

¹⁵ In *The Many-Headed Hydra*, Linebaugh and Rediker highlight that Shakespeare, as an investor in the Virginia Company, was "ever sensitive to the problems faced by his fellow [mercantile] investors" (30). This concern for investment made its way on stage in plays like *The Merchant of Venice* and *The Tempest*.

capitalism, and capitalist exploitation and expansion, as a negative like Christopher Marlowe. This critique of mercantile capitalism and global consumption is readily apparent in Marlowe's play *The Tragical History of the Life and Death of Doctor Faustus*. While this critique is apparent in both the A and B quartos, this chapter will mainly be using the A text from 1604 quarto because it is most likely the version performed on stage.¹⁶

Written by Christopher Marlowe, *Doctor Faustus* examines the concepts of good and evil, of redemption and damnation, of Christianity and magic, and of early capitalist profit and the cost of profiteering. The period's ties to mercantile capitalism and inter-imperialism, as well as the play's fascination with questions of spirituality and comedic potential, converge in the character of Mephistophilis. The necromancy practiced by Doctor Faustus does not just represent a turn against Christian values but embodies the beliefs that the imperial and mercantile capitalist systems England was partaking in within the Early Modern Era were empty promises that didn't live up to their supposed value. This chapter will present *Doctor Faustus* not just as a critique of early modern capitalism, as Jane Degenhardt does in her article "The Reformation, Inter-imperial World History, and Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*," but presents it specifically as a conservative critique of England's failed forays into inter-imperial relations and an argument against England expanding its proto-colonial exploits in 1588. In the play,

¹⁶ While it was thought by Leo Kirschbaum and W.W. Greg in the 1940s that the 1604, or A-Text of *Doctor Faustus* was an abridged version of the 1616 B-Text and that the B-Text was thereby more complete and more authoritative, modern scholars like Charles Nicholl argue that the A-Text is the closest text to the original staged version of the play, thought to be performed in 1588 according to the British Library, while the B-Text was an edited and expanded version of the A-Text.

temptations that lead to damnation are linked to mercantile capitalism and proto-colonialist exploitation through material objects. While Doctor Faustus dreams of and is tempted by material goods, what he sells his soul for falls short of what is promised to him by the demon Mephistophilis and Doctor Faustus never does collect the materialist goods he longs for in the opening scene.

Doctor Faustus literally gains trivialities and becomes entertainment in lieu of keeping his soul and ends up, despite times within the play where he could repent and regain his immortal soul, with nothing to show for the exchange. The depiction of Doctor Faustus as a fool exposes mercantile capitalism, closely tied with inter-imperial trade between nations and proto-colonial imaginations just taking hold in England, was bad for the nation; not because of the exploitation tied to these (often-times intersecting) systems, but rather because the materialist goods gained from such exchanges were just plain lacking in comparison to the risk involved. First, this chapter will look at the religious overtones of *Doctor Faustus* and how religion and capitalism were undeniably tied together during the early modern period. Second, this chapter will look at historic events surrounding England in 1588-1592 and how the defeat of the Spanish Armada opened England up to not only more naval power, but also more mercantile capitalist possibilities and exploits. Third, this chapter will look at Doctor Faustus's devolution from scholar to fool and how Doctor Faustus's transformation acts not only as a form of entertainment for the play itself but also as a warning against capitalist expansion.

Perform What Desperate Enterprise I Will?: Doctor Faustus The Damned

Doctor Faustus is a play, undeniably, about the corruption and damnation of its hero and I would argue that this damnation isn't just about a mortal soul but rather also about the soul of a nation and the corrupting principles of material accumulation. As Michael Keefer points out in his work, "The A and B Texts of Marlow's *Doctor Faustus* Revisited," the play centers around the question: "can Faustus repent? It would seem that Anglican theologians of the period, if consulted on the matter... would have responded with a unanimous negative" (511). Throughout the course of the play, Doctor Faustus rejects the Good Angel as well as any actions he may take that would lead him down the road to redemption and away from the Evil Angel and hell. In the following excerpt, we see Faustus receive multiple damnations after he terrorizes the character of the Pope:

Evil An.

Go forward *Faustus* in that famous Art.

Good An.

Sweete *Faustus* leaue that execrable Art.

Faust.

Contrition, Prayer, Repentance? what of these?

Good A.

O they are meanes to bring thee vnto heauen.

Euill A.

Rather illusious, fruits of lunacy.

That make them foolish that do vse them most.

Good A.

Swéet *Faustus* think of heauen, & heauenly things.

Euill A.

No *Faustus* thinke of honour and wealth.

Faustus

Wealth? Why the Signory of Embden shall be mine:

When *Mephostophilis* shall stand by me,

What power can hurt me? *Faustus* thou art safe.

Cast no more doubts

And that attempt goes to the Euill Angel, for the second “honour” and “wealth” are mentioned, Doctor Faustus stops thinking “of heauen, & heauenly things” and turns back to material, worldly goods. Doctor Faustus seems to believe, along with the Euill Angel, that he is unsalvageable and that prayer will do little to redeem him early on in the play. The Good Angel seems to be more representative of the idea that there is always a choice to be had and that nothing is predetermined – while Doctor Faustus is corrupted,

salvation is still there but only if Doctor Faustus will take it as offered by the Good Angel and begins to make good choices from this point forward. This scene's exchange strongly reinforces a hybrid reading; while salvation and damnation are being played with within the text, the road to damnation is painted with "honour and wealth" on earth and the purposeful conflation of heavenly and earthly power; Faustus tells himself to "Cast no more doubts" because no "power can hurt" him after he turns his mind to "honour and wealth." In his mind, power and wealth on earth are equal to that of a redeemed soul able to enter heaven.

In 1533 C.E., Queen Elizabeth I's father, King Henry VIII, issued the 1533 Act in Restraint of Appeals which broke England away from the Holy Roman Church and declared the island-nations own sovereignty and reaffirmed the nation's Protestantism (Degenhardt 404). When Queen Elizabeth took the throne in 1558, she both renewed and continued this separation¹⁷ of England from the Holy Roman Church. In retaliation, Pope Pius V famously declared that any catholic assassinating Queen Elizabeth I was not only pre-absolved for the crime but was actually doing a service for God if they successfully killed the queen. Catholic nations like Spain, under the rule of King Philip II, also cut off trade with England which put a strain on the island nation as trade was an important part of its survival (Brotton 3). The early modern period in English history was a time of

¹⁷ After Henry VIII, who first changed England's religion from Catholicism to Protestantism, died in 1547, England continued as a Protestant nation under Edward VI, who took the throne at the age of 9. After Edward VI's death of tuberculosis in 1553, he named Lady Jane Grey as his heir but she was deposed after nine days on the throne and was executed in 1554 when Queen Mary, daughter of Catherine of Aragon and Henry VIII, took over the throne and turned England from Protestant to Catholic once again. Queen Mary I was married to Philip, the King of Spain, to try to secure a Catholic line for England but the marriage did not produce any heirs and when Mary died in 1558, Queen Elizabeth I took the throne and England was once again a Protestant nation.

mercantile or “trade-based” capitalism with “colonial functions” (Collins 457). In order to stave off this Catholic starvation imposed on trade with the English, Queen Elizabeth I took two main economic ventures, highlighted and explored more fully in chapter one of this dissertation: the first was for the crown to lean more heavily into England’s joint-stock companies like the Company of Merchant Adventurers to New Lands¹⁸ (Kitch 122) and the second was to negotiate direct trade with the Ottoman Empire, without going through Venice, for the first time in English history in 1579 (Brotton 1). Because England’s head of the nation was also its lead religious figure and made economic decisions for the nation, religion cannot, and should not, be separated from understanding what mercantile capitalism was doing in this era. And the rationale for this argument becomes apparent throughout *Doctor Faustus* with the close ties between religious and materialistic temptations offered to Doctor Faustus which led to his corruption.

Keefer points out in his work that the play centers around the question: “can Faustus repent? It would seem that Anglican theologians of the period, if consulted on the matter...would have responded with a unanimous negative” (511). In scene vii lines 127-141, we see Faustus receive multiple damnations after he terrorizes the character of the Pope:

Me.

Now *Faustus*, what will you do now? for I can tell you

You’ll be curst with Bell, Booke, and Candle.

¹⁸ The Company of Merchant Adventurers to New Lands was founded in 1551 and was given a charter to monopolize trade between England and Russia in 1555. It’s widely recognized as England’s earliest first joint-stock company.

Faust.

Bell, Booke, and Candle; Candle, Booke, and Bell,

Forward and backward, to curse *Faustus* to hell.

Enter Friars with Bell, Booke, and Candle, for the Dirge

I Frier.

Come brethren, let's about our businesse with good doution.

Cursed be he that stole his holinesse meate from the Table.

Maledicat Domius.

Cursed be he that stroke his holinesse a blow the face.

Maledicat Dominus.

Cursed be he that struke fryer Sandelo a blow on the pate,

Maledicat Dom.

Cursed be he that disturbeth our holy Dirge.

Maledict Dom.

Cursed be he that tooke away his holinesse wine.

Maledicat Dom.

Mephistophilis first suggests that Doctor Faustus's actions within this scene will get him cursed with "Bell, Booke, and Candle," and finally he gets five curses from the Friar who remains on stage after the Pope is removed. While this scene is comedic and presented to

a Protestant audience¹⁹ that had just witnessed Doctor Faustus hit the Pope, steal from his table, smack a friar, and steal the Pope's wine while invisible, Mephistophilis and Doctor Faustus agreeing that Faustus is damned shows how far away from redeemable Doctor Faustus has moved. The third and final Chorus of the play, in which Doctor Faustus has passed, further adds textual evidence to Doctor Faustus's damnation when the Chorus states:

Cut is the branch that might haue growne full straight,
And burned is *Apollo's* Lawrell bough,
That some time grew within this learned man,
Faustus is gone, regard his hellish fall,
Whose fiendfull fortune may exhort the wise
Onely to wonder at vnlawfull things:
Whose deepnesse doth intice such forward wits,
To practise more then heauenly power permits.

Doctor Faustus's ultimate end in the final scene is described as "his hellish fall" because he was "fiendfull" and sought "fortune." I think it's also important to note that within this closing chorus, the argument isn't that all "fortune" is "fiendfull" but rather that the way Doctor Faustus pursued his fortune, that he "practice more then heauenly power permits" is what brought about his downfall. While Doctor Faustus has many chances to repent

¹⁹ The Act of Supremacy of 1558 re-established Protestantism as the national religion of England while the Act of Uniformity of 1559 made the *Book of Common Prayer* from Edward's reign both the common book used in churches and tried to make the religious text more appealing to Catholics and Lutherans in the nation. While there are some debates about people's outward practice of religion versus their inner beliefs at this time, most of the audience in England watching *Doctor Faustus* would have at least appeared to be Protestant.

within the play, he refuses to turn back, giving into temptation in the name of knowledge, power, and material wealth, which is what ultimately created his downfall and corruption moreso than the necromancy itself. Kiessling points out that it's not consorting with demons nor the magic that undoes Doctor Faustus, but "it is pride... that best suits the character of Doctor Faustus as Marlowe conceived it" (211). Doctor Faustus is too proud to repent, too stubborn to see that magic isn't living up to what he thought it would be and ends up in hell because of it. It is Doctor Faustus's pursuit of "his own interests" which "brings disaster upon himself" (Green 275). It is this desire for the impossible goods, ones that trade amongst imperialists or pre-colonialist nations couldn't acquire yet, before colonization and established routes to bring goods back to the mainland on a regular, systematic basis²⁰ that drives Doctor Faustus towards damnation and corruption.

Doctor Faustus is a text with many layers to it: it is representative of the debate of religious determination going on during the Early Modern Period in England, and it expresses a critique of the inter-imperialist system, closely tied to the emerging mercantile capitalism of the era. The Euill Angel character most clearly identifies with the imperialist and capitalist systems to illustrate that the systems would not deliver what they promised; from the beginning of the play, both angel and demon ignite colonial desires in Faustus that drive him towards necromancy. The brutal death and damnation of Doctor Faustus at the end of the play further illustrates that while the wealth promised by inter-imperialism and mercantile capitalism seems tempting, it ultimately wasn't worth

²⁰ In the not-too-distant future for England, sugar becomes a clear example of this. Sugar from India would become a huge commodity for the English Empire once The East India Company joint-stock mercantile company returned to England from its 1601 maiden voyage in 1603, shortly after Queen Elizabeth I's death. But this is all outside of the knowledge Marlowe would have had at the time.

its empty promises and steep price. England had, up until 1588, little luck in the inter-imperial arena outside of establishing a good deal on trade with the Ottoman Empire in 1579, roughly nine years before the Spanish Armada sailed for England. Marlowe was a well-educated English citizen that was aware of religious as well as political debates happening during his era and showed an acute awareness of the growing desire for goods obtain through inter-imperialist commercial interests through Doctor Faustus's desires for material worldly goods. But, from his vantage point in time and untimely death, England had no previous success and little to suggest that England could become a power that dominated the known and unknown world after its defeat of the Spanish Armada.

While there is no established scholarly agreement on the original performance date of *Doctor Faustus*, most scholars agree that it was performed prior to its first publication in 1604 C.E., most likely sometime after 1592 with a 1594 performance on record (though it's not thought to be the first performance), a year before Marlowe's death (British Library). Marlowe could have been writing *Doctor Faustus* in 1588 C.E., the year a long contentious relationship between England and Spain came to a head when the Spanish Armada sailed to England and were defeated through a combination of the English Navy, Dutch privateers, and a storm in the North Atlantic that left over a third of the 130 ships from Spain at the bottom of the sea (Rodger 272). This was not only the first major sea battle won by England, but it also began to establish England as a possible future sea power due, in no small part, to the defeat of their rivals from Spain.

This island-nation which had just bucked off relations with the Holy Roman Church, was under threat from Pope Pius V, and was cut off from trade with Catholic

nations like Spain, had just demonstrated that it could survive and thrive without the help of the European mainland. England had, for example, trade routes forming in 1570 with The Ottoman Empire through the Mediterranean Sea (Brotton 3). Richard Halpern in *Eclipse of Action: Tragedy and Political Economy* argues that:

Protestantism, we might say, confronts the individual with a spiritual mechanism from which he is fundamentally alienated, since he cannot set it into motion by his own efforts...The genius of Marlowe's play, I would argue, consists largely of bringing these forms of material and spiritual alienation—Capital and Protestantism— into contact with each other. *Doctor Faustus* is a play in which action requires an immense apparatus, the capabilities of which far exceed those of any individual, and thus promise to extend human possibility beyond past limits. But at the same time, this mechanism cannot ultimately be controlled by the individual. Its actions are therefore its own, and we are (at best) along for the ride. Faustus's tragic error is to convince himself, for a time, that he *can* control it (122).

Degenhardt builds on this self-delusion of control within her work when she points out that the mercantile trade of the period was only somewhat successful but also yielded many lost ships, lost investments, and poor investors during its advent (402). For someone living in England from 1564 to 1593 as Marlowe did, English colonialism and England's power on the sea had not yet been firmly established. All England had at the time were inter-imperial desires and joint-stock companies taking multiple forms of risk (risking things like the ships themselves, the lives aboard those ships, the investments

made in those ships, and the goods the ship was trading and/or picking up). Even after the reduction in power of the Spanish Armada, it took until the 1700s for England to expand out and become a strong colonial power. The promise of wealth for investors and joint-stock company owners brought by inter-imperialism and capitalism were just that in Marlowe's age: promises, yet unproved, that came at the cost of material goods, people's livelihoods, and people's lives.

Within the play itself, Doctor Faustus is enchanted by the ideas of foreign goods and of material wealth tied to these two systems. Degenhardt highlights that "throughout the play, commerce is linked to imperial subjugation" (406). Doctor Faustus is enchanted with promise of "all natures treasure" contained within "that famous Art" promised by the Euill Angel. Doctor Faustus responds to this promise of natural treasure with:

How am I gluttet with conceipt of this?

Shall I make spirits fetch me what I please?

Resolue me of all ambiguities?

Performe what desperate enterprise I will?

I'le haue them flie to *Indian* for gold;

Ransacke the Ocean for Orient Pearle,

And search all corners of the new-found-world

For pleasant fruites, and Princely delicates.

I'le haue them read me strange Philosophy,

And tell the secrets of all forraine Kings

Moreover, Faustus's mention of "strange Philosophy" and the "secrets of all forraine Kings" underscores his thirst for forbidden knowledge and his aspiration to transcend the boundaries of human understanding. This aligns with the broader theme of intellectual curiosity versus moral consequences that permeates the play. Faustus's relentless pursuit of worldly riches and esoteric wisdom leads him down a treacherous path, ultimately raising questions about the moral implications of unrestrained ambition and the consequences of seeking power through supernatural means. As Degenhardt suggests, these themes are intricately woven into the play's exploration of commerce and its association with imperial conquest, offering a multifaceted critique of the socio-political and ethical landscape of Marlowe's time.

Doctor Faustus longs for the wonders, wonders directly tied into commodified goods and markers of wealth, of other nations – a desire that drives him from the first scene in the play to explore necromancy. In the book *Wonders and the Order of Nature* by Lorraine Datson and Katharine Park, these imperialist desire for goods “were overwhelmingly topographical in nature; that is to say, they were linked to particular places...and often to particular topographical features...the magnet was indigenous to India, for example” (24). India, long since the middle ages and the Crusades in Europe, has been a place of imperial desire. Degenhardt points out that “Faustus’s trajectory from west to east maps the directions of desired trade routes that Europeans were newly pursuing in the late sixteenth century” (402-3). Even the name “orient,” given to the east (later challenged by scholars like Edward Said in his work *Orientalism*) is imperialist in nature: the *OED* highlights that “orient” as a descriptor (as in “orient pearl”) originated in

1400 C.E. and is “of a pearl or other precious stone, originally one coming from the East: of superior value and brilliancy, lustrous, precious.” The utilization of "orient" to describe valuable objects carries symbolic weight beyond its literal meaning. By attributing qualities of value and brilliance to Eastern origins, the term reinforces the narrative that the East was a repository of treasures waiting to be discovered and exploited. The Ottoman Empire was England’s way of exploiting these goods at the time but this linguistic framing reflects a broader mindset that fueled explorations, conquests, and colonization that England would start with their joint-stock companies such as The East India Company and The Virginia Company. Doctor Faustus’s desires were written to reflect England’s current inter-imperial subjects at the time: India and the New World.

I would further argue that Marlowe’s depiction of Doctor Faustus’s world travels on dragon-back are closely linked with exploration akin to England emerging as a sea-power. While imperial desires and material wealth first motivate Doctor Faustus to become a necromancer, he does achieve the desire of exploration within the play as pointed out by Wagner:

Learned *Faustus*

To know the secrets of Astronomy

Grauen in the booke of *Ioues* high firmament,

Did mount himselfe to scale *Olympus* top,

Being seated in a chariot burning bright,

Drawne by the strength of yoaky Dragons necks,

He now is gone to proue Cosmography,

And as I gesse will first arriue at *Rome*,
To see the Pope and manner of his Court;
And take some part of holy *Peters* feast,
That to this day is highly solemnized.

This passage not only illustrates Doctor Faustus's travels, but also makes multiple references to past fallen empires, the Roman Empire and Ancient Greece, through its allusions to Mount Olympus and "a chariot burning bright" through the sky. While the Greeks also had Mount Olympos as part of their pantheon and Apollo pulling a chariot through the sky rather than the Roman God Helios, the spelling Olympus with a U here suggests that this is a reference to the Roman spelling of the word and a reference to the Roman Empire yet, for an audience hearing this performance, the U and O spellings would have simultaneously existed within these lines. This allusion specifically to fallen empires, I would argue, signals the idea that with expansion and power inevitably comes a fall.

The Chorus later summarizes Doctor Faustus's journey "[fr]om east to west" riding his dragon and how "new exploits do hale him out agen,/ And mounted then vpon a Dragons backe" to drive him to study all things on the earth and in the heavens. Samira Al-Khawaldeh in her dissertation argues that:

Doctor Faustus (1592) is one of the earliest English literary works that reveal the actual imperialist, colonialist tendencies at their dawn. *Doctor Faustus* incorporates multiple degrees of the domination of the other that include

geographical exploration which facilitates the acquisition of knowledge – intentional knowledge which ultimately leads to colonization (29).

While I agree that *Doctor Faustus* reveals imperialist and colonial tendencies at their dawn, I would argue against Marlowe and his work being complicit in expansionism. Instead of using this gained knowledge for any means outside of exploitation and financial gains as one complicit with a system would do, Doctor Faustus continues to explore and exploit people within the play. William Tate points out that “Christopher Marlowe’s *Doctor Faustus* identifies Faustus with...negative characteristics with his imperialism” (262). Doctor Faustus isn’t primarily linked to wealth, knowledge, or cultural exchange; instead, it’s his connection to desire, the futility of sacrificing one’s life for such pursuits, and his prideful nature that ultimately led him to damnation in the end.

Doctor Faustus goes beyond including imperial and capitalist elements to incorporate a critique of inter-imperialism and early capitalism. The character of the Evil Angel is where these two systems merge strongly within the play. The Evil Angel, a character associated often with the corruption of Doctor Faustus and the idea of predestination, often invokes imperial and material desires within Faustus himself. While history would look back on the spread of capitalism and the evolution of imperialism into colonialism as set markers, there was no way to determine that these systems would succeed in Marlowe’s time. The Good Angel within the text of the play isn’t just trying to persuade Doctor Faustus from turning away from the dark arts; the Good Angel is arguing that no investment is a guarantee no matter what venture mercantile capitalists

and inter-imperialists trade promises. The English should not model themselves after the colonizing and formerly strong mercantile nation of Spain. Not only had the English just defeated Spain, but Spain's involvement in expansion, conquest, and capitalism did not make their navy stronger than a storm at sea. England, the winners of the sea battle, were more isolated than Spain due to the reduction of contact they had with Catholic nations at the time. While I don't argue that *Doctor Faustus* is an argument for outright isolationism, I do assert that *Doctor Faustus* is an argument against unfettered expansion and conquest.

Ultimately, Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* is about the empty promises of the imperial and capitalist system. Warran D. Smith points out:

The point Marlowe is deliberately making...is that the realization of sin falls far below the original anticipation. As soon as the contract is sealed, Faustus learns of the limitations of Mephistophilis's power. Believing that now he can have everything he asks for, the hero ardently requests a wife to satisfy his 'wanton and lasciuious' mood. But because Marriage is a holy sacrament, Mephistophilis can supply him only with a devil dressed as a woman (175).

Upon the sealing of the contract, Doctor Faustus anticipates unlimited power and the ability to obtain anything he desires. The power and wealth promised to Doctor Faustus for selling his soul to gain magic simply did not pan out. Doctor Faustus desires a wife and gets no wife just as Doctor Faustus desires wealth and power yet has nothing to show for those desires in the end. The deceptive appearance of a devilish wife and the unmet contract in the story draw parallels to the shortcomings and challenges of mercantile

capitalism. In the world of mercantile capitalism, entrepreneurs could collaborate in forming joint-stock companies, engage in contractual agreements, and anticipate profits.

However, these profits were far from guaranteed. At best, a joint-stock company could mitigate losses but couldn't fully compensate for what was originally expected under the contract. David Anderson points out that that “if Faustus does have free will, his trade with the devil is an exceptionally poor one” for Doctor Faustus never amounts to the potential he believes he has (97). Doctor Faustus states that he’ll “be great Emperour of the world” and that no other “Emperour shall not liue, but by my leaue” but instead of living as the emperor of all emperors, he is the servant of emperors and kings in courts. This makes Doctor Faustus, as I will assert more fully later, more adjacent to the position of a jester or fool rather than the position of scholar he starts off with nor adjacent to the position of power he craved. I think it’s also worth noting that in a Christian monarchy, the only king above a king is the Christian God. Doctor Faustus never gets to rise up to that level but instead is always second fiddle to another, using his magic to please those above him rather than aspire to their ranking or above it.

Monarch of Hel: Capitalism and Racism as Separate (Yet Interwoven) Forms of Oppression

If we see the magic and material desires of Faustus as a metaphor for imperialism as Degenhardt claims, then these systems have failed to deliver their promises to Doctor Faustus. And this, I argue, is the play’s point: the risks involved in inter-imperialism and mercantile capitalism – that of hefty investments in ships, the risk of human life, the

subjugation of other peoples and lands, and that the possibility that after all of that work and investment, the ships can still be lost at sea or the goods obtained aren't as valuable as the initial investment – simply weren't worth it. These systems promised wealth and prosperity to those who put in investments, but those promises could and would often fail. This reality of failure was readily apparent to an early modern English audience, as joint-stock companies emerged precisely because individuals couldn't carry the financial risk of mercantile capitalist ventures alone. England itself was just emerging as a sea power and they weren't yet a fully formed imperial nation at the time Marlowe was writing *Doctor Faustus*. The degradation of the main character, Doctor Faustus, from the status of a venerated scholar to a bumbling damned fool as the play progresses is meant to mirror a capitalist buying into the promise of mercantile capitalism and losing everything.

In Katherine Walker's article, "Clowns and Demonic Learning in *Doctor Faustus*," the early modern figure of the clown and Doctor Faustus's desire for material goods and downfall are further linked. While the play itself has multiple clown-like figures outside of Doctor Faustus and the Pope, she argues that these more classic clowns, Wagner and Robin, are foils to the play's namesake. She argues that:

The magician [Doctor Faustus] never realizes his dreams of political and cognitive mastery, and the clowns in the play, including Wagner, illustrate why Faustus is denied any intellectual transcendence. His knowledge is continually parodied by the clowns' own debased forms of understanding, and their interactions with demons suggest that what is ultimately mocked in the play is the

very pretention of desiring to learn the unknowable. Faustus, unable to grasp that what he desires to know are God's inscrutable secrets, is instead mired in the business of spectacle; turning to a lesser supernatural being, Marlowe's play shows that learning from the devil is theatrical precisely because the devil's own forms of knowledge are ephemeral, and depend on the materials of the natural world. The clowns, like Faustus, learn from an imperfect master in a parody of apprenticeship. Demonic knowledge, it turns out, is all show and no substance (405-6).

Doctor Faustus damns its namesake character in order to give a warning about the dangers of material accumulation and about their price: a soul is not worth all the material goods of the old or new worlds. While England had just defeated one of its strongest foes at sea with a combination of skill, allies, luck, and a natural disaster in the way of a storm, the play shows a hesitation towards England trying to take Spain's place at sea as a global player in the emerging inter-imperial market, early colonialism, and mercantile capitalism. Like the Pope's dinner imported from all over Italy, fanciful, rich, and bountiful goods did little to protect the Pope from the demon and Doctor Faustus.

Much like the fireworks Doctor Faustus later uses on a friar, mercantile capitalism was all flash and no bite – something that had the promise of entertainment like the grapes in court, but little other value for one such as Doctor Faustus. While Doctor Faustus is tempted by these material goods linked to the inter-imperial trade going on in the nation at the time, the goods prove to be worthless: none of the material items Doctor Faustus gathers are hopes for will ever be able to save his soul, his most valuable asset

that he sees as a triviality up until the end of the play. Doctor Faustus did not understand the value of his own soul: it was only through his own devolution into a fool and dissent into damnation through the desire for material goods that Doctor Faustus learns his final lesson: the acquisition of material goods isn't worth his soul. In my argument that Doctor Faustus's soul is a stand-in for England's national soul, this means that the final moral lesson of the play is that the acquisition of material goods isn't worth England's soul.

As Okerlund points out, most take the 1616 B-text of *Doctor Faustus* to be the more comedic of the two texts which reduces Doctor Faustus to the status of a fool by the end, but this is a misrepresentation of the differences between the two versions of the text. The 1604 and 1616 texts both contain "significant comic actions" in which "the comedy which the two texts share is exactly that in which Faustus acts his silliest – the snatching of the meat and wine from the Pope's banquet" and "the fire-works episode" (259). The comedic core in both the A and B texts of *Doctor Faustus* are a key part of the critique of the early capitalist system and England's new-found interest in imperial expansion. Since this chapter is mainly focusing on the A-text, I will present links between the two scenes Okerlund highlights as having comedic elements that call into question inter-imperial trade and capitalism. Additionally, this section will look at how Doctor Faustus devolves from an intelligent doctor to an on-stage fool and how this is meta-commentary on how the pursuit of material gain and power would have a negative effect on England.

The play's critiques of inter-imperial trade, mercantile capitalism, and power don't begin and end with the character of Doctor Faustus; while he is the main fool in the

play (despite the presence of a clown), the Pope is also made a fool. While Doctor Faustus pranks the Pope by first mocking him while invisible then through an implicit stage action where Doctor Faustus makes physical contact with the Pope made apparent through Doctor Faustus's line "Nay then take that" and the Pope's immediate response of "O I am slaine, help me my Lords." Marlowe first establishes the scene with the Pope eating dinner before an invisible yet vocal Doctor Faustus decides to physically interact with the Pope. The Pope attempts to enjoy "so rare a present" from "the Bishop of Millaine" after they all sit down for dinner, implying that the present is food-related which is further backed up by the Pope saying "who snatch't the meat from me!" after Doctor Faustus takes the present meant for the Pope's consumption. After that, the Pope attempts to eat "a most daintie dish" from "a Cardinall in France." While the Pope is in Rome, Milan (Millaine) and, let's use Monaco as an example here – a city on the border of France and Italy, are not close cities. The distance between Rome and Monaco is roughly 424 miles and the distance between Rome and Milan is 360 miles.

While it's hard to estimate the exact time of travel due to differences in horse breeds, the different gaits a horse can have, and the fact that their speed when pulling a cart varies depending on the weight of the cart and terrain it is passing over, under the best conditions, a general average of horse speed is 4.3 miles for a walk, 8.1 miles for a trot, and 25 to 30 miles per hour for a gallop according to Susan E. Harris in *Horse Gaits, Balance and Movement*. If a single horse and rider exhausted themselves and galloped the Pope's meal to him, the Pope's dinner from one of the closest possible cities in France, Monaco, would have arrived in roughly fifteen hours while his meal from Milan would

have arrived in roughly thirteen hours. More than likely, though, with breaks for the horse and rider and varying gaits, the Pope's dishes would take at least a day to arrive. Much like Doctor Faustus's magical grapes that were inter-imperial dreams according to Degenhardt, for grapes could not stay well and ripe on such a journey without magic, the Pope's dinner shows signs of either magically being transported, taking days of exploitive labor for it to arrive to be on his plate over the land, or being brought from land-locked Milan to a city like Genoa and being transported by sea to speed up the process.

Italy had well-established trade routes with the east and used to act as one of the only European nations to trade with eastern empires like the Ottoman Empire long before England established trade with Sultan Murad III (Brotton 1). Through Italian nation-state ports like Venice, despite its disputes with the Ottoman Empire over territories as covered in Chapter 1 of *Abolish Shakespeare*, the rest of Europe and Italy enjoyed what was considered exotic goods like fruits, spices, silks, drinks, grains, carpets, fabrics, jewelry, dried meats, and even the pearls Doctor Faustus so readily covets (Zarinebaf 103). While we don't see the Pope directly enjoying these inter-imperial goods before Doctor Faustus starts to play his prank on him, we do see the Pope enjoying items that must have been procured in much the same way from other Italian and French cities. On top of the resentment of inter-imperial goods and mercantile capitalist systems that Doctor Faustus displays in his scene with the Pope, this scene also has a religious reading. As England was not on friendly terms with the Holy Roman Church nor Catholic nations like Spain at this point in time, the Pope being a figurehead for the church further added to him being a

target of Doctor Faustus's prank. This scene serves both to show how acquiring material goods, or in this case, a very nice dinner, from one's power doesn't stop one from being the butt of a devil's (in this case, Doctor Faustus's) joke, but also how the Holy Roman Catholic Church was susceptible to infiltration by the demonic, or, through the extended metaphorical reading I'm offering here, capitalist temptations.

The firework scene to which Okerlund alludes happens in the same scene as the Pope's dinner right after the friar's prayer ends the scene. The stage directions instruct that Mephistophilis and Doctor Faustus "Beate the Friars, fling fire worke among them, and Exeunt" in what is probably one of the more entertaining exits outside of Shakespeare's "Exit, pursued by a bear" from *The Winter's Tale*. Much like the Pope's dinner, the fireworks themselves, whether conjured by magic or acquired at the market, are the product of inter-imperial trade. Explosive powder, like gunpowder and the powder inside of fireworks, were imported from eastern countries into European markets and became valuable not just for its entertainment value in the form of the firework, but also valuable for mercantile tradesmen and navy ships for defense (Rodger 68). Not only are the fireworks here non-magical (for we see fireworks elsewhere in the play and they are clearly labeled as fireworks that are being used in oration, not just in the stage directions), but Doctor Faustus doesn't even use the fireworks on the Pope, the object of his ridicule. Instead, after being cursed, and in the company of a demon that has the power to turn them both invisible, Doctor Faustus resorts to material goods that are easily purchasable to debase the friars (aka debase religious figures within the play) and create a lightshow on the stage.

Okerlund highlights that this scene is one where the audience first sees Doctor Faustus start to fall from his high status as scholar:

The comparable deterioration of Faustus reveals itself in actions and tricks as silly and simple-minded as those of Robin and Dick. Where Dick steals a cup from taverns, Faustus snatches dishes from the Pope's table. Where Robin and Dick use their conjurations to dismay the Vintner, Faustus throws fireworks to intimidate Friars. Professionally, Faustus has deteriorated from teacher and scholar into court jester, a subordinate who expedites the entertainment of emperors and their servants (271).

Doctor Faustus's parallel with the comedic townsmen Robin and Rafe (Dick in the B text), particularly in their shared use of the book given by Mephistophilis, is intended for the audience to recognize, highlighting the theme of knowledge and temptation in the play. Like Doctor Faustus, Robin and Rafe can read from the book, cast spells from the book, and benefit from the unholy knowledge contained within its pages. In the scene that follows Doctor Faustus playing pranks on the Pope, Robin and Rafe not only perform similar actions as Doctor Faustus on different townspeople but use Doctor Faustus's book to summon Mephistophilis to scare away Vintner who has become suspicious of the pair stealing a goblet. Robin and Rafe are able to use Mephistophilis, much like Doctor Faustus, but without selling their soul to gain the benefits of both the magical book and the magical demon. This makes Doctor Faustus a fool, through multiple meanings of the word.

Over the course of the play, much as Okerlund has pointed out, Doctor Faustus devolves from a scholarly figure with the potential to be all-powerful into the role of a clown, parallel to the comedic characters who fill in the side-plot of the play. The *OED* defines fool in multiple ways, but the two that are most pertinent to this chapter's argument are the noun 2.b. entry which states that a fool is "to act the part of a fool or jester." This is most akin to what Okerland has highlighted: Doctor Faustus acts like a fool as the play progresses both through his comedic actions, serving as entertainment in courts rather than as a powerful figurehead himself, and through the parallels the play itself draws to Doctor Faustus and the side characters in the play. The second relevant definition of fool is definition 3: "one who is made to appear a fool; one who is imposed on by others; a dupe...to have one's labor for nothing." While this use is now archaic and not our modern understanding of the word fool, its use was between 1450 and 1879, making it relevant to our understanding of Doctor Faustus being painted as a fool by Marlowe during the Early Modern period in which he was writing the play.

The *OED's* archaic definition of "fool" as "one who is made to appear a fool" takes on a poignant relevance in the context of Doctor Faustus's portrayal during the early modern period. This definition illuminates Marlowe's intention to emphasize Faustus's vulnerability to manipulation, his eventual disillusionment, and the potential commentary on the societal consequences of unchecked ambition and hubris. Likewise, the *OED's* definition of "fool" as a verb, in the context of acting the part of a jester, resonates significantly with the trajectory Faustus undergoes. As highlighted by Okerlund, Faustus's transition from a character with the potential for boundless power to one who

assumes a clownish role is underscored by his increasingly absurd and comedic actions. This transformation manifests not only in his own behavior but also in how he becomes a source of amusement in the courts. The juxtaposition between Faustus's initial scholarly aspirations and his eventual performance as a jester amplifies the sense of tragic irony that pervades the play. This narrative also serves as an economic allegory, illustrating how endeavors to amass wealth can ultimately lead to foolish and avoidable losses.

If we see Doctor Faustus as a stand-in for English inter-imperial desires for expansion (which I argue is the case), then his pride is a critique of England not being willing to abandon mercantile capitalism and expansion despite it not living up to its promises. While Marlowe is critiquing mercantile capitalism, the risk involved, and inter-imperial trade, I would argue that the figure of Doctor Faustus also makes an argument against the other extreme – isolationism. While isolationism or being an isolationist is best known as an American concept referring to neutrality and not getting involved in another nation's conflict and, indeed the *OED* seems to confirm this term's first use occurring in 1899 in the Philadelphia press to encourage such an attitude of isolation from other nations within America, Todd Andrew Borlik highlights that the attitude of isolation in England well precedes the first known use of the term. Borlik highlights that "whoever first conceived of girdling England in brass is not entirely clear...however, a similar fantasy occurs in Doctor Faustus, when Marlowe's conjuror speaks of commanding his spirits to 'wall all Germany with brass' (1.1.190)" (68-9). By having Doctor Faustus ultimately be a foolish figure, his idea to wall off Germany (where *Doctor Faustus* is set) in "brass" is not to be seen as a solution to the ills of capitalism

and trade but rather another abuse of his ill-gotten power. Walker points out that Doctor Faustus's desire to isolate Germany "hold[s] the potential to produce significant political and social change" (405) but, ultimately, because Doctor Faustus is distracted by material goods and frivolous magics, he does not follow through with any kind of social or political change within the play itself. To covet material goods and misuse inter-imperial trade is seen as a negative in this play, just as the other extreme, an isolated Germany (or, by proxy, England since the play was written by and being performed in England for an English audience), is seen as a negative.

In the first chapter of this dissertation, I have also written about *Othello*, another main character made into a dupe, but not by the devil or the devil's servants – rather by a more manipulative character on stage, Iago. While this dissertation argues that *Othello* is ultimately pro-mercantile capitalism and helped to erase the Ottoman Empire's contribution to early capitalism and that *Doctor Faustus* is anti-mercantile capitalism and critiques the system through its namesake character, the two still overlap when it comes to anti-Blackness within the early modern period. I would argue that *Doctor Faustus*, much like the play *Othello*, is making a specific argument: to be wary of a nation's trade partners. *Doctor Faustus* has a secondary message to it, however: to conscientiously consume.

While *Othello* has a clear anti-Moor and anti-Black stance that can be seen as a push back against England's trade with the Ottoman Empire, I would argue that *Doctor Faustus*, albeit less apparent, also contains sentiments of early modern attitudes of anti-Blackness by connecting Blackness with the devil and magic within the play. Lucifer, in

a conversation with Belzebub and Mephostophilis, states that the “subjects of our Monarchy” are “the blacke sonnes of hell” while magic within the play is referred to as “blacke spels” as well as a “damned Art.” These lines not only associate Blackness with Lucifer, but it also associates magic, the thing damning Doctor Faustus to hell, likewise with blackness. Within the playtext, Mephostophilis also furthers this negative association when he says:

You Princely Legions of infernall Rule,
How am I vexed by these villaines Charmes?
From *Constantinople* haue they brought me now,
Onely for pleasure of these damned slaues.

This line specifically affiliates Lucifer and his “infernall Rule” with Constantinople which had been under Ottoman control since 1453, or for 135 years by the time *Doctor Faustus* was likely being written in 1588.

Kim Hall, in her book *Things of Darkness: Economics of Race and Gender in Early Modern England* highlights that instances that can be read as racially coded, even when they are subtle and minor parts of a premodern text, should be read as such. She states that “literary criticism” can often remystify:

the appearance of blackness in literary works by insisting that references to race are rooted in European aesthetic tradition rather than in any consciousness of racial difference...I argue that descriptions of dark and light, rather than being mere indications of Elizabethan beauty standards or markers of moral categories, became in the early modern period a conduit through which the English began to

formulate the notions of “self” and “other” so well known as the Anglo-American racial discourses (1-2).

The early modern period across Europe was a period in which, as this dissertation argues throughout numerous chapters, early modern Europeans including the English began to form concepts of whiteness as a category for self-identification which would later lead to the English and other Europeans imagining whiteness as superior and to alienate or other anyone who fell outside of the veil of whiteness. Ian Smith in his article “Performing Race in Early Modern England,” highlights that:

“England” as a geographical discourse [was] centralized in an ideology of imperial presence...[and that]...the nation’s validated subjects, mostly educated, male (and in many cases urban) elite, come to identify with the English notion and its racialized correlative, *whiteness*, through a range of linguistic performance (173).

Smith’s work here not only links England’s white identity with its emerging sense of self and imperialism, but also reinforces Adrienne Merritt’s definition of imagined white supremacies or “the underlying (yet often unnamed) concept of” one’s nationality “as whiteness” and that this “quality or trait” of whiteness leads to superiority. While *Doctor Faustus* challenges England’s emerging sense of mercantile capitalist identity, the work still reinforces early modern England’s sense of whiteness as a marker of identity.

This isn’t the only parallel between my first chapter on *Othello* and this chapter on *Doctor Faustus* despite Shakespeare and Marlowe’s differing views on capitalism as presented in their works; both namesake characters from their respective plays are

associated with magic and witchcraft. The concept of magic in both plays is intricately tied to questions of power and identity. In *Othello*, the accusation of enchantment shapes how Othello perceives himself and his relationship with Desdemona. Similarly, in *Doctor Faustus*, the pursuit of magical knowledge represents Faustus's quest for power and the transformation of his identity. Both characters grapple with the implications of engaging with the supernatural, and these interactions have profound consequences on their sense of self and their place within their respective societies. Doctor Faustus's usage of magic takes on a distinct tone. While Othello's story revolves around the potential effects of enchantment, Doctor Faustus's interactions with magic serve as a commentary on capitalism and its pitfalls.

Deborah Willis in "Magic and Witchcraft" highlights that while most accused of witchcraft and devil worship in the early modern period were women and that this had some affiliation with the sexist notion that women were weaker, "theories of women as the 'weaker' sex did not mean that men were never weak, only that fewer of them were" (173) and that, indeed, male figures that engaged in witchcraft were readily written about in the early modern period. Doctor Faustus, she argues, is "doomed by a complex intersection of internal and external forces, in which [his] own desire and propensity for wishful thinking combine with cultural influences and human relationships to make [him] acutely vulnerable to 'supernatural soliciting' and manipulations of the devil or his agents" (177). Witchcraft, as Silvia Federici points out, was a capital crime that "performed a function similar to that performed by 'high treason'" and was "punishable even in the absence of proven damages" (170) and that "the witch-hunt was a major

political initiative” (168) which “was also instrumental to the construction of a new patriarchal order where women’s bodies, their labor, and their sexual reproductive powers were placed under the control of the state and transformed into economic resources” (169). Faustus's desire for power and knowledge leads him down a perilous path, and his engagement with magic serves as an allegory for the negative repercussions of unchecked ambition within a capitalist framework. In this light, Doctor Faustus's journey becomes a mirror reflecting the potential consequences of personal desires and societal expectations, resonating with the broader themes explored in both the play and the earlier chapter on *Othello*.

Conclusion

By the end of the play, Doctor Faustus turns out to be a fool in that he is “a dupe,” fooled by the material promises of the Evil Angel, Mephistophilis, and Lucifer himself. The power Doctor Faustus was promised turns out to be non-exclusive; it comes in the form of a book that others easily pick up, read from, and conjure magic just as easily as Doctor Faustus can. Further, even with the power he has, Doctor Faustus uses his magic not to gather the material goods he wishes for, not to place himself on a throne, but to act as entertainment for kings and queens across the land and to play a prank on the Pope – a prank that most likely marks an end to Doctor Faustus’s possibility for salvation within the play itself. Just as a fool is one that has their labor amount to nothing, Doctor Faustus has nothing to show by the end of the play – not a kingdom, not loyal servants who don’t mess with his magical book, not a wife, not an heir, and no hope. With his soul being

dragged down to hell, Doctor Faustus won't even have a spirit to leave behind in this world and, more importantly, even if Doctor Faustus had a secret stash of material goods surrounding him on stage in the form of grapes and gold and pearls, his descent into hell would make the material goods around him moot: goods from new and old worlds can't travel with Doctor Faustus down to hell.

The parallels between *Othello* and Doctor Faustus, both being tied to magic and both being tied to anti-Blackness, are no accidents when it comes to early modern concepts of trade and inter-imperial race relations. Both plays, in their critique of trade and trade partners, openly make a fool out of and, I would argue this for both plays despite the lack of actual devils and demons in *Othello*, demonize the characters associated with Blackness. In *Othello*, this demonization comes when Othello calls himself a "turke" (V.ii.3354), despite his Christianity and residency in Venice, which the early moderns associated with "traits of ambition, anger, hatred, and envy" (Brotton 283). Likewise, Othello associates himself with magic when he calls his mother a "Charmer" (III.iv.2206). While *Doctor Faustus* is more critical of capitalism and materialism than the play *Othello*, it is still a product of early modern English social and ideological constructs and its more subtle but just as apparent anti-Black sentiments help reinforce that while capitalism and racism are interdependent systems, they are not completely interlocked systems.

In other words, racism can exist even within anti-capitalist sentiments and outside of capitalism itself. This is reinforced by Cedric Robinson in *Black Marxism* in his argument that "the creation of capitalism was much more than a matter of the

displacement of feudal modes and relations of production by capitalist ones" and that "capitalism was less a catastrophic revolution (negation) of feudalist social order than the extension of these social relations into the larger tapestry of the modern world's political and economic relations" (10). Racism existed under feudalism and, when capitalism took over as the main economic force first in Europe then in the rest of the world through imperialism and colonialism, imagined white supremacies and anti-Blackness spread with it.

Conclusion: Paranoid Shakespeare or Reparative Shakespeare: Contemplating the Future
of Shakespeare Studies

In Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's piece, "Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading; or, You're So Paranoid, You Probably Think This Introduction is about You," she identifies two methodical ways of critically reading a text; the first is paranoid reading or paranoia and suspicion being a way to deconstruct repressive political and social ideologies found within the works we interrogate. She specifically highlights that "paranoia knows some things well and other things poorly" (8). Within *Abolish Shakespeare*, the chapters are indeed based on a paranoid reading model, one that breaks down what is suspected within the text and offers historical context to back up that paranoid reading. And while, as Sedgwick argues, paranoid reading has a place, reparative reading, her second methodology discussed within this piece, can fill in gaps of knowledge paranoid reading doesn't fully address like local knowledges of people living under oppressive systems, embracing surprises, chance, an unknown future, and can look to experiences of life as being inconstant and shifting rather than fixed in a generalized framework that often accompanies critical theories that fall under the paranoid umbrella. In other words, reparative reading looks towards effect or affect rather than suspicion and interrogation.

For the conclusion of *Abolish Shakespeare*, I want to celebrate the work being done in the field of early modern and Shakespeare studies that fits with this reparative model. I would also argue that the three areas I'm going to focus on here serve as models for where Shakespeare studies can go after capitalism: the first example is looking

towards current academic forums that focus on personal narratives and past academic practices like Race B4 Race at ASU, Race and the Premodern Period here at UCR, and the “Imagining Shakespeare in 2050” November 2022 conference. The second examples are looking towards self-clarifying rewrites and performances of Shakespeare’s works within American theater like *American Moor*, written and performed by Keith Hamilton Cobb, and Madeline Sayet’s one-woman play exploring her love of Shakespeare and her Native roots as a Mohegan in a play called *Where We Belong*. The final example looks towards my own experience in school with Shakespeare before I moved into my field of study, how I attempt self-clarifying pedagogies within a Shakespearean classroom, and begins to solidify the idea of a People’s Shakespeare.

Within this chapter, I am using the term self-clarification with a specific definition in mind – one that comes from Karl Marx in a letter from September of 1843 to his comrade Arnold Ruge. In this letter, Marx defines self-clarification as a mode of critical philosophy that highlights “the struggles and wishes of the age” and deems this struggle “a task for the world and for us. It can succeed only as the product of united efforts.” As society moves out of capitalism and modernism, and into a new economic and cultural system, Shakespeare studies can be reborn and reshaped under whatever systems we create. That is, after all, the intended purpose of critical theory – both the paranoid methods and the reparative methods – to analyze and make what’s underlying and ideological visible and by making visible, make it something people can change.

Conferences, lecture series, and talks all play a pivotal role in intellectual exchange and scholarly growth because of their unique ability to foster dialogue and to

connect scholars across multiple fields of study. RaceB4Race stands as an ongoing conference series that first started, according to their website, as a collaboration between the Medievalists of Color (MOC) group and the ShakeRace (Shakespeare and Race) community, both seeking to push the boundaries of premodern studies. When the International Congress of Medieval Studies (ICMS) rejected panels on race and antiracism, MOC and ShakeRace united to provide “an alternative home” for the rejected panels so they could “demonstrate to the world how our understanding of periodization, historicity and even academic disciplines can become more expansive once race is acknowledged as a viable lens of investigation.” RaceB4Race doesn’t just make room for race and antiracism in their talks but prioritizes it and uses their platform to further the expertise, experiences, viewpoints, and socio-political concerns of BIPOC scholars. The current board members of RaceB4Race are also notable premodern critical race scholars like Patricia Akhimie, Scott Manning Stevens, David Sterling Brown, Seeta Chaganti, Urvashi Chakravarty, Ruben Espinosa, Kim F. Hall, Ayanna Thompson, Cord J. Whitaker, Dorothy Kim, and Shokoofeh Rajabzadeh, who all actively contribute their expertise to the conference.

RaceB4Race has also served as inspiration for another lecture series. Here at UCR, Race and the Premodern Period (RAPP), a guest lecture series, was started by Mariam Galarrita after attending RaceB4Race. Like the conference series, RAPP centered BIPOC scholars and speakers like Ruben Espinosa, Ian Smith, Keith Hamilton Cobb, Jennifer Morgan, Marissa Fuentes, Kevin Dawson, Carissa Harris, Danielle Lee, Madeline Sayet in conversation with Leticia Alvarado, and Wallace Cleaves and invited

them to not just share their works, but also their lived experiences. In my mind, there is no better model for disseminating information and academic discourses for Shakespeare studies after capitalism than RaceB4Race because it was born to address a systemic issue that was actively being excluded from other established forums and grew to serve the needs of the premodern community while also inspiring and supporting further intellectual inquiry and growth in the field. In other words, or rather, in Marx's words, RaceB4Race can be seen as a self-clarifying conference. RaceB4Race stands as a powerful model for disseminating knowledge and fostering academic discourse within Shakespeare studies and beyond.

Late last year in November 2022, I also had the privilege to attend the "Imagining Shakespeare in 2050: Performance and Archives" conference where artists, archivists, directors, and scholars came together to discuss the future of Shakespeare studies at The Huntington. Ayanna Thompson, in a short piece titled "What Is the Future of Shakespeare?" posted to The Huntington's blog *Verso*, cites the closures of theaters and libraries during COVID-19 as "an opportunity to rethink Shakespeare's position" and to ask the question "can we use Shakespeare's works to create and foster a culture of radical inclusion?" The central questions driving this conference were not only driving my own dissertation but had scholars and artists I could only dream of having access to on their panels. While I haven't seen a Royal Shakespeare Company production of a play outside of a recording due to both distance and price, Greg Doran and Erica Whyman, two artists from the company, were there speaking at the conference. Likewise, archivists like Jill Gage from the Newberry Library in Chicago and Michael Witmore from the Folger

Shakespeare Library²¹ in Washington D.C., two cities and libraries I haven't stepped foot in, were there to talk about their archives.

Overall, I feel that the themes of accessibility, approachability, and cross-disciplinary scholarly works and performances strongly emerged from this conference. Barry Edelstein of The Old Globe in San Diego talked about community outreach programs, reduced price ticket nights, and outreach to local prisons to perform their plays for incarcerated peoples while Nataki Garrett from the Oregon Shakespeare Festival shared the pushback she's experienced when audiences in Oregon view one of her productions as outside of the boundaries of typical Shakespeare, cementing that there is an ideological concept of what a Shakespeare production should look like to an audience, but also used her space on stage during her panel to help envision what a Shakespeare performance without boundaries might look like. I think one quote from the conference that has stuck with me the most came from Greg Doran when, in response to a question from the audience, he replied that if the Spanish Armada hadn't sunk, we'd all be speaking Spanish and we would currently be at a conference talking about Lope de Vega. Shakespeare after capitalism, which may or may not happen by 2050, should recognize the historic conditions that spread both Shakespeare's works and English across the globe and, likewise, should push back on the ideological constructs that spread with it.

²¹ Both the Newberry Library and the Folger Library have been instrumental in bringing conversations about inclusive practices, scholarship about race and identity, and how the archives can play a pivotal role in this. For example, the Newberry sponsored the "Seeing Race Before Race" free exhibit which opened September 8th, 2023, and runs until December 30th, 2023, and in 2019 the Folger partnered with RaceB4Race for a conference on "Race and Periodization."

Modern performances, as touched on at the “Imagining Shakespeare in 2050” conference, are another site where restorative interpretations of Shakespeare are taking place. For this discussion, I want to focus on two self-clarifying performances that engage with Shakespeare: Keith Hamilton Cobb and his play *American Moor* and Madeline Sayet and her piece *Where We Belong*. Cobb’s play reimagines *Othello* in the modern context of a one-man show where he auditions for the role of Othello and answers to an offstage director. *American Moor* highlights the challenge that Black actors face when playing the complex role of Othello, written for a white actor in racial costuming to imitate a Black man, who is also often overshadowed by Iago. Sayet’s play is similarly inspired by her own personal experiences with Shakespeare. Sayet’s play centers around the question of “what it means to belong in an increasingly global world” while “moving between nations [like England and America] that have failed to reckon with their ongoing roles in colonialism” as a Native person studying Shakespeare in a PhD program (MadelineSayet.Com). I am labeling these two performances as self-clarifying because they center the person, their culture, and their experience. While I have seen and appreciate things like punk rock performances of *Twelfth Night* at the free Shakespeare performances in the park in Los Angeles, these performances try to wrap something culturally significant around Shakespeare rather than speaking through Shakespeare to say something culturally significant.

As a low-income and first-generation college student engaged with abolition and community activism both on and off campus, my choice to study early modern literature and Shakespeare always seems like a surprise to my non-academic peers. Early modern

studies and Shakespeare studies, despite what I've talked about in the past two sections of this conclusion, are not typically seen as hubs of radical thinking within activist and abolitionist communities. This is, in part, because the radical work we do is generally behind a pay wall or requires registering and paying for an event in order to engage with our works. But I am still always generally surprised by their surprise – many of the works we read and discuss in radical circles, some used in this very dissertation like Mark Neocleous, Silvia Federici, and Karl Marx, often talk about the early modern period and the transition into capitalism as sites for radical thinking. Karl Marx's daughter, Eleanor Marx, also noted that Shakespeare's works were "seldom out of our hands and mouths" while growing (Kerziouk). Reading this made me think about my own experience growing up and my engagement with Shakespeare and I can't say that my experience mirrors Eleanor's.

Growing up, there were exactly two plays by Shakespeare in our mobile home – *Julius Caesar* and *Macbeth* which were left over from one of my mother's high school classes. These plays weren't kept because they were well read or discussed while I was growing up – it was more that no one decluttered or donated any old books from our bookshelves. However, because they were in my home and I ran out of books to read from the school library and I was too young to walk to the public library alone, I picked these two plays up and began reading them in the sixth grade. I can't say I understood everything taking place, but I understood the general plot and tried to imagine the action taking place on stage. I wouldn't encounter Shakespeare's works again until high school

where we read *Romeo and Juliet* and watched the 1968 film²² during my freshman year in high school. During that same year, 1996, Baz Luhrmann's *Romeo + Juliet* was released in theaters in October and was a popular film, at least in my high school, to go see with a group of friends.

The way we viewed a pop culture movie production of the play versus how we spoke about it in class always stuck with me – as did the consumption around the film. In class the play was a tragedy, the characters were too young and naïve, and there was a constant push to go along with our teacher's interpretation of the play rather than offer our own understanding. In the theater, Leonardo DeCaprio was considered a heartthrob and people in the audience openly lusted after him as Romeo and coveted the place of Juliet. While the movie was a tragedy, the core of the movie was the love story – a love story that, again, people in the audience openly idolized and wanted to imitate despite the ending. I saw this film once in theaters, but my friends saw it multiple times and purchased the movie's soundtrack and would have friends over to listen to the CD. One

²² I think it's important to note that there's some controversy now over the 1968 film where the actress playing Juliet, Olivia Hussey, and the actor playing Romeo, Leonard Whiting, stated they were told during auditions that there would not be nudity in the movie yet, during filming, they were pressured to appear nude. This is also compounded by the fact that they were legal minors at the time being sixteen and seventeen at the time of appearing nude in the film. There was a lawsuit filed against the film's distributor, Paramount Studios, but it was later thrown out in May of 2023 according to a *Variety* article. Some of the reasons cited for the decision in the case are that the actress, Hussey, openly stated in interviews as recent as 2018 that she was proud of her nude work in the film and she saw nothing wrong in it (Maddaus). The director's son, Pippo Zeffirelli, made similar claims when he said that both actors "have always maintained a relationship of deep gratitude and friendship towards [the elder] Zeffirelli, releasing hundreds of interviews about the happy memories of their very fortunate experience" (Giuffrida). Despite the lawsuit being thrown out, past interviews with Hussey, and Pippo Zeffirelli's claims, the controversy around the film remains as it can take years, even decades, for people to realize they are the victims of sexual coercion.

of the friends I walked to school with had a picture of DeCaprio as Romeo on her wall. Everyone I knew in high school owned the VHS²³ of the movie.

Outside of the 1996 movie, my encounters with Shakespeare in high school were all limited to the classroom. We read plays, we sometimes read scenes and acts together in class, and we were told what to think and how to think about his works. It wasn't until I started to attend community college in 2001 and later took a survey of Shakespeare class that I began to be able to talk openly about my own thoughts and opinions on Shakespeare's works and began to think through the consumerism I had witnessed around the 1996 film. I don't think my experience in high school is unique; for many, their first encounters with Shakespeare occur in high school and these classrooms are often led by an overworked (and underpaid) teacher that is trying to meet the goals of their curriculum (measured by constant testing) rather than drive engagement and interest in Shakespeare's works.

Likewise, these high school teachers aren't early modernists nor Shakespearean scholars – they are teaching a play based on curriculum decided at the state level, filtered through the county level, then once again interpreted by the city before it gets interpreted by a school district, the school itself, and then reaches the hands of the individual teacher. *Romeo and Juliet* in the high school classroom is about learning to read tragedy, about learning what a tragedy is, and about recognizing quantifiable elements of the play so it can be measured on a quantitative assessment test connected to school funding. Outside

²³ DVDs weren't widely released in the U.S. until later in 1997 so while this movie was available on DVD after it was in theaters, the DVD was an expensive medium at the time and my friends and I were all poor. We had VHS tapes.

of the classroom, commercial movies make Shakespeare about spectacle and commercial consumption. And I think that, sadly, this first common exposure to Shakespeare in the high school classroom often stays with people so when they do encounter more radical work around Shakespeare, our work is seen as an outlier.

Now, as someone who teaches Shakespeare at multiple colleges, I try to make sure students have a better experience with Shakespeare than I did in high school by centering diversity, student opinions, and lived experiences as a means to access the text. In my critical thinking and writing course at Mt. San Jacinto College, for example, we don't just read *Othello* as a tragedy and learn what tragedy meant in the early modern period, we read Ian Smith's "We Are Othello: Speaking of Race in Early Modern Studies" and talk about movements like Black Lives Matter and local politics. We look at adaptations and works inspired by *Othello* like Cobb's *American Moor* where we talk about alienation and being typecast and unable to escape someone else's expectations.

Our course final is a creative final where students turn in a digital creative project that engages with themes from *Othello* and is a project entirely of their own choosing and own creation. I have had students turn in entire sets built from Legos, perform scenes in the cooperative video game Minecraft, write music for and perform "The Hanging Tree," the song Desdemona sings foreshadowing her death, and I've even had students create and turn in short films. I should also note that the creative aspect of the final is ungraded; I ask that students pursue their passion and do as much or as little work as they choose. Their grade comes from their written reflection on their project, where they write about what drove their creative process and how it engaged with their chosen theme from

Othello. While not every student finds a deep connection to the text itself, they all find a way to incorporate their own interests into the classroom and to connect Shakespeare to the modern world in ways they didn't expect when entering the course.

While there are strong movements both within academia and theater towards more inclusive and abolitionist approaches to Shakespeare, there is still an access problem that needs to be addressed. In the introduction to my dissertation, I have written about creating a new knowledge commons, and the key concept of commons is having open access to information. Unfortunately, most academic works are still behind a paywall and theater, as Keith Hamilton Cobb pointed out in his 2021 RAPP talk, is an industry that is ultimately concerned with profit as it is a capitalist enterprise. The cost to subscribe to the Oxford English Dictionary is 29.95 for a single month subscription or 100 dollars for a year. Access to *Shakespeare Quarterly*, for online access for a single issue through *Oxford Academic*, costs 70 dollars. As noted in the "Introduction" of *Teaching Early Modern English Literature from the Archives* edited by Heidi Brayman and Ian Moulton:

Various online databases now provide access to over 125,000 texts, including the original and early editions of works by Shakespeare, Spenser, Milton, Donne, and every other major English writer of the period. Some of these are transcriptions; some are digital copies of microfilm; some are color photographs of the pages from the volumes themselves. More importantly, the internet makes thousands of non-canonical texts available for classroom use: ballads, sermons, medical texts, primers, chronicle histories, self-help manuals, political documents, romances,

and more. The availability of these texts for online use in the classroom is revolutionizing the teaching of early modern literature (2).

But these 125,000 revolutionary texts are only available to academics through databases which have subscription fees, making the revolution of information accessible only for the few.

The cost to see Madeline Sayet's *Where We Belong* show in Ashland, Oregon, playing from August 24th through October 15th, 2023, costs a minimum of 45 dollars and is limited to audiences living in driving distance or who are willing to spend even more money than the price of a ticket to travel to and stay in Ashland to see the show. Sayet has another upcoming performance of *Where We Belong* at the Folger Theater in Washington DC from February 15th through March 10th, 2024, but the same issues of affordability and access remain. The price of a ticket for the Folger Theater show is seemingly priced lower at 25 dollars, but that's only for Folger Library subscribers with the cost of a subscription starting at 75 dollars for an individual yearlong membership.²⁴ That means that most of the work that academia and the theater achieve is only accessible to those who are either enrolled in schools that provide access to information and fieldtrips to theatrical shows or to those with the monetary means to access this information and these performances on their own.

I do recognize that we all, yet again unfortunately, live under capitalism and thus must find a way to survive under capitalism. That means for performers and playwrights

²⁴ Performance information and links to ticket prices were found through Madeline Sayet's website, madelinesayet.com/upcoming.

like Sayet as well as for smaller theaters, ticket sales and ticket prices are often directly tied to their ability to survive, thrive, create, and perform future works under capitalism. Likewise, theaters like Ye Old Globe in San Diego and multiple renditions of Shakespeare in the Park, like the one run in Los Angeles by the Independent Shakespeare Co. at Griffith Park, provide open performance access and cheap or free performances aimed at people that otherwise would not attend a performance of Shakespeare's works. Shakespeare's Globe in London also has its own streaming service, called the Globe Player, which is, yet again accessible for a price,²⁵ but, despite the cost, does help to eliminate access issues as it makes performances of Shakespeare's works accessible online for those who cannot afford to attend these performances in person. And, while they vary in video quality and professional production values like lighting and audio recording, there are numerous recordings of various performances of Shakespeare's works accessible to all without a paywall found on YouTube.

Starting in June 2023, one popular YouTube channel called The Try Guys released a series of free videos exploring Elizabethan Fashion,²⁶ Shakespearean performance and acting on stage,²⁷ and stage fencing²⁸ to their 8.04 million subscriber audience²⁹ as a build up to a paid event through the platform Kiswe on August 10th where

²⁵ 9.99 pounds per show which is roughly 12.55 in U.S. dollars given the August 2023 exchange rate or 59.99 pounds (75.37 U.S. dollars) for an annual subscription.

²⁶ In a video released on June 3rd, 2023, titled "Try Guys Try Shakespearean Fashion" on The Try Guys YouTube channel.

²⁷ In a video released August 5th, 2023, titled "The Try Guys Go To Shakespeare Academy" on The Try Guys YouTube channel.

²⁸ In a video released August 9th, 2023, titled "Try Guys Try Sword Fighting" on The Try Guys YouTube channel.

²⁹ After the live performance was pushed back to August 10th, multiple special guests with large YouTube audiences were also announced like Good Mythical Morning with 18.4 million subscribers, The Game Theorists with 17.9 million subscribers, and Rosanna Pansino with 14.4 million subscribers. While these

the comedic acting trio would perform what they described as a “Choose Your Own Shakespeare” performance of *Romeo and Juliet*. In two of their three free Shakespeare-oriented videos available to their full 8.04 million subscriber audience as well as nonsubscribers across the YouTube platform, The Try Guys called Shakespeare “the greatest author that ever lived” in their June 3rd, 2023 video and said that “[Shakespeare] understood the human condition in a way that really, really still speaks to people” in their August 5th, 2023 video. While I do not have access to the sales of their livestream event on August 10th, I will note that the cost is less than any other ticket or service discussed in this conclusion thus far being 9.99 before tax and 11.09 after taxes. In the paid for two hour and forty six minute performance, audience members at the time of the live performance were able to vote in real time on what would happen on the stage and The Try Guys would adapt their performance to fit with the audience’s vote. During the live performance (which I purchased and viewed after the live voting so I could observe rather than participate), questions were asked a few scenes before the action being voted on took place. For example, in Act I scene i, just after Romeo’s introduction, there was a poll asking the audience to vote on what would happen in Act I scene v during Mercutio’s Queen Mab speech.³⁰ The results of the poll weren’t revealed until the scene itself so while audience members voted ahead of the scene in question, they wouldn’t know the results until it arrived on screen.

audiences, with all probability, do overlap with The Try Guys 8.04 million subscribers, it still opens up their performance to a much wider audience than their subscriber base alone.

³⁰ The options were 1) pop balloons, 2) play with confetti poppers, or 3) blow bubbles. The audience voted on option three, blow bubbles, which was revealed in a side panel on the screen a few lines into the Queen Mab speech itself as the bubbles appeared on stage.

The Try Guys, with their large audience base and wider, open reach compared to that of academia and most non-recorded live performances of Shakespeare's plays, has further perpetuated Shakespeare as an open economy and reinforced Harold Bloom's concept of Shakespeare as appealing to our innate humanity while also perpetuating a sales pitch made repeatedly in Shakespeare's first folio. The folio itself opens with two addresses, one to the benefactors and one to the general readers, that make strong arguments for anyone reading to buy the book, and to "buy it swift" and repeats the call later with "but, whate euer you do, Buy" because "it is now publique, & you wil stand for your priuileges...to read him...again, and again." While this relationship between a capitalist notion of monetary value and Shakespeare's works is clear within these dedications, what is less obvious are the sales tactics that follow; specifically, the poem that starts the section of poetry praising Shakespeare and his works contained within, "To the memory of my beloued, The Author, Mr. William Shakespeare" by Ben Jonson³¹ which opens with the following four lines:

To draw no envy (Shakespeare) on thy name,
Am I thus ample to thy Booke, and Fame
While I confess thy writings to be such,
As neither Man, nor Muse, can praise too much.

The opening highlights the reader's ability yet again to purchase greatness; Jonson has the "ample" to purchase Shakespeare's collective works, works that "neither Man, nor

³¹ While the folio pages themselves are not marked with page numbers, in the Norton Facsimile of Shakespeare's First Folio, this poem appears on pages 9 and 10.

Muse, can praise too much.” Shakespeare’s company that put together the first folio were, very much like The Try Guys, capitalists looking to make a profit from their venture. The connection between Shakespeare and capitalism isn’t just found within Shakespeare’s works, but within the framing of the folio as a piece of art readily available for purchase as well.

The Try Guys are not academics; they are entertainers looking to earn a profit and while they have the funds and the means to access culturally significant and groundbreaking performances of Shakespeare’s works that push back on Bloom and can purchase access to a journal, paper, or database or two in order to conduct better research, they didn’t and I can’t really argue that it’s their responsibility to. Yet while The Try Guys have the funds to access these performances and pieces of information, their audience, with all probability due to their brand being skewed towards young adults and teens, do not. The issue here isn’t that they performed *Romeo and Juliet* in a way that perpetuates people’s perception of Shakespeare as universal; rather, the issue is that information that pushes back on Bloom isn’t as culturally widespread as it should be and that’s due to capitalism’s influence over academia. The purpose of research isn’t to sit in physical or digital repositories to generate an income for a journal or database – the purpose of our work and research is for dissemination as far and as wide as possible.

Without major movements across universities and within academia to open up access not just to Shakespeare studies but to all of our research and works, there is a limited road for scholars to take to share their work with a wider, non-academic audience for free. One of the easiest ways to disseminate work is to make a public

ResearchGate.Net or Academia.Edu profile so that others with profiles on these academia-oriented social media sites can access our works. Another tactic I've seen scholars take is to clearly state on their X³² biography that they will happily provide any articles they've written, free of charge, to anyone that emails them a request. Institutions like the Newberry also have free exhibits like "Seeing Race Before Race" which is free for all who can travel to the exhibit and, likewise, there are free and open books like the Globe's "Anti-Racist Shakespeare Series." Finally, and one that I think is the closest to what I'm envisioning when I say open access, conferences and scholars alike will now post recordings of their sessions to YouTube or as a podcast³³, making them widely accessible. But many of the videos don't do the back-end work of researching keywords, linking the videos to similar works, finding a podcast host outside of the institution's website, or posting regularly – all of which makes the recordings easier to find and easier to spread through algorithm.

While these are steps in the right direction and have the spirit of open access, they still actively require someone to seek out a specific piece of work or a specific researcher. Similarly, they require effort on the part of the person seeking out the work – they have to make a profile that's open to the public in order to access works on websites like Academia.Edu or directly email the researcher, something many college students find intimidating let alone people outside of academia, in order to ask for access to their work. Going even further, social media platforms like X are not only highlight commodified in

³² Formerly Twitter.

³³ For example, the September 2019 "Race and Periodization" conference has been preserved as a podcast found on the Folger's website.

and of themselves but are owned by billionaires like Elon Musk that actively cause social, political, and environmental harm. To watch a video by The Try Guys, I simply have to go to YouTube without logging into anything. Sometimes I might have to type in the group's name but when a channel posts regularly and has subscribers in the millions, their videos tend to show up on the front page of YouTube without the need to search. From there, all I have to do is click on a video and it automatically plays. To make our works free to access is one step towards accessibility; the next step is ease of access and the ability to stumble upon research rather than actively search it out.

As alluded to in the Marx quote in the opening of my conclusion, the work of rebuilding Shakespeare studies after capitalism falls is on the shoulders of the many rather than on the shoulders of the few. I can make predictions based on current movements in academia, theater, and easily accessible and free entertainment platforms like YouTube, but I do not control what comes next. If Shakespearean scholars and performers want Shakespeare to survive in whatever system comes after capitalism, it's my argument that the first step is to open up access to our works to help create what I like to think of as a People's Shakespeare. A People's Shakespeare is one that aligns with Marx's description of self-clarification, where the movement's goals and principles would be driven by current people's interests, wants, and needs rather than tied to a market for profit or an ideological system for imagined white supremacies. The first step of such a movement would include open access and writing for a general, rather than field-specific, audience (which is something I've attempted to do throughout this dissertation). In an ideal world where academics could easily avoid publishing their work

behind paywalls and where publication wasn't tied to tenure and prestige, I would argue that individual academics should write their works towards mixed audiences and avoid journals that restrict access when it comes to publishing their works. But that's not the world we live in and, as so many problems prove to be, the lack of access to academic works is a systemic problem rather than an individual one.

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