

BEING A THING IMMORTAL: SHAKESPEARE,
YOUNG ADULT CULTURE, AND THE
MOTIFS OF THE UNDEAD

by

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A DISSERTATION

Presented to the Department of English
and the Graduate School of the University of Oregon
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

December 2015

DISSERTATION APPROVAL PAGE

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Title: Being a Thing Immortal: Shakespeare, Young Adult Culture, and the Motifs of the Undead

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DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

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Doctor of Philosophy

Department of English

December 2015

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In the early decades of the twenty-first century William Shakespeare's works and figure began to arise in Young Adult adaptations and transnarratives focusing upon the undead. These works of werewolf, vampire, and zombie fiction represented Shakespeare as a creature of the undead or as a heroic savior. I argue that the figure of Shakespeare appears as an ambivalent symbol of corrupt authority or redeeming power within these YA undead adaptations because we are unable to reconcile Shakespeare's centrality in literary studies with our twenty-first century social, political, and moral ideals such as multiculturalism, gender equality, and race relations. Essentially, these undead adaptations manifest the figure of Shakespeare as a crisis of our own faith in the "dead white European male" model of authority.

Many of the works offer a rather dim view of the author and the cultural authority that he once represented. And the image these YA narratives conjure is often that of a zombie Shakespeare who is both immortal and rotting. Or alternatively, the absolute power of a vampire

Shakespeare: cold, white, male, feeding upon the blood of the living. I argue that the YA protagonists must destroy the corrupt authority figures who hold power over them to create a “new world order” in these narratives, and Shakespeare’s position as “the author of authors” serves as the prime target.

Alternatively, the contrasting narratives place Shakespeare in opposition to the undead hordes that are attacking humanity. In these novels and films, the figure of Shakespeare is an iteration of viable knowledge and authority solving not only his era’s problems, but those of our own, as well. I argue that these narratives seek to renew and add to Shakespeare’s authority through a metaphor of undead hybridity. By analyzing the werewolf or zombie-hunter in both film and literature, I demonstrate that many narratives utilize Shakespeare as a hybrid of both historical/literary authority and our own modern ideals. Rather than simply wolf or slayer, the Shakespeare of these narratives is both early modern authority and twenty-first century social/political hero.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to express my appreciation to Professor Freinkel for her help in preparing this manuscript. There are few people who have directed me on stage, in a graduate seminar, as a Graduate Teaching Fellow, and in writing a dissertation. Dr. Freinkel is unique on all accounts. In addition, I wish to thank Dr. Bovilsky for her much needed help in editing my prose. I also wish to thank Dr. Gopal for her direct help in addressing the film studies issues necessary to complete my work, as well as Dr. Calhoon for his questions regarding the undead. Finally, I also wish to thank the readers of this manuscript for their valuable input: Carol-Ann Fuller, the best colleague and academic editor that I could ever hope to find and Dr. Marci Carrasquillo for her friendship and direct input into my argumentative strategies.

This work is for Michelle, Alex, and Chandler:
the loving, supportive, and patient trio.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. INTRODUCTION: EARLY SHAKESPEAREAN ENCOUNTERS.....	1
II. SHAKESPEARE AMONG THE UNDEAD: YOUNG ADULT CULTURE'S SHAKESPEAREAN RESURRECTION	8
Notes.....	47
III. FEMINIST WEREWOLVES AND CULTURALLY ELITIST VAMPIRES: YOUNG ADULT REGENERATIONS OF SHAKESPEARE AND THE UNDEAD.....	49
Notes.....	83
IV. SHAKESPEARE'S UNDEAD FLESH: THE UNCANNY, ABJECTION, AND WOUND CULTURE IN YA ADAPTATIONS	85
V. SHAKESPEAREAN IMMERSION: SHAKESPEARE'S PERSONA IN VIDEO GAMES, FANFICTION, AND YA DRAMA.....	119
Notes.....	156
REFERENCES CITED	158

CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION: EARLY
SHAKESPEAREAN ENCOUNTERS

As a child, I rarely gave William Shakespeare even a casual thought. Most of the reading curriculum in my junior high English classes involved stories of the American Midwest, a Bildungsroman or two of early American lives, and the perils of entering puberty by way of Judy Blume's books. If Shakespeare was part of even a single narrative I have no memory of his presence.

I do remember the puzzling language of *Romeo and Juliet* in high school and the shocking discovery of Shakespeare's dramatic works in my own college years. My first encounters with Shakespeare were with his original dramatic works, contained in books battered by many previous high school readers. The only intermediaries between Shakespeare and myself were the editor of the volume and my teachers and professors. However, as I look at the reading lists my own sons are bringing home in middle school and beyond, the pages of possible reading choices offer a staggering number of Shakespearean novels. My attention was sparked initially by how few of these novels have anything to do with Shakespeare's dramatic works. Instead, the novels on a sixth-to-eighth grade reading list include tales of werewolves, vampires, and zombies. These same novels, surprisingly, regularly include Shakespeare as a character within the *dramatis personae*. Those reading lists offer a

myriad of tales: Lori Handeland's *Shakespeare Undead* (2010) and its sequel, *Zombie Island* (2012); Stacey Jay's *Juliet Immortal* (2011) and its sequel, *Romeo Redeemed* (2012); Conor McCreery's graphic novel *Kill Shakespeare* (2010); Caroline B. Cooney's *Enter Three Witches* (2007); Claudia Gabel's *Romeo & Juliet & Vampires* (2010); and Lyssa Chiavari's edited collection of supernatural Shakespeare short stories, *Perchance to Dream: Classic Tales from the Bard's World in New Skins* (2015).

Such a curriculum offers a new perspective on Shakespeare. Collectively, the novels displayed an ambivalent portrayal of the Bard. Often, Shakespeare appeared as a vampire or zombie, his wounds agape, one arm stretched out before him, ready to tear the young protagonists limb from limb. In other works, Shakespeare appeared in contrast to the forces of evil, a hero who held the undead apocalypse at bay for a modern world. However, even in the novels in which Shakespeare appeared heroic, his authority demonstrated a corruption of authority. For example, in Handeland's novel *Shakespeare Undead*, Shakespeare is a zombie-slayer, keeping the world safe from an imminent zombie apocalypse, but simultaneously, he is a vampire feeding upon multitudes of the living. One of the counterparts to Shakespeare in these novels would be Edward Cullen from the *Twilight* novels, a hero, for certain, but one struggling with the corruption of his undead flesh.

I enter this dissertation through my sons' exposure to Shakespearean novels and through my teaching of college-level students.

My sons arrived at a dark reading of Shakespeare before ever encountering a single original source of his writing. Similarly, my college students arrive at their first Shakespeare class with entirely different opinions and perspectives on the Shakespearean corpus because of the tangential nature of their initial encounters with him in young adult readings.

I first became aware of the ways these novels and films were affecting young readers when I would sit down in the evenings to read bedtime stories with my two sons. The novels were initially pulled from the bestseller shelves at a local bookstore, and neither my boys nor I was aware of the fact that Shakespeare was hidden somewhere within the pages. We needed a pleasurable novel to fulfill their reading assignments, and I was more than happy to listen to their engagement with these supernatural narratives. The stories were often chosen by my middle-school-aged children for their focus on magic, dystopian strife, and non-stop adventure. One such choice, *The Sorceress* by Michael Scott, was simply the third in an ongoing series of YA novels that focused upon Nicholas Flamel, an alchemist, and his nemesis Dr. John Dee, one of Queen Elizabeth's advisors in early modern London.

When we began reading, the surprise of seeing Shakespeare revealed as a participant in the story was powerful. As my children have had little exposure to live Shakespeare performances and lacked the patience to sit through a traditional adaptation, they had numerous

questions, because they knew that Shakespeare was their father's domain. What surprised me were the distinctly different questions that my children raised than I would have at their age. As Shakespeare the character in *The Sorceress* sided with a set of powerful, dead, dark gods in the work, my sons' perspectives were also quite dark. "Dad, why would you spend so much time studying someone so evil? He doesn't seem like someone that we would even like, let alone spend so much time reading," commented my younger son.

My older son couldn't resist chiming in, "Dad, did you ever consider that there's a reason no one likes Shakespeare anymore? Maybe we know more about him now . . ." And while their views were probably also flavored by their father retreating to an office to work on Shakespearean writings instead of spending my afternoons with them wholeheartedly, their eyebrows furrowed each time Shakespeare's name was mentioned after reading Scott's book.

My explanations of Shakespeare's worth have never fully satisfied either son since that time; instead, both of their perspectives have actually increased in negativity, as Shakespeare continued to appear in novel after novel in the YA books appearing on my sons' reading lists in junior high. Both *Juliet Immortal* and *Kill Shakespeare* were introduced to me through my sons' school curriculum; both texts were included in the recommended reading lists sent home for use in homework. In neither work does Shakespeare appear as anything but a villain. *Juliet*

Immortal projects an elaborate authorship conspiracy around an inept and drunken Shakespeare, and pulls him into a world of time-traveling, soul-sucking vampires. *Kill Shakespeare's* world is an all-out war between Shakespearean villains and heroes, with Shakespeare serving as a hermitic wizard god who must be destroyed or worshipped. In these fanciful revisionist works, a large part of the writing defines Shakespeare as a soulless vampire or else an all-powerful god in need of rescue. The haunting refrain of my son's words, "maybe we know more about him now . . ." indeed, offers both a personal reason for this study and a jumping-off point for further scholarly analysis.

The ways in which Shakespeare is given to new readers is of much interest to me as an educator and as a Shakespearean scholar. My purpose in exploring many of the works within this dissertation is to locate the ways Shakespeare has been infused with the themes of the undead.

Any analysis of teenage-werewolf-vampire-zombie-romance-novels, even those that bear Shakespearean source titles, may seem to have little value in academic renderings in the twenty-first century. However, I find that even a short discussion of their value as crossover Shakespearean adaptations alleviates tensions that are often generated over in-depth studies of YA novels, self-published works, and fanfiction, as such works are often overlooked as topics for literary analysis.

I would argue that YA novels and YA culture have recently created and led trends that have dominated popular culture in the early decades of the twenty-first century. YA novels are not simply read by teenagers, but by large swaths of the American populace, regardless of age. Studying such trends is of great value because this is how the population at large is encountering Shakespeare for the first time. The recommended age group for many of these novels is nine-to-twelve-years old, an age that represents a possible first exposure to Shakespeare. Within the school system that my own sons attended, their first reading of Shakespeare's own works took place at age 14 in ninth grade. Yet I suppose that my children are not alone in having read multiple works that interpret Shakespeare indirectly, as well as having seen multiple films and television series that also interpret Shakespeare well before the age when they encounter an original play in high school. Studying the arguments that these YA works are presenting allows us to see how Shakespeare is being animated long before an initial exposure to academic study. In particular, the ways in which these works seem to reference Shakespeare as supernatural or as providing an encounter with the undead seem to be something specific and new to our current political and cultural climate near the start of this century.

My writing in the following chapters is motivated by my own personal cultural moment in teaching Shakespeare to my children and to the young college students who enter the doors of academia. As both

groups have entered their study of Shakespeare recently, with their brows furrowed and their eyes squinting in distrust, I hope to illuminate many of the ways Shakespeare is arriving at a moment of cultural transition.

CHAPTER II
SHAKESPEARE AMONG THE UNDEAD: YOUNG
ADULT CULTURE'S SHAKESPEAREAN
RESURRECTION

Lori Handeland's recent Young Adult zombie novel *Shakespeare is Undead* (2010) combines a number of unlikely elements within her Elizabethan mystery. The novel, set in London circa 1592, begins in a darkened alley with a zombie attack. The zombies are dispatched by an unnamed stranger, but through means that are even more discomfiting than the zombies' slow, ambling search for brains. The zombie is first emasculated, disemboweled, and then executed with a sword. In the midst of this battle, the heroic stranger is surprised by a human bystander, and accidentally kills the witness to the zombie skirmish.

Only at this point do we realize that the zombie hunter is something more than what we suspected, as the blood on the human murder victim initiates a deep hunger in the figure we'd thought was the hero of the tale. Instead, we learn quickly that this is no simple zombie apocalypse, but a fight between zombies, vampires, and the human populace of early modern England. The unnamed zombie hunter is revealed later in the text as William Shakespeare himself, a necromancer, psychic medium, and 3,000-year-old bisexual vampire who hunts down zombie hordes in his spare time.

During the course of the novel, Shakespeare summons his magic to stop zombie incursions and to ensnare a young girl named Kate, who is coincidentally masquerading as a boy stage actor. The novel offers an array of action that incorporates both zombie and vampire mysteries, anecdotes of Shakespeare's long list of historical acquaintances, such as Cleopatra and Julius Caesar, and a romantic plot that mirrors much of the plot of *Romeo and Juliet*.

This combination of mixed genres, historical details, and Shakespearean plotlines run amok triggers multiple analytical opportunities. Handeland's novel is not alone in resurrecting Shakespeare as a character within a dystopian or apocalyptic narrative. Young Adult (henceforth "YA") literature, and many, dispirite independent films have also recently begun to bring Shakespeare to life within the context of monstrosity--often as a vampire, a zombie, or as a hero who must vanquish the monsters. For example, films such as *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Undead* (2007) and *Romeo & Juliet vs. The Living Dead* (2009) place Shakespeare as a character within vampire and zombie apocalypses, respectively. YA novels such as *The Sorceress* by Michael Scott and *Juliet Immortal* by Stacey Jay position Shakespeare as a villainous character in a dystopian world who must be vanquished directly by teen protagonists for the good of humanity.

Other film and novel storylines center on a more realistic depiction or recognizable parallel to our own world. However, these dark narrative

microcosms or "pocket dystopias" offer an inescapable boundary for the participants within the plot.¹ In many cases, the boundary for the protagonists is psychological, but often these pocket dystopias are firmly held in place by social or political structures. Within these fantastical microcosmic realms Shakespeare's plays manifest themselves as solutions to real-world ills, when, for example, a bigoted small-town prep school filled with bullies is transformed by the magical powers of Shakespearean fairies (*Were the World Mine*, 2008) or a military academy is altered morally by the introduction of a same-sex Romeo/Juliet pairing (*Private Romeo*, 2011). One of the unifying themes in these diverse works is that Shakespeare rises as a figure of the undead or as a slayer who must defeat the zombies, vampires, or dystopian villains.

These works offer unique perspectives on the ways that twenty-first century audiences are engaging early modern studies through metaphors of the undead. The collision between Shakespearean plotline and these images of vampires or zombies is no accident. Shakespeare, as a character or figure within these narratives, represents both a heroic figure from the past, and a body that has been transfigured through some terrifying apocalyptic moment and monstrosly reborn. So why put Shakespeare through such a transformation? What does it mean for him to return in this current incarnation as part of the undead?

If we are to determine why Shakespeare's current incarnations as a soulless, undead monster, or as a powerful heroic god/monster slayer

have taken such a hold on audience's imaginations, we must first analyze the ways in which Shakespearean trends have appeared in film and literature in previous incarnations—particularly the 1990s with its insistence on Shakespeare's prominent position and integration with popular culture and film. I would argue that Shakespeare's portrayal as an undead monster or heroic slayer at the start of the twenty-first century requires defining and locating former trends or positions in which Shakespeare was "alive." I use the term *alive* specifically to highlight the difference in content and exposure that previous audiences have had during recent former popular heydays for Shakespeare--such as the 1990s. Certainly there are numerous periods in the twentieth century when the film industry's interest in Shakespeare sparked significant changes in both film history and academic study. However, the 1990s featured a Shakespeare more aligned with blockbuster filmmaking and imbued with pop culture references in new ways. Further, as the 1990s directly preceded the introduction of an undead Shakespeare, analysis of its films sharpens the contrast between past and current strategies of Shakespearean adaptation.

Second, looking at the rise of multiculturalism and the expansion of traditional canons' destabilization of Shakespeare's singular cultural importance at the end of the twentieth century clarifies the changes underway within early modern studies. I will connect the "canon wars" in academia and the rise of dystopian literary trends, as parts of a world

in which unimpeachable power or authority is also under question and revision. Specifically, representing the Western canon more broadly, Shakespeare becomes figured as a source of power in dystopian literature that must either be rescued or destroyed to create a new world order.

Third, the effects of 9/11 and the rise of YA culture in the early years of the twenty-first century altered the landscape of popular culture in ways that drew a decade of Hollywood Shakespearean popularity to a sudden end. In the final years of the twentieth century, books and films such as J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* developed new markets for YA literature that came to dominate not only bookshelves but blockbuster cinemas as well. Combined with seismic events like 9/11 and a systemic worldwide mistrust of government organizations that followed, the Harry Potter books allowed audiences an escape to a perceived utopian world like Hogwarts. These fictional utopian worlds were also transformed into dystopian Meccas for corrupt power sources by series end. Harry Potter is certainly not the only source of the rise in dystopian literature, but an analysis of how this work and other dystopian worlds connect to simultaneous academic and governmental shifts on a global scale is part of this study because these fictional worlds model themselves—often—upon the strife-ridden, real-world events.

Last, I will argue that, in this current Shakespearean media renaissance, Shakespeare's confrontation with the undead reflects a resurrection similar to that of Shelley's *Frankenstein*—a Shakespearean creature made flesh again from previous incarnations, yet as a damaged source, an immortal figure sometime made vengeful through rejection and abandonment, sometime triumphant in strength and wisdom. Shakespeare in this cultural moment is both the ultimate symbol of authority and power and the discredited remnant of a dying trend. He is, in other words, the supreme example of a "Dead White European Male" invested with immense cultural authority, but his existence in these new media works reflects a modern mistrust of such immortal power.

By analyzing former moments of Shakespearean media production, such as the Hollywood boom in the 1990s, it is my hope to clarify specific differences between the ways Shakespeare was presented in the pre-9/11 world on the one hand, and, on the other hand, his presentation in the YA-dominated film and literary culture of the early twenty-first century. I will identify the ways that Hollywood and alternative independent filmmakers in the 1990s monetized Shakespearean authority at exactly the moment when Shakespeare's position within the academy was under evaluation. And I will contrast this with the early decades of the following century where filmmakers and YA new media revive Shakespeare as part of the vampire, werewolf, and zombie media. Further attention will be given to the ways in which the 1990s integrated

Shakespearean plotlines within the realm of other accessible and popular genres: the high school film, the romantic comedy, the war biopic, or the Hollywood musical. As part of this process, filmmakers often employed contrasting tactics within their adaptations: they either imported Hollywood elements into the Shakespearean plot, or exported Shakespearean source material into entirely different secondary worlds. Whether the adaptations moved outward from the Shakespearean diegetic plane or interpolated new genre elements within it, these differing tactics nonetheless achieve similar results. More often than not, these new works ejected Shakespearean dialogue and poetry altogether, keeping only the central plotline as a recognizable framework for a modern Hollywood film.

During the 1990s, 115 cinematic ventures listed William Shakespeare in their writing credits.² Academic criticism has often attributed this sudden spike in cinematic production of a single director, who completed production of four successful Shakespearean films—more than any other director, including Sir Laurence Olivier and Orson Welles. There is good reason to refer to this era as Kenneth Rothwell does as “The Age of Kenneth Branagh.” Branagh's initial box office success with *Henry V* (1989), a landslide of popular film reviews, an influx of academic criticism about the film, and an international audience of millions encouraged other directors, producers, and successful and experienced Shakespearean actors (and others neither so experienced nor so

Shakespearean) to enter the fray. *Henry V* also brought about two significant cultural events for American audiences. First, the film ended a long drought in Shakespearean film adaptation. There had been no major Shakespearean movie produced since Roman Polanski's *Macbeth* in 1971.³ While the BBC had released tapings of stagy Royal Shakespearean Company (RSC) productions as television specials during the early 1980s, there are no comparable American television productions, nor any large-scale Hollywood studio productions between 1971 and 1989.

Branagh's Shakespearean film certainly piqued Hollywood and American filmmakers' curiosity about the possibility of mining Shakespeare's economic potential. Over the initial years of the decade, Hollywood capitalized upon Branagh's success by investing in his fledgling Renaissance Theatre Company, green-lighting production of his second feature film *Much Ado About Nothing* (1993), a third feature, *Hamlet* (1996), and a fourth, *Love's Labour's Lost* (2000) with a greatly enhanced budget. Funding materialized throughout the decade for other major Shakespearean productions, including Franco Zefferelli's adaptation of *Hamlet* (1990) and Baz Luhrmann's *William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet* (1996).

The blushes of success in the relationship between Shakespeare and Hollywood also sparked a debate within academia that differed sharply from the favorable popular film reviews.⁴ The debate focused on

Branagh's self-proclaimed purposes in making *Henry V*. In his autobiography, Branagh claimed that he had succeeded in what he "set out to do. [*Henry V* is] a popular, accessible and yet serious view of an underrated play" (242). For academics of the time, the popular accessibility of Branagh's version undercut any claim to its status as a serious interpretation. For Branagh, however, the serious merit of the play lies in its enormous popular appeal. Sarah Hatchuel comments on Branagh's detractors by summarizing this debate quite simply: "If Branagh has made Shakespeare fashionable and popular for Hollywood producers and young people, he has removed it partly from the scholars" (15). Part of Branagh's contribution to Shakespeare was simply to remove the Bard from the academic ivory tower and hand him to audiences as an easily consumable filmic object. Such a process also allowed audiences a chance to see a revived historical figure and darling of the humanities resurrected on screen in a dialect or language that appeared new. In such new productions, the characters rarely spoke with the posh British accents of the BBC or Royal Shakespeare Company, but in American dialects that harkened more from the Midwest than from any London neighborhood.

After *Henry V* was released in the United States and Europe, its box office success ignited financial interest from numerous sources. While Branagh's first film was funded largely through private sources and generous grants from the British government, his next three

Shakespearean films were underwritten by Hollywood production companies such as Samuel Goldwyn Productions. The budgets for each of his future films exceeded the financial gross of *Henry V*'s box office during its entire theatrical run. Kenneth Branagh's *Henry V* also allowed and inspired other filmmakers to adapt Shakespearean projects for the screen. One of the first to build upon this success was Franco Zeffereilli, who began work in 1989 on *Hamlet*, starring Mel Gibson, just after the release of Branagh's *Henry V*.⁵ Zeffereilli's previous Shakespearean adaptations had been popular entries in the genre, but his return to Shakespeare after so long a pause drew attention to the revitalization of Shakespeare's financial potential. Thus, even before 1990, Hollywood's sense of Shakespeare as a financial boon was beginning to gain momentum. As the decade progressed, larger and more lavish productions also gave credence to the idea that Shakespeare was a conceivable boon to the financial goals of most filmmaking enterprises. *William Shakespeare's: Romeo + Juliet* (1996) and *Shakespeare in Love* (1998) proved to be financially successful beyond their production companys' respective dreams—and also provoked a startling amount of academic criticism surrounding the popular success of Shakespeare within mass media.⁶

Adaptations of Shakespeare's texts were making strong financial and popular gains, and Hollywood quickly rushed other works based upon Shakespearean source material into production. Adaptations of

King Lear (*A Thousand Acres*, 1991), *The Taming of the Shrew* (*10 Things I Hate About You*, 1996), *As You Like It* (*Never Been Kissed*, 1996), and *Othello* (*O*, 2000) each garnered financial success and provoked even further levels of interest in developing Shakespearean projects. As each adaptation recouped its budget, another film and adaptation took its place. After nearly two decades of disregard for Shakespeare, his plays were pulling audiences into the megaplex.

Kenneth Branagh's success and the combined box office of each subsequent filmmaker's success opened the doors for multiple and varied interpretations of Shakespearean source material during the 1990s, and allowed Shakespeare to reach mass audiences through Hollywood film for the first time in a generation. More importantly, this decade serves as the beginning not only for lavish Hollywood productions that pulled younger and younger audiences into the megaplex, but as a decade when Shakespearean material becomes a template to financial success.

Part of this financial success resulted from the new novelistic and filmic enterprises also capitalizing on revising Shakespearean source material. For the first time, major Hollywood productions rewrote Shakespearean plays from alternative internal character perspectives (*A Thousand Acres*), excised main plotlines in favor of overlooked characters (*My Own Private Idaho*), or integrated Shakespeare as a character within his own dramatic plotlines to find new meaning and purpose for his

writings (*Shakespeare in Love*). Looking even briefly at these larger revisionist tendencies of 1990s Hollywood or independent cinemas reveals a filmmaking process highly concerned with alternative, subversive, and revisionist ideals. Shakespeare is lifted, within these new adaptations, from the confines of the “as written” play and becomes, often, a character free to roam through modern genres. Shakespeare “unbound” is free to leap from 1990s Shakespearean films that foreground the demise of the family farm, the peril of gay teenagers in the American Midwest, and the hazards of playwrighting in Elizabethan London to even more exposed ground in the twenty-first century. These larger intensive revisionist aspects of the 1990s Shakespearean boom suggest a source of our twenty-first-century trend of seeing Shakespeare as a zombie or within the vampire apocalypse.

Kenneth Branagh’s lavish Hollywood films enshrined Shakespeare within traditional genre films that can be identified, simply by analyzing where the films fit within the terms of a megaplex’s roster: *Henry V* is a war film, *Much Ado About Nothing* is a romantic comedy, and *Love’s Labour’s Lost* attempts to revive the Hollywood musical. Shakespeare in Branagh’s and Luhrmann’s films became identified with recognizable Hollywood genres in a way that had rarely occurred before.⁷ Rick Altman offers a familiar definition of genre in a film context as a starting point in his complex study of the field, *Film/Genre*. A genre film “uses the same material over and over again” as a form of cumulative meaning-making

for an audience (25). In other words, audiences often construct meaning by placing a film in the context of films with similarities in theme, imagery, or plot content. Audiences, for example, likely bring a thorough understanding of dark-hatted cowboys and sheriffs on white horses to any Western film because familiarity with these conventions transfers from one cowboy movie to another with seeming ease. For my argument, Shakespeare becomes interpolated within these other genres with such comfort that by the start of our current cultural moment we are able to lift him clearly and soundly out of his own plays and deliver him (un)safely into the post-apocalyptic dystopias that populate much of our current fiction and cinema.

Other studies suggest that genres are not simply modes of repetition and recycled plot points, but powerful forms of cultural dialogue. In her work "Rethinking Genre," Christine Gledhill's discussion of genre's influence on social understandings allows for an exchange of meaning between film and audience perception:

Genres provide fictional worlds as sites for symbolic actions, but the combination of generic and cultural verisimilitude ensures a fluidity not only between the boundaries that divide one genre from another but also between fictional and social imaginaries. In the process genre itself becomes a dialogised category and, as we have seen, occasion of contest. (240)

Gledhill argues that film genres are metaphorical testing grounds which allow cultures to generate and construct meaning within a symbolic world. She suggests that genres register friction within and between fictional and social boundaries. To put it more simply, we seek answers to social problems in our real world by watching how fictional films develop solutions within their genres. Audiences bend the generic boundaries of cinematic worlds, causing genres to overlap and cultivating filmic solutions to apply to our own tangible world. Shakespeare's appearance within familiar genres is just such a collision. We know what to expect from Shakespearean plays. We know what to expect from a high school comedy. But do we know what to expect from a *Taming of the Shrew* adaptation disguised as a romantic high school comedy?

Audiences return to genre films with expectations that they will possess similarities in plot and theme, but with each new filmic addition to the collection of films within the genre, the recycling of plot points and ideas varies slightly because of these collisions between genre boundaries and because of our own real-world experiences. This variance allows a culture to re-evaluate and add relevance to the generic conventions that bear value in the real world. Within this conceptual framework, Shakespeare is no longer simply a referent of high culture, but an integrated part of the blended genre elements. Shakespeare becomes a

source of change within familiar genres, but also an element that audiences see as divergent from normal generic variations.

One way to see how Shakespeare takes on this new role as familiar and unfamiliar is by looking at the way Branagh incorporates Shakespeare's *Henry V* within the coded genre boundaries of the war film. Branagh's introduction of Shakespeare after a long Hollywood drought of such material certainly drew attention, but what also pulled audiences once more into the breach was Branagh's repetition of genre hallmarks from other high-grossing war films in preceding years, such as *Full Metal Jacket* (1987), directed by Stanley Kubrick, and *Platoon* (1986), directed by Oliver Stone.⁸ While a general study of war films lies beyond the scope of this work, the similarities between Branagh's work and other mainstream war films of the era suggest that one reason for the proliferation of Shakespearean film during the 1990s was that individual directors could make Shakespeare seem part of a contemporary cultural landscape. Hollywood's focus in war films of the 1990s was primarily Vietnam, but *Henry V*'s medieval conflict borrowed from the larger trend that presented realistic visual depictions of war, combat, death, and injury to tell of Henry's war of conquest in France. Each of the war films released in close proximity to *Henry V* offers an extremely realistic portrayal of such battle sequences; in fact, they often rely upon this form of realism to make a political point about the grim consequences of war. Kenneth Branagh was able to make Shakespeare seem timely because

he recast *Henry V* in the genre conventions familiar to audiences of war films of the period. Following *Henry V*, Shakespeare was similarly successfully integrated into other popular film trends and genres.

In the cultural landscape after Branagh, we can see effects of this change by examining the expansion of Shakespeare's influence into popular teen markets as well. Ultimately, as we will see, this transition paves the way from teen-oriented Hollywood fare like *10 Things I Hate About You*, to the world of YA fiction. Altman and Gledhill offer an understanding of the way that Hollywood genre films allow audiences to create meaning by recycling images and common generic material. Shakespeare during the 1990s becomes a part of this genre machine, torn into salvageable parts that spark our notice, reconstitute some glimmer of reference, but so thoroughly combined with new genre material that the new object is more present-tense than past authority. Gledhill's argument is that genre is a way of allowing audiences to make sense of the real world through a generic plot, so when Shakespeare becomes intertwined with the lavish Hollywood spectacle he is detached from his position as high-cultural referent. Instead, Shakespeare in the 1990s is a source for political war propaganda, lavish spontaneous musicals, and high school comedy.

For instance, in *10 Things I Hate About You* (1999) the film's writing and dialogue bear very little resemblance to those of Shakespeare's *Shrew*, instead providing a constant stream of references to

the source play, which students may or may not seek out after a film viewing. Shakespeare's presence in such a teen film draws our attention because he is a source of cultural capital. The screenwriting in this film, by Karen McCullah and Kirstein Smith, pulls only a few brief quotes from Shakespeare but much of the prose and poetry disappears within McCullah and Smith's modern idiom. This breaking down of Shakespeare into source content, separating a writer from his writing, is again a forerunner of what will happen in the following decade as Shakespeare is both living and dead, summoned and dismissed, present and departed. The conflict about Shakespeare's value is illustrated by the increasing departures from and alterations of original source material. The teen films in the later half of the 1990s go further than Kenneth Branagh did because Branagh's film largely retained content and language from an original source, whereas the importing of Shakespearean plot without Shakespearean writing created a much more abstract definition of Shakespeare, as the actual language was no longer needed except in tiny pieces.

Of course, just as critics such as Sarah Hatchuel had noted at the beginning of the "Age of Branagh," the rising star of Shakespeare at the box office was paralleled by a perceived attack on his fading glory in the Academy. Alongside Kenneth Branagh's films and the rush of Hollywood adaptations pitched at the teen market, academic debates about multiculturalism found new footing. Just as Shakespeare was intriguing

film audiences on a broad scale and his corpus disarticulated into generic tropes of character, plot and dialogue — an academic movement was gaining support to broaden literary content beyond the constraints of the “Dead White European Male”: i.e. the presumed usual suspects that appeared on literary and academic syllabi. At an early stage in the debate, the Modern Language Association published a self-reflective series of articles that sought to define the ways that the canon debate had evolved at the end of the twentieth century. Stephen Greenblatt and Giles Gunn edited these, published as an anthology. The essays attempted to bridge the widening gap between traditional scholars, who wanted to maintain the rigorous or ‘exclusive’ attention placed upon the Western canon, and more liberal voices, who wanted to expand or dismantle the canon boundaries to include other writers normally excluded from academic syllabi. In the introduction to their *Redrawing the Boundaries: The Transformation of English and American Literary Studies*, Greenblatt and Gunn attribute the divergence of views about the curriculum as a conflict between traditional scholars who populate their syllabi with white male authors and an ever-changing student body that perceives this ‘white syllabus’ as exclusionary. Greenblatt and Gunn argue that as education became more accessible to “people of different backgrounds--ethnic, racial, social, cultural, sexual, and religious-- teachers of literature have found that the traditional humanistic curriculum seems less representative” (3). In turn, this diversification of

the student and faculty bodies aroused interest in "revising and expanding the literary canon" and forces questions about "the assumptions on which that curriculum was based" (3).

For Leah S. Marcus, who wrote the Renaissance studies section in the volume, the central issue for Renaissance scholars is conveyed by the subfield's choice of self-descriptive terminology. The conservative view of the term *Renaissance studies* suggests a rebirth and a flourishing of authorship and literary genius. The alternative suggested by supporters of canon expansion lowers the stakes, placing the same period of writing in context with other historical periods, and referring to the field as *early modern studies*. Such distinctions of terminology reflect the ways in which a conservative take on the debate attempts to capitalize on the 16th and 17th centuries as a singular epoch that rises above other periods. In turn, supporters of canon expansion question the idea that the early modern period should be gilded in name above other historical epochs. Marcus defines this struggle as an internal psychological struggle for most scholars of the period, with each individual feeling "both a strong pull toward interdisciplinary approaches in our study of the past and a proprietary desire to preserve our own scholarly domain" (44). Marcus suggests there are not two camps of scholars—one decrying the study of Shakespeare and the other valiantly protecting him—but a shared and conflicted scholarly sensibility. On the one hand the discipline we share strives to expand our studies beyond the limits of its

current reach while, at the same time, we reflexively protect Shakespeare from neglect within this broadening of boundaries.

Marcus's second point is that, at the end of the twentieth century, early modern studies recognized that the concepts of "genius" and individual authorial control were themselves products of a period like the Renaissance, not objective values nor ones that reflected other periods' own understandings of authorship or cultural values. "Works that showed signs of participation in the heady developing enterprise of authorship, with its high seriousness about the dignity of the task, its emphasis on classical learning as a prerequisite, its revival of classical forms, its exaltation of literature as a transcendent, 'golden' achievement of the human spirit" were repeating the same ideas that Renaissance humanism produced in the first place. Marcus concludes her point by suggesting that these particular ideas of what authorship and literature represent were "historically conditioned and limited rather than universally true" (46).

Marcus's final words in the volume on early modern studies reflect concurrent recognitions of a "methodological terminus" and "of the idea that the major critical movements of our century are finally winding down" (61). Alongside her claim that "we are moving toward a period of great and fecund methodological instability, even anarchy, as our own discipline interpermeates with others that once appeared remote from it and as even the book as we know it is challenged by other technologies of

writing” she suggests that such a problematic future is probably a self-fulfilling prophecy (61). Rather than look to an apocalyptic future for early modern studies, she argues, we should celebrate and recognize the continued debate as a source of relevance of our field in the upcoming twenty-first century.

The central themes in Marcus's essay are 1) the controversy over the terms *Renaissance* and *early modern* and 2) the concept of a forthcoming apocalypse within the academic study of Shakespeare. Clearly, the academic apocalypse that Marcus feared never transpired, but we see evidence of the cultural upheaval she describes in the way apocalyptic themes become firmly bound with Shakespeare at the end of the twentieth century. Shakespeare never fully disappeared from popular culture or academic scholarship, yet the number of mainstream adaptations declined sharply in the early years of the twenty-first century. I must first highlight Marcus's recognition that language and terminology surrounding the period--like the word *Renaissance*--signify a rebirth, a moment in which a culture's reinvention declares a difference from all other cultures before it. A similar reinvention is occurring now, in the second decade of the twenty-first century, by the series of new authors and filmmakers pulling Shakespeare into the realm of the undead. However, our need for Shakespeare suggests that we are not in an age separate and unique from all others, but an age that is questioning our dependency on older authorial mandates. Shakespeare

in YA culture is undergoing a renaissance and is recombining old authorial forms that will not die with new and popular genre material. This combination distinguishes a literary Shakespeare who may, indeed, be immortal and worthy of continued study, while also recasting him in many narratives as a supernatural monster that cannot be destroyed by normal means.

By discussing one particular trope in popular culture, the zombie, we can see clearly the ways in which the tension Marcus describes (i.e. kill off Shakespeare or keep him alive) is foregrounded in scholarly work. This same tension animates Shakespeare's resurrection in pop culture's narratives of the 2000s. For example, Elizabeth McAlister's work "Slaves, Cannibals, and Infected Hyper-Whites: The Race and Religion of Zombies" discusses the transmigration of the Haitian zombi mythology into white American film culture. She argues that zombie mythologies are a reversal of the Hollywood plot metaphor that "order is always restored by a central hero in the *deus ex machina* ending" during the final reel. Zombie films are the destroyers of order sought through both the structure of Hollywood film and in the dystopian or undead worlds popular in YA novels of the early twenty-first century. Zombies ensure that order will never be restored, thus rendering the old world order dead. Shakespeare's appearance within these zombie narratives carries the connotations and concerns for cultural canonicity and history. He is

simultaneously a representation of our fear that history will be lost *and* a representation of our desire for history to be lost.

With such metaphorical plots circulating in pop culture, the appearance of Shakespeare as a zombie hunter in works like Handeland's *Shakespeare Undead* offer a brief glimpse of the old world order returning to dispel chaos and disorder. In works such as these, Shakespeare becomes a form of rebirth of the old, called to save the current generation from harm. However, he almost always does so as an inadequate heroic agent. It's nearly impossible to resist an allegorical reading of these materials: Shakespeare the undead white male suggests that, while our current world is broken, there is nonetheless hope for renewal and rebirth, albeit a wan and impoverished hope. In other words, a heroic dead white male like Shakespeare might not be able to resuscitate order within the apocalypse, but he might be the best example that remains from that now-dead old world--and such "a dead white author" is represented as the pale, ghastly figure of the zombie undead. Shakespeare as a zombie hunter is killing the whiteness he also represents.⁹ How do we dismiss the authority figures from the past, if they are all that hold us from slipping over the edge into further chaos? Each of these horrifying authority figures from a dead world could be imperfect or outright diabolical, but we cling to them as tokens of what once was and what still could be.

McAlister further argues that the apocalypse's normally religious significance forces the text to associate the purpose of suffering with a divine order. However, in zombie films and novels, there is no "transcendent figure who has predetermined the apocalypse. It is humans alone who have caused the end and humans alone who must survive it" (475). The heart of a zombie film requires someone to heroically defy the hordes and this "human messiah hero who will do battle with the death-seeking 'other' that threatens to destroy the world" is often someone that has earned the right to occupy the place as messiah in a religious sense, as well (477). The idea that the post-apocalyptic future must be averted or altered by a seer who is able to foresee future catastrophes and who somehow heals the wound between his time and ours is critical to the ways in which Shakespeare operates as a character within these works.

Shakespeare's presence in numerous twenty-first century zombie narratives suggests that he symbolizes, on the one hand, a progenitor of past wisdom and, on the other, a malingering remnant of what was dangerously wrong within the fallen world of the past. This ambivalent duality is resolved in each narrative differently--by Shakespeare defeating the zombie hordes, or by his own destruction by the human heroes at the center of the narrative. He serves as both a hero and the fulfillment of the promise that individual human genius has the key to survive, rather than a predatory religious/political body within the zombie world. Or he

is seen as the cause of a society's downfall, an idol who has no place in a new world order.

At first glance, it is easy to suggest that we have always had problematic, meaningful ties to historical texts and canonical authors, but at the start of our twenty-first century, we were barraged with apocalypses both real and perceived--and such an assault altered our perceptions of sources of power--political, social, and historical. The perceived end of traditional canon forms and boundaries within academic curricula severed ties to a notion of unalterable and central authority, but our current popular dystopian fetishes were also born out of the very real apocalyptic feelings tied to the terrorist attacks of 9/11. Melissa Ames's work, "Engaging 'Apolitical' Adolescents: Analyzing the Popularity and Educational Potential of Dystopian Literature Post-9/11" suggests that these dystopian narratives present a world struggling with authority figures who dominate a new world order--teachers, parents, governments--that have little or no care for the characters struggling for survival within the novels and films. If the post-apocalypse is a struggle against oppressive dominant symbols from past worlds, these narrative landscapes project a verdant ground for a re-invention of Shakespeare. It is probably no coincidence that many of the readers of these YA novels and audiences at the megaplex are also consuming a heavy dose of Shakespeare for the first time in their high school curricula simultaneously.

Ames further argues that "teenagers who are temporarily trapped in a high school panopticon" are often searching for palatable authority figures in their academic studies and in the real world. In this mode, students and young audiences alike are placed in a contact zone with dominant figures and symbols of past cultures and also with each other. I posit that Shakespeare serves as a figure of that historical past, and many narratives have classified him as part of the villainous or darker side of a lost world. By recasting Shakespeare as part of the dystopian genre, authors and audiences can position him as a zombie or zombie hunter, a vampire or a vampire slayer, a werewolf or a gun-slinger with silver bullets. Within the archive under analysis in my writing, Shakespeare is being used equally well as both a symbol of our destruction and as our possible savior. Our ambivalence towards Shakespeare replicates our fear of succumbing to corrupt cultural authority as well as our fear of abandoning these former preeminent authority figures.

When Shakespeare is reconfigured within a plot of gay teenagers struggling for acceptance among school bullies, or as a vampire zombie hunter who cannot gain the attention of popular and powerful young women, these dramatic recastings allow audiences to see Shakespeare not simply as an intractable and untouchable figure of authority, but as a concretely tangible character with whom audiences identify.

Shakespeare has been reassembled as an advocate for modern youth.

His participation in plots that resemble conflicts and identities found in modern, rather than early modern life, work to redress Shakespeare's perceived cultural distance from modern young adults. As Maddie Rodriguez has argued, we have spent far too little time delivering Shakespeare from the stodgy realm of academia. She suggests "instead of demanding that young people interest themselves in Shakespeare, maybe we should keep trying to make Shakespeare interesting to young people." These recastings of Shakespeare within the realm of the undead serves this purpose, as well. We learn about tokens of past authority, but only by resurrecting the Bard as a vampire, zombie, or werewolf.

Shakespeare serves as a bridge figure—a link to cultural identity and authority—who has earned survival in some of the narratives, while others showcase him as a symbol of change. To see how this symbolic reconfiguring works amidst the apocalyptic tropes, one could turn first to Ashley Kunsal's "'Maps of the World in Its Becoming': Post-Apocalyptic Naming in Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*" which argues that many current authors depict the apocalypse as a "linguistic journey toward redemption, a search for meaning and pattern in a seemingly meaningless world" (59).

Kunsal argues that in most post-apocalyptic fiction and film, language itself has been returned to a rudimentary structure, and must therefore be reconceived and reimagined. To summon Shakespeare is certainly a popular hope that Shakespeare as the symbolic "author of

authors” may rescue us from our own destructive tendencies. The apocalyptic landscape within the novels and films, according to Kunska, is not a *tabula rasa*, not a reimagining from scratch, but a search for what is next and new (69). Kunska's work deals primarily with the dystopian in adult or literary fiction, which tends to highlight further levels of hopelessness, despair and anguish about the passing of the old world than are seen in YA dystopian works. More important, in her argument, nostalgia often takes over the narrative, and the plot resolutions tend to augment these feelings of grief over the loss of the old culture. This element of grief is precisely what distinguishes the tone of YA dystopias and the adult versions of the genre. Nonetheless, what the two share is a sense of the need to salvage something of the past.

In the narratives I discuss, Shakespeare serves as an archetype of valuable cultural authority that can be preserved, but within the dystopia, as a character, he is often irrevocably changed. Shakespeare often retains shadows of his former authority, but also represents the changed new world that is being created within the context of apocalypse. This alteration is not a simple borrowing of cultural capital, but a transition from "dead white European male" to a newly forged character with various forms of political value within a changed world—Shakespeare as a woman or a sexual minority. In this way, Shakespeare's supposed genius is left intact although transplanted to a different kind of person, one more typical of or acceptable to a more

leftist political culture. Shakesperean cultural capital is retained even as readers can invest it in a different and better form or character.

Shakespeare's rebirth as a new form and old authority allows him to represent both the "finite" end of life for most authority figures and the "infinite" or immortal position that his supposed genius has created.

If Shakespeare is indeed "finite" then his lingering presence is even more disturbing, as it represents a particular reason for our mistrust of these old forms in a world where multiculturalism has considerably expanded and altered the boundaries of canon. For twenty-first century audiences, Shakespeare also certainly represents a social group that emanates power and privilege, and also our own culture's dramatic distrust of that social group. He is the "1% of authors" at a time where "the 1%" is under cultural attack. Shakespeare's race and social class—ranked by his spot in the canon alone—would certainly place him in the uppermost-tier of white privilege. In a post 9/11 world, whiteness and class privilege both confer power and elicit mistrust in popular culture, and Shakespeare has become increasingly aligned with such power.

In "Doing It Slant: Reconceiving Shakespeare in the Shakespeare Aftermath," Thomas Cartelli discusses the advent of a new era in Shakespearean production—something he calls "post-Shakespeare." Much as Alan Kirby and Henry Jenkins have argued, Cartelli suggests that newly dominant popular culture effects changes on older media forms, as new technology and new audiences demand reinvention of

older material.¹⁰ He argues that the production of Shakespearean media has been changed by the advent of new media such as the overlapping content in internet media and homemade Shakespeare videos, to the extent that Shakespearean film is slowly becoming extinct. And at the end of the twentieth century this was certainly the case. Cartelli asserts that film itself was no longer a viable medium to transmit Shakespearean adaptations, but YA culture's changes in mode and genre of entertainment, I will argue, have meant that even given fewer Shakespeare films, there is little reduction of the total amount of Shakespearean adaptations. Instead, in the twenty-first century, our adaptations simply shifted to more participatory forms of adaptation like fanfic, self-published works, and personal YouTube adaptations.

Sarah Darer Littman makes a similar case for the rise of dystopian media outside of traditional publication and film media. In her argument, post-9/11 Americans "preferred to lose themselves in reality TV than pay attention to the erosion of civil liberties during the War on Terror" (175). Such realities were seen on the news every evening, and in many YA narratives discontent with serious forms of media like dramas or war films waxed considerably. Other authors including Carrie Hintz and Elaine Ostrey suggest that our turn to more escapist dystopian fare always follows trying times of war. They posit that our turn from drama to comedy in moments of terror is always short-lived, and encourages a

burst of fictional dystopias that reflect more serious concerns in a masked form:

Children have a great deal to worry about, especially in the wake of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. We remember fearing nuclear war during our 1980s adolescence (a fear fueled not just by the Cold War but by TV movies like *Threads* [1984] and *The Day After* [1983]) as well as global warming and overpopulation. A startling number of works in the dystopian mode for young adults deal with post-disaster and environmentally challenged scenarios. (5)

Whatever the reason, after 9/11, popular culture trends moved past the Hollywood Shakespearean film, and turned towards lighter comedic fare. As part of this trend, the Thursday night line-up on NBC, which featured ensemble comedies like *Friends* and *Will & Grace* took the highest spots on the television despite their many years already on television.¹¹ In a strange turn, even Hollywood's comedies that were not expected to achieve substantial returns became blockbusters, for an audience hoping to escape from the harsh reality of the September 11 attacks. The highest grossing domestic films released before and after 9/11 were not the Hollywood action blockbusters or dramatic fare, but a trio of light-hearted family films: *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* (2001), *Monsters, Inc.* (2001), and *Shrek* (2001).¹² These films serve as evidence for Cartelli, as the erosion of film as a dominant media form and

a gradual end to the Hollywood Shakespearean media trend. His text presents a perilous course for Shakespearean original-language works, but ultimately new ground for Shakespearean fields beyond Hollywood film. He defines the change as “productions that take far more manifest liberties with setting, dramatic structure, and chronology, and that are particularly venturesome in their use of interpolated visual material and editing practices” (30). This new breed of Shakespearean drama that is emerging in the twenty-first century appears to be material that is less focused on the language within the Shakespearean plays and more intent on demonstrating the recapitulation and privilege of details that inspired the dramatic works. For example, the plays seem to embed discussions of the author’s life as reason for the plays’ existence. Cartelli discusses the *ShakespeaRe-Told* series on the BBC as one example of the way new productions focus on integrating Shakespearean life history and details of authorship beyond the play itself. The drama could be classified as an original language production, but the characters of Beatrice and Benedict, in the adaptation of *Much Ado about Nothing* use multiple Shakespearean sources, including the sonnets and elements of Shakespeare’s biography as examples in their courtship. A further example is *Shakespeare in Love* (1998), which reads Shakespeare’s love life as the basis of content in *Romeo and Juliet* and *Twelfth Night*. Norman and Stoppard’s *Shakespeare in Love* rightly belongs to the “living” adaptations of the 1990s, but the film also represents a

forerunner of twenty-first century authors' desire to integrate Shakespeare as a character within their dystopian worlds.

Cartelli's overarching vision of the diminishing cultural authority of Shakespearean film in the wake of new media offers a useful frame for twenty-first century adaptations. However, Cartelli has missed a critical and fundamental change in popular culture trends post-9/11. In the twenty-first-century world where young viewers and consumers have been barraged with images of terrorist attacks, a decade that will notably be remembered for the rise of the War on Terror, including an all-out attack on Iraq, popular culture changed. The surge in dystopian literature in YA culture directly responds to an audience's need for what Paul Ricoeur refers to as a "testing field" for the creation of a new world out of the rubble. By playing with the possibility of destroying long-held authority figures or altering those bastions of cultural authority in new ways, fiction allows readers to see the countless avenues of possible change. And when Shakespeare became aligned with the war, his value dwindled for many YA audiences.

Indeed, one reason for the shift away from conventional treatments of Shakespearean sources was the way politicians began to use Shakespearean themes as a call to arms in a post-9/11 world.¹³ These historical events logically propelled YA audiences away from an apparent patriotic Shakespeare. In this guise, Shakespeare appeared complicit with the politicians summoning Shakespearean cultural authority. What

arose from the ashes after the golden decade of the 1990s for Shakespearean film was a turn to the author himself, rather than his dramatic works. If *Henry V* bore the marks of war and corrupt authority in the eyes of YA audiences, Shakespeare's persona was still dappled with authority in these narratives.

Emily Sidel reads Shakespeare's appearance as a character in new cultural forms like comic books and TV series, as a "cognitive dissonance of conflicting presentations" (109). Shakespeare within these presentations is not simply a historical figure or a biographical character, but a physical representation that integrates divergent cultural ideals into a single figure. In each case, the Shakespeare seen in print or on screen bears little resemblance to a scholarly portrait of Shakespeare. Instead, Shakespeare appears as a manifestation and model of our own twenty-first century political and cultural ideals.

So what is the figure of the author in a post 9/11 world, in a popular culture dominated by YA culture, dystopian fiction, and fanfiction? The answer, for me in this work, is that the undead Shakespeare in this current cultural moment is an authorial figure for a culture that no longer believes in authors or the high echelons of power and cultural authority from the past. Shakespeare is an author who has been separated from his writing. An author who has been reconstructed piecemeal out of our own political and cultural unconscious. Within these YA novelizations and dystopian films, Shakespeare is

simultaneously immortal and dead--a symbol of ancient power, but also an icon of modernity and contemporary ideals. I would argue that Shakespeare has become a Janus figure, an authorial symbol in transition. Dystopian literature, and (quite paradoxically) the most culturally debased, young adult version of that—has become the testing ground for Shakespeare's standing within the twenty-first century.

We find such a testing ground in the independent film *Private Romeo* (2011), where a group of young military academy students are forced to study Shakespeare in their humanities class, and each student dreads, fears, and seeks an end to the work--all the while living within a *Romeo and Juliet* style romance between two male soldiers. In the end, the protagonists break out of the Shakespearean narrative, a heteronormative and oppressive regime that would demand a double suicide, both for the recognition of their love and for familial and military peace. The film evades this fate; instead of suicide, the lovers pretend to die. Their duplicity forces a recognition of the corrupt authority within the military hierarchy. However, by destroying Shakespeare's plotline in the final moments of the drama, the two students are able to survive together. This metaphorical destruction of Shakespeare, followed by a denunciation of such "ancient woes," is the only way for the young adults to progress. In essence, they must overcome the ideas of the past before a personal and social change can be made. Within these parameters, Shakespeare stands as the repressive force that nearly forced a suicidal

pact. To survive in *Private Romeo*, old ways of thinking must be eliminated.

Alternatively, in *The Sorceress*, a YA novel by Michael Scott, Shakespeare maintains a duplicitious personality who may be a representative of an old system of ideals, or a helpful and guiding figure worthy of preservation and understanding. In this YA fiction, William Shakespeare is an “alchymest” still living in present-day London and visited by teen heroes while they are hunted by dark gods and evil minions. Shakespeare's alchemical powers allow the young heroes to evade capture and death at the hands of an encroaching army of supernatural British invaders. One of the protagonists, the young Sophie, who has been invested with numerous abilities already by great alchemists from the past, cites a great number of historical figures whom she has met in her journeys, but tells Shakespeare, "None of them are as famous as you are" (132). Her awe at his reputation clouds her judgment of him through much of their early interaction. The narrative creates a kind image of Shakespeare, only to lure the children into his clutches. In reality, his intentions are much darker, as he has sided with one of the dark gods trailing the protagonists. The novel depicts the protagonist's journey from respecting Shakespeare's authority, to questioning his validity and power, to actively seeking his destruction.

Shakespeare's status as temporary ally to the young heroes allows them to work together for a time, but also prepares the teens to accept

that Shakespeare is not all that he originally seemed. In their need, they see Shakespeare as a source of power, but upon closer inspection, Shakespeare proves to be a villainous character whom the teens will have to dispatch, or else the planet will fall into the hands of their enemies. In the novel, Shakespeare appears to be a powerful emblem of knowledge and wisdom, but ultimately is revealed as a symbol of old power and corruption that must be destroyed. As we will see throughout this study, this ambivalence characterizes Shakespeare's status per se for a YA audience. Within the archive of text, film and new media examined below, an undead Shakespeare comes to represent both the enduring force, and the decaying credibility of the old world culture to which he bears witness.

Thus, for example, in many of these works Shakespeare appears as a significant and powerful symbol of authority, but one which is ultimately revealed as malignant and in need of destruction. In contrast, we find Shakespeare appearing as well in dystopian stories where he must vanquish monsters of various forms. In those worlds of vampires, zombies, aliens, or demons, Shakespeare's presence is heroic. But it is a heroism framed, and arguably tainted, by the horror genre that informs it. In one telling version of the trope: Shakespeare kills zombies, but is himself a vampire (*Shakespeare Undead*, 2007).

Joni Richards Bodart's writings offer a broad definition of what horror and monstrosity symbolizes in the current YA apocalyptic trends:

"Horror is all about disintegration, falling apart, but the vanquishing of the monsters creates the opposite effect--reintegration, coming together--that brings a feeling of rightness and security, if only for a short while." In each of these works, Bodart writes, "Horror is an allegory--a symbolic story that represents something else. All monster/horror stories say in symbols what we are afraid to say right out" (22). For Bodart, the symbolic import of monster narratives lies in the sense of reintegration that their destruction enables for our "real-world" security. When we encounter Shakespeare as a vampire, werewolf, or zombie, his annihilation brings a fulfillment and new world order. In turn, when Shakespeare vanquishes the undead hordes, we see him as a source of reintegration and comforting authority. But his function here, cast as positive, simply articulates the other pole of his figure's ambivalence in contemporary YA cultures. For some authors and filmmakers Shakespeare is a villain who must be destroyed; for others he's the vanquisher of chaos and destruction itself. Either way, within this archive Shakespeare bespeaks an old world order that refuses to die, even while its value remains in question.

One final scholarly reflection upon zombies clarifies exactly why this reiteration of Shakespeare in YA culture, a genre motivated centrally by representing rebellion against authority, is the prime area of conflict and debate over how to adapt Shakespeare at the start of the twenty-first century. In "And Say the Zombie Responded? Or, How I Learned to Stop

Living and Unlove the Undead," H. Paul Steeves argues that our horror at seeing a zombie is motivated by three distinct factors: zombies' lack of language, lack of speed/movement, and cannibalism. These qualities explain why zombies both terrify and thrill us in popular zombie apocalypses. For Steeves, "The 'real' zombie is thus related to the cult of personality. The real zombie is there to stand in for those we have lost, beckoning us to commit those sins of ego, those sins of idolatry, that doom us" (11). In his argument, zombies represent something that we have lost, but that we cannot bear to lose--so we hang on to the undead with everything in our power. When the undead return to devour us, we are captivated by the spectacle of their return, simply because of our past love and the remembrance of what it once was. Those same zombies lack all language and the ability to speak: "What it means for someone to be dead is never to be able to respond. The dead are, to be sure, still with us. But there will never be a response" (22).

Shakespeare's return from the dead, a return across the millennial boundary, a return from an "academic death," a return after popular tastes turned to lighter fare, can hardly be described in better terms. For us to bring Shakespeare back is both to request an answer from the grave and to experience a terror at what we've summoned. For his return as zombie or vampire, monster or slayer is simply our own hope to consume his glory once again, one gory mouthful of flesh and blood at a time.

Notes

¹ Paul Ricoeur's *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia* references "pocket dystopias" as places within our own world that are inescapable due to social, cultural, or psychological boundaries. For example, a young child in an orphanage would be unable to escape whatever harsh conditions the dominant power structure of the orphanage enacted. While the story may take place in our own recognizable world, a pocket dystopia refers to any such place where the normal power structure is skewed and inescapable for the narrative's participants.

² According to IMDB.com, or the Internet Movie Database, these 115 films mark a dramatic increase in filmic production that outnumbers all other decades of the 20th century outside of the silent film era (1894-1920). According to alternative lists at absoluteshakespeare.com/trivia/films, there are over 250 adaptations during this decade, and www.filmsite.org/90sintro declares the number at 178. Whichever number is chosen, or what the criteria, there is no higher number of adaptations in any single decade.

³ My research within this work focuses primarily upon adaptations and developments within North America. While there are multiple film adaptations that contribute to the Shakespearean corpus outside this area of focus, I wish to highlight the ways that Hollywood adaptations ignore Shakespeare for much of the 1970s and 1980s.

⁴ Under famous and powerful directors like Orson Welles and Lawrence Olivier, Shakespearean material also found strong box office success. Alternatively, films that allude to Shakespearean plotlines found even greater monetary gains, but these forms of adaptation happened only rarely in Hollywood. Two examples that may clarify exactly what I mean here are *Kiss Me Kate* (1953) and *West Side Story* (1961). While both films make strong use of Shakespearean plots, they abandon attempts at Shakespearean dialogue and poetry altogether. I draw attention to the two different types of adaptation simply to show that these forms of traditional and modified adaptation style are nothing new, but that they increase in popularity and number during the 1990s.

⁵ Filming for Zeffirelli's production had already begun with Canal+, a French premium pay television channel in 1989. With Branagh's success, Canal+ sought theatrical distribution for Zeffirelli's production, starring a high profile Mel Gibson. Zeffirelli credits Branagh's film as the reason for the increased attention and focus on Shakespeare in the DVD commentary for *Hamlet*.

⁶ While the articles surrounding these Romeo and Juliet adaptations are probably too numerous to mention there are a few stand out articles that deserve special consideration. Stephen Buhler's *Shakespeare in the Cinema: Ocular Proof*, offers multiple chapters focusing on both of the adaptations listed here. Also, Elizabeth Klett's articles "*Shakespeare in Love* and the End(S) of History" also focuses on the sense of authorial experience at work within the plot of Marc Norman's film. Mark Nicholls' article, as well, "Brush Up Your Shakespeare: Performance Anxieties in *Shakespeare in Love*" argues that the intertwining of performance and actual experience within the film causes an intertextual crisis that self-reflectively ends the 1990s Shakespearean film fad by the turn of the century.

⁷ Shakespearean films, for the greater part of the 20th century, remained adaptations that maintained dialogue, poetry, and plot from the original dramatic works. However,

special mention should be made here of two films that singularly ejected both poetry and dialogue in exchange for modern scripts and modern language: *Kiss Me Kate* (1953) directed by George Sidney and *West Side Story* (1961) directed by Jerome Robbins and Robert Wise both could be argued as precedents for the 1990s trend of snatching plotlines without any Shakespearean accompanied writing.

⁸ Donald Hedrick in "War is Mud: Branagh's Dirty Harry V and the Types of Political Ambiguity" offers strong comparisons between the Henry V of Branagh's play and the previous war films that audiences were familiar with in the previous year's releases. As does Samuel Crowl in *Shakespeare at the Cineplex*, where he argues that Branagh develops war genre elements in Henry V to create "a film language that allow[s] Shakespeare to break free from the elite art-house audience [and] to find a broader public, especially among the young" (12).

⁹ Admittedly, the figurations of race and ethnicity are extraordinarily complex in this example; we can only gesture inadequately to them here. For further clarification see: Royster, Francesca T. "White-Limed Walls: Whiteness and Gothic Extremism in Shakespeare's Titus Andronicus." *Shakespeare Quarterly* 51.4 (Winter, 2000): 432-455. *JSTOR*. Sept. 24, 2015. Web. By looking closely at Royster's article we may make a similar form of analysis unpacking the complexities of white and ghostly white in the figure of the Shakespearean zombie or zombie hunter.

¹⁰ See Alan Kirby's *Digimodernism: How New Technologies Dismantle the Postmodern and Reconfigure our Culture* New York: Continuum, 2009 and Henry Jenkins' *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide* New York: New York UP, 2006.

¹¹ Ratings and rating shares are available for shows like *Will & Grace* at <http://www.durfee.net/will/ratings.htm>. According to this, and other, rating sites, the individual share for *Will & Grace* began a prominent increase within days from the attacks after 9/11. The episode "Last of the Really Odd Lovers" earned a 7.8 rating and a 12% share of the entire television audience when it aired on 9/6. When the series returned following the 9/11 attacks, the first episode back gathered a significantly larger audience that continued to rise throughout 2001. "The Third Wheel Gets the Grace" which aired on 9/27 earned a 14.6 rating with 21% share of the American television audience. By Feb. 2002, at only the midpoint of *Will & Grace*'s season, the show had doubled its viewership from the previous year. "A Chorus Lie," which aired on 2/7/02 earned a staggering 15.0 rating and 23% share of all television viewers that evening.

¹² *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* was released on November 14, 2001 (\$317 million). *Monsters Inc.* was released on November 2, 2001 (\$255 million). *Shrek*, which I include in this list despite its early release on May 16, 2001, showcases the strong showing of comedic family fare that characterized the year (\$267 million).

¹³ See Note 8 and articles for Mackubin and Newstrom.

CHAPTER III
FEMINIST WEREWOLVES AND CULTURALLY ELITIST VAMPIRES:
YOUNG ADULT REGENERATIONS OF SHAKESPEARE
AND THE UNDEAD

In the independent film adaptation of *Z for Zachariah* (2015), a PG-13 YA adaptation, directed by Craig Zobel, a young heroine named Annie (Margot Robbie) struggles in a post-apocalyptic landscape with her belief that she is the last woman alive on the planet. In Annie's near-utopian valley, there is little trace of the natural disaster that destroyed much of the world around her. The green hills and lush farm growth remain beautiful, despite occasional hints of what might be nuclear fallout. Otherwise there is little to no explanation of what natural disaster caused the human extinction. Annie is simply alone.

In the opening scene of the film, before any details are explained, Annie enters an abandoned, nearby town, a city outside the safety of her pristine valley. Annie is clad in protective gear that obscures her face and entire body. The sounds of her breathing echo within the gas mask that she wears, and we can hear an ominous clicking of something like a radiation detector nearby. Annie scavenges the town for supplies, but her first and foremost destination in these opening shots is the public library. She breaks the locks on the building, signaling to the audience that she has never been here before, and enters a structure utterly devastated by some type of attack. The shelves are covered with dust,

which obviously worries Annie, as she double-checks her equipment before collecting any of the books.

The camera tracks Annie's gloved hands. Her movements are obviously nostalgic, gentle caresses against the covers, like someone browsing through the stacks and considering the choice between a favorite volume or a new book. Annie's goal, however, is specific, and she heads almost immediately to the Young Adult section of the library. There, as in many contemporary libraries, a few books sit upon the YA Shakespeare shelf.

Her hand comes to rest on a shelf that certainly surprised many in the theater: a collection of Shakespearean plays, poems, and specifically a visible volume of Charles & Mary Lamb's *Tales of Shakespeare*. After grabbing one of these Shakespearean options, she lifts the book to her face, examines the cover, shakes her head with a groan, and tosses the book away. In this post-apocalyptic landscape, Shakespeare is clearly dismissed by our young heroine--and her distaste is transmitted clearly to the audience, even through a radiation mask. Indeed, the laughter that rippled through 1,100 audience members at the Sundance Film Festival viewing I attended on January 30th, 2015 showed that many viewers both recognized and identified with Annie's choice. I was struck suddenly by how many people in the audience shared Annie's distaste for Shakespeare. As Annie sought something different, better, or easier, the audience's giggles subsided. Her movements through the YA shelves of

the library and her choice of a generic werewolf book caused hardly a ripple in the crowd. Her eventual choice was accepted as more appropriate and more relevant by so many people around me that there was silence.

Annie's choice of reading material within the opening shots of Zobel's 2015 film *Z for Zachariah* offers another vantage point on the post-apocalyptic resurrection of Shakespeare for a millennial audience. In this case, Annie's complete rejection of Shakespeare suggests that his writings offer nothing to those who populate the post-apocalypse. Indeed, as one of the remaining representatives of humanity on earth, Annie's rejection forecasts a permanent death of the Shakespearean corpus.

The film version of *Z for Zachariah* is adapted from Robert C. O'Brien's YA novel written in 1976. The novel has no such opening library scene or any link that I could easily establish with Shakespeare. Although Annie Burden is an avid sixteen-year-old reader within the novel, the only mention of any specific book is contained within the title. The reference is to a Biblical ABC's book that Annie recalls from her childhood: *A is for Adam, Z is for Zachariah*. In Annie's memories of the book from childhood, "Zachariah" must be the last man in the world. The film's introduction and foregrounding of the library scene heralds a contemporary concern about the role of authoritative master texts — a concern apparently not shared by the 1970s novel, with its titular

reference to the Bible. Where O'Brien's novel finds its very name in the authoritative exemplum offered by the sacred Book of books, Zobel's film begins with a vivid rejection of our culture's secular bible: the work of William Shakespeare.

Zobel's rejection of Shakespeare, however, bespeaks the larger pattern I will be examining throughout this study: namely, the paradoxical ways in which millennial YA culture relies upon a figure of Shakespeare that it simultaneously negates, at once salvaging and disrupting traditional forms of authority. In a post-apocalyptic landscape, that ambivalence finds expression in the figure of the question of *what remains of Shakespeare, paragon of culture, after culture itself has been dismantled*.

In "Presenting the Case for Social Change: The Creative Dilemma of Dystopian Writing for Children," Kay Sambell explores the dynamics of identification at play within YA responses to dystopian and apocalyptic narratives. Sambell suggests that YA novels deliberately figure rebellion within their plots to "create conditions for young readers to rehearse, actively, almost playfully, a way of reflective thinking that focuses on asking questions, discovering analyses, and hypothetically testing out solutions" (152). YA novels, for Sambell, offer up rebellion as a playful alternative to a real-world scenario in which young readers must submit to the unquestioning rule of authority. Within *Z for Zachariah*, the initial encounter with Shakespeare gives exactly this spark of teenage rebellion.

Shakespeare's presence in the film serves to showcase a sense of outright rebellion against the old forms of authority. No matter if Shakespeare was accepted by school and family in the old world; in this new civilization, only Annie gets to choose how to remake societal values, and only her choices decide what knowledge is worthwhile and what structure new authority should receive.

While we never see Annie's final choices from the stacks, we do get to see the stacks of books later in her home. Annie's fondness for J. K. Rowling, L. J. Smith, and other YA authors became visible as we are guided through the books amassed on every surface in her living space. Her affection for novels about the undead--and werewolves in particular--offer another chance for audience members to judge her taste in literature. In my January 30th, 2015 audience, no one made a peep. We seemed to share her viewpoint, sharing her connection to dystopian fiction, to the undead, to the worlds of Hogwarts and *Twilight*, the world of magic and fantasy. In that brief moment in the theater, each audience member was able to become Annie and recognize a similar choice.

To be sure, neither the author nor his words ever appear in *Z for Zachariah*. It is only the bound and mute volume of his work that is resurrected from the ashen fallout of a fallen world: i.e. the resurrected book, which is then summarily reburied. However, we needn't look far, in YA fiction, for the more complete resurrection of Shakespeare's words: for the transposition of his actual narratives (and not just his bound

volumes) into a world of revenants. I have in mind here numerous dystopic “adaptations” of Shakespeare that bear little resemblance to any dramatic work that any of us have read. Often, these adaptations are absurd in their reconstitutions of Shakespeare, with apocalyptic battles between werewolves and vampires, shape-shifting daughters and fragile human fathers/lovers, or mutable supernatural creatures and the slayers who hunt them. The texts throw out much of the original plot to reconstruct the mythology of their respective undead monsters, much as Annie did at the start of *Z for Zachariah*. In turn, and again like Annie, the world of Shakespeare is exchanged or tossed aside for settings populated with zombies, vampires, and werewolves. Yet each work retains faint glimmers of the original--at least enough to sharpen a reader's curiosity to the influences from Shakespeare--and the scenes that are kept most faithful to the original are the ones that contain notorious interpretive cruxes: i.e. those elements of the original text that, irreducibly corrupt, equivocal or ambiguous, are least amenable to translation or paraphrase.

In short, these YA adaptations preserve those scenes that cause much analytic debate in Shakespeare, the most infamous moments of ambiguity and dissent. These cruxes reflect and archive a society whose ambiguities and ironies we still cannot settle in our interpretation. For example, in *The Taming of the Shrew*, two of the more difficult scenes to resolve are Petruchio and Katharina's initial encounter in Act II.i, where

the verbal banter walks an equivocal tightrope between playful banter and outright hostility, and the Act V.ii resolution where Katharina actively participates in a performance of wifely submission to her husband. These renowned scenes have drawn our attention as readers for centuries, and even in these YA adaptations they are the moments that are retained almost intact. In these instances, Shakespeare details an ambiguous argument about patriarchy--one that we are still repeating, discovering, and debating. In our own definition and analysis of nebulous terms such as *patriarchy*, *masculinity*, and *femininity* we still struggle overtly at providing a clear and fixed point of reference. Shakespeare's ambiguity within these moments becomes a target for the authors of these novelizations, as we are still arguing about patriarchy and/or what it means to resist it. The pivotal and troublesome areas of Shakespeare's plots offer intriguing points upon which to anchor an adaptation strategy.

Indeed, it is the perennial undecidability of these textual cruxes that seems to invite their inclusion in these YA narratives. The ambivalence contained within a moment like Katharina's final speech—is she truly submitting, or ironically resisting the will of her husband?—is both where our entertainment/pleasure lies and also the purpose for the a revivification of a 400-year-old text. Something still, apparently, needs to be worked through in these critical narrative moments, and the YA

novelizations that resuscitate the text provide an opportunity for that working-through.

Furthermore, in the YA fiction I examine below, this working-through takes the form of a kind of cultural necromancy. The YA characters and authors invoked below are not just passive readers like Annie Burden stacking texts upon a shelf; instead they are actively participating in the magic of raising the dead. Annie Burden's choice presented the question of what remains of Shakespeare, of cultural authority, in the wake of cultural collapse. In the YA fiction at issue here, these remains are itself the question, and the cultural necromancy performed grants Shakespeare's work a both-and space between life and death. The worlds of these narratives are populated with both figures as well: undead zombies and vampires, shape-shifters and (paradigmatically) werewolves. A werewolf is both alive and undead, a supernatural creature, a human being, a witch, a demon, the victim of a curse, a physical power, fluidity, ability, mutable change, uncontrollable power, animalistic hunger, human intellect, and romantic icon. A creature such as the werewolf allows us to see the ambivalence in cultural ideals, and in turn a chance to allegorically form supple and fluid answers to age-old cultural questions. A werewolf is not simply "one thing" or "another" but a signifier of multiple reference points, mythologies, folklores, and a simultaneous physical representation of power--a combination rather than an exclusion. Moreover, Shakespeare's

appearance in the worlds of these multiform werewolves and undead revenants is no accident—Shakespeare is himself dynamically equivocally, both dead writer and living authority.

In this chapter, I explore two of the more vibrant novelizations written for the YA audience interpreting Shakespeare through the trope of the werewolf.¹ First, Beverly Shults's *The Taming of the Werewolf* introduces a Katharina from Shakespeare's *Taming of the Shrew*, who has been transformed into a werewolf before meeting Petruchio. The novel offers a comparison between two unique worlds: the Padua of the sixteenth century riddled with patriarchal restrictions and the world of the wolves that roam the countryside outside the city, matriarchal and ruled by alpha females who hold the stronger and more powerful male wolves in submission. Shults's work, I will argue, utilizes the werewolf mythology to create a violent disruption of patriarchal authority, and as a way of replacing ambiguity with precise fourth-wave feminist and political arguments for her YA audience. Rather than looking at the patriarchy or anti-patriarchy binary that has driven our discussion of Shakespeare in past generations, Shults shifts attention towards Kate as a hybrid form of both, a type of fourth-wave feminist who seeks inclusive acceptance, rather than dichotomies and binary oppositions.

Second, *Romeo and Juliet: A Vampire and Werewolf Love Story* written by H.T. Night presents a cultural war in Verona between impoverished werewolves who live in slums, projects, and ghettos outside

of proper society and vampires who control the economy of the city. Night's 2012 work, I will argue, employs its werewolves as a tense metaphor for a racialized other who is often correlated with the beastly half of the monster, and the vampire-werewolf conflict as a metaphor for the kinds of economic oppositions and conflicts crystallized in late 2011 by the Occupy Wall Street movement. Rather than situating the Capulet and Montague houses within a binary and equal opposition, Night shifts attention to more ambiguous forms of inequality generated through race and class warfare. These works have more in common than the werewolf motif that appears in their supernatural plotlines. In both novels, the authors develop the themes of the undead specifically to locate resolutions between Shakespeare and our modern world. Shakespeare's reputation is renewed and reinvigorated in both these narratives as a source of still-relevant historical wisdom.

In YA terms, these "ancient" sources are valued by academics and previous generations, but for new readers in the twenty-first century, these authoritative sources must explain their supposed immortality in visible and recognizable terms. In other words, a werewolf plotline adds "street cred" to *The Taming of the Shrew* and to *Romeo and Juliet*.

Turning Katharina into a werewolf offers two points worthy of consideration: a fourth-wave feminist reading of her power within the relationship with Petruchio, and a gendered reclaiming of a werewolf mythology that has been dominated by masculinity.² What happens

when we turn Romeo into an underprivileged Montague werewolf whose entire culture is at war with an economically elite Capulet vampire regime?³ The absurdity of the plot can often be much of the pleasure of reencountering a familiar text such as *Romeo and Juliet* hidden within a werewolf battle. We see the conflict between werewolf and vampire instead of competing Italian houses. Such a story can reinvigorate our understanding of the original and offer a reading of *Romeo and Juliet* that echoes something like an undead Occupy Wall Street movement.

In this light, Michelle Pagni Stewart has recently argued powerfully that studying YA supernatural texts allows us an opportunity to see how these texts dismantle stereotypes, "create cultural criticism of the dominant society, and make manifest crimes of [the] past" (89). As Stewart suggests, YA texts critique dominant source material in an attempt to raise new meaning from the corpse of an old cultural referent, thereby resuscitating the old work for a new world of readers. These new meanings are often entirely in opposition to the revered themes or arguments of the older writings. Her argument helps explain Shakespeare's entrance within the genre — both through the use of his plotlines, and his appearance as a character in his own right—since he can act not only as a hero, but as a straw man that can be struck down or burned in effigy. Stewart further argues that "in the angst of adolescence and horror" many YA novels eschew simple "spine tingling terror" and in turn construct an "identity, which is connected to the past,

to the present, and to others, both those an adolescent has much in common with and those he or she does not" (96). Within this context, Stewart suggests that we often turn to the past to find a point of origin, a place or time that makes us feel comfortable by its sheer familiarity. However, by the end of the work, these novelizations tend to upend that familiarity and create something entirely new, a sense that the world is being reborn by creating a new set of values and a new set of priorities. These novels filter and sift the relics of the past to find what is worth keeping and what requires abandoning.

I would argue that these YA novels employ Shakespearean plotlines as a type of master narrative that connects our current cultural moment to an authoritative past, while also fancifully reinterpreting the master narrative for a twenty-first century YA audience. As these new stories engage the master narratives, or culturally authoritative texts, the reinterpretation generates new meaning for an audience that is also looking to dystopian or apocalyptic texts to create a better future within the real world.

Just this activity of reinterpretation and recreation takes place in Shults's *The Taming of the Werewolf* where the ambiguous question of patriarchy becomes the driving force of the supernatural plot. Katharina's power within the Shakespearean narrative is ambiguous-- she is a woman ruled by her father under the constraints of a patriarchal culture, yet simultaneously one of the most dynamic and inventive

linguists in Shakespeare's canon. Her final speech is the longest spoken in the play, but it is also a speech of profound submission. The supernatural elements of Shults' novel manage to encompass and even resolve these ambiguities, and in doing so, the novel transforms the power structures of the original play. Within Shults's work, Katharina is both a part of the patriarchal world and also part of a new hybrid form of supernatural power derived from the wolves of Italy. Shults's work finds new ground by offering YA readers a place both within patriarchal culture and within the overlapping circle of feminist opposition--a hybrid place of acceptance for anyone who wishes to join in the peaceful revolution. One need not be simply a human or a wolf; instead fluid hybridity is the answer.

Indeed, more than anything else this hybridity is the hallmark of the undead as the trope appears in YA culture — and it is the centrality of hybridity that, arguably, makes the undead (be they zombies, werewolves, vampires or other shapeshifting monsters) such a resonant term within this literature. The undead characteristically inhabit a place that is neither a world of the past nor a world entirely new. The trope presents a nebulous space that offers resolution with the past rather than its erasure or destruction. The notion of a *separate* and *accepting* place will serve as a partial definition here. This should appear strange considering such a world will be full of monsters, but it is not. In these new YA adaptations, the undead creatures that populate this hybrid

space are often simply misunderstood. Monsters can always be redeemed. In fact, a host of recent narratives have sought just such a redemption for some of the most notable villains of modern narratives. One need only look at the popularity of novels, Broadway musicals, films and TV series such as *Wicked: The Life and Times of the Wicked Witch of the West* (2007) originally written by Gregory Maguire, *Maleficent* (2014) directed by Robert Stromberg, and the multiple fairy tale villains of *Once Upon a Time* (2011) currently in its fifth television season.

If villains have recently undergone a redeeming baptism, then undead monsters have received a deluge of warm and fuzzy turnabouts. *Warm Bodies* (2013) directed by Jonathan Levine adapts the YA zombie novel of Isaac Marion of the same title. Marion in turn adapted *Romeo and Juliet*, but here with a forbidden love between zombie boy and human zombie-hunter's daughter. By story's end, the film/novel depicts the cure for the zombie apocalypse through love, emotion, and affection--a resolution, no doubt, devoutly to be wished. The undead zombies in *Warm Bodies*, when joined with the Shakespearean source material from *Romeo and Juliet*, offer one of the most cozy and adorable depictions of zombie literature that I have ever witnessed. The true love shared between the supposed doomed lovers end their novel with a zombie cure and a happy ending.

David Linker, in his YA novel *Romeo & Juliet 2: True Love Never Dies* (2011), also shows the lighter side of zombie fare by showing the

sequel to Romeo and Juliet's epic love story once they return from the dead as zombies. In this comedic twist, the romantic tale can only survive if the doomed lovers return from the grave to continue their love story as zombies. The narrative blends gross out humor, an eternity of rotting body parts, a quest for brains, and the hope that somehow Friar Lawrence can rescue the town from the zombie apocalypse he created by using necromancy to revive Romeo and Juliet's disinterred corpses.

Vampires have also joined the Shakespearean fray in multiple incarnations. The best-selling *Juliet Immortal* (2012-13) series by Stacey Jay documents a YA alternative sequel to *Romeo and Juliet*, this time with the lovers depicted as soul-sucking vampires trapped in a temporal loop, repeating their doomed love again and again--until one of them can break the spell of their vampire overlords. In a more classic YA vampire story, Robert Jeschonek's *Bloodliner* (2010) details a William Shakespeare destined to walk the earth as a vampire. This quest story describes Shakespeare's search for the vampire afterlife, which he can only attain by beating human descendant Jonah Ivory and wicked vampire Genghis Khan to a priceless hidden artifact. While Shakespeare is undead in the novel, he is by no means a monster--this title is reserved for such baddies as Khan and Hercules, who attempt to destroy Shakespeare, as well as most of humanity by novel's end. By final resolution point, Shakespeare becomes a "vampire support group leader" and counselor for those struggling with their undead status.

Undead creatures are no longer simply villainous monsters in these YA re-creations; they are ever so much more. Misunderstood outsiders certainly, but also compendia of wisdom, pain, loneliness, angst, deceit, anger, cleverness, and deep love. Each of these novelizations offer an undead resurrection of Shakespearean master narrative in the context of modern dystopia. And in each of these YA dystopias, the Shakespearean undead brings a new hybrid fluidity to the impasses of the past.

It is just this hybrid fluidity that Shults' Katharina provides in *The Taming of the Werewolf*. Katharina is, unsurprisingly, neither a monster nor a terrifying creature of the night; she is simply a young girl who must adapt to her own changing place within the shifting world around her. Shults dismisses much of Shakespeare's plotline, and engages only some of the more infamous moments of the play—such as the initial meeting and the final resolution. When Shults does so, each of these scenes--while remaining nearly faithful in dialogue--creates new possibilities for a fourth-wave feminist reading of *The Taming of the Shrew*. In short, Shults' text illustrates its critique of Shakespeare's text through the trope of the werewolf. As Shults makes clear in her text, Katharina assumes almost all of the power within the relationship with Petruchio. Her werewolf abilities trump the masculine power demonstrated in all aspects of the novel. Katharina has only two weaknesses that Petruchio can exploit. The first is simply that the novelization is set in Italy during

the late sixteenth century, and Katharina must navigate the male-dominated world around her. Without a husband, she cannot inherit her father's estate, and she cannot maintain her social status within the community if she abandons her place in this patriarchal world.

However, Katharina's hybridity allows her an escape from even these perceived weaknesses, as both Petruchio and Baptista cower before her physical strength and mental dominance.

Shults creates a powerful alternative to contrast with the restrictions in Padua--and it is here that the werewolf plotline becomes an overt critique of patriarchy. Just outside the walls of the city, hiding within the wilds of the outlying orchards and farms, lives a pack of wolves. At the center of the wolf pack, as lead hunter is an alpha female. Katharina encounters the wolf pack after her early transformations as a werewolf and attempts to join with them in their nightly hunts. She is accepted by all of the pack members except for the alpha female who recognizes Katharina as something different. Her smell is not entirely wolf, but not entirely human either. Her scent as both wolf and human causes the unnamed alpha female to reject her. Once the alpha female makes her decision, Katharina must flee for her life as the entire pack begins to hunt her through the forest. During her flight, Katharina identifies her new hybrid social position:

I admired this wolfish confidence. I couldn't help but contrast this with the expectations of a "well-bred" woman in

human society—with “well-bred” meaning “well-behaved”. We were expected to keep our eyes modestly cast down, our voices quiet, our feelings bottled tight.

I refused to play by those rules any more. (120)

Shults's critique of patriarchy is both simply constructed for YA audiences and a powerful way of comparing two entirely different worlds. One world is dominated by men who hold all the power through control of economics, religion, law, and social custom. In the other, a wilderness outside Padua hides an entirely oppositional world that threatens the power structures of the patriarchal community cloistered within the city—the wolves. Even the strongest alpha male within the pack is dominated and submissive to the alpha female. The matriarchal society of the wolf pack opens Katharina's eyes to a new way of seeing the world, one in which feminine power is not simply part of a fairy tale.

This battle between two powerful alpha females, one entirely wolf and the other a supernatural shapeshifter, offers a chance to see the ways that Shults's work might serve as a metaphor for fourth-wave feminism. I follow Ealasaid Munro's formulations here. Munro argues that members of the third wave of feminist movements hold back a fourth wave of feminism or deny its existence based upon their lack of knowledge surrounding digital or social media. Munro continues her analysis by outlining the precepts of a fourth-wave feminism that relies on activism in social media spheres and through digital means. "Many of

those academics in a position to research and publish on feminism belong to this older age group [third-wave feminists], hence academic feminism is arguably guilty of failing to properly examine the shape that the fourth wave is currently taking" (sec. 3). This fourth-wave feminist group, as defined by Munro and others such as Jennifer Baumgardner, is able to adapt to new media forms and critique depictions that older generations are not able to define. "The proliferation of these new technologies" shows a few ways that the fourth-wave feminist movement may need to evolve and change to fit their environment as, "terms such as WoC [Women of Color], cis [individuals whose gender and sexual identities may not cleanly overlap] and TERF [trans-exclusionary radical feminists] are invaluable given the 140-character limit imposed by Twitter, and lend themselves to the practice of hashtagging, an online practice that allows information to be quickly retrieved and linked" (sec. 4). In *F'em: Goo Goo, Gaga and Some Thoughts on Balls* Baumgardner tracks this movement as a more inclusive feminist movement that accepts all those who wish to be women--even when biological gender prevented such a claim.

Shults's Shakespearean adaptation develops this conflict between new fourth-wave feminists and third-wave feminists by placing two alpha-females together, one an older intractable wolf with little knowledge of new forms, and another that is able to adapt, shift, change, and include new ideas of what it means to be a "wolf" within her world.

Such a concept is hidden within wolf's clothing, but the idea that the younger and mutable Kate is much more adaptive and inclusive than her older female counterpart will not be lost on YA readers.

Such a contrast is heightened by both Shakespeare's original plot and the reader's popular knowledge of the werewolf. Katharina serves as an anchor point to an authoritative text, where we can see Shakespeare critiquing social restrictions on female power. But Katharina also stands within *The Taming of the Werewolf* as a modern feminist who doesn't necessarily need either the old patriarchal world of Shakespeare or the new matriarchal society of the wolves. She hovers between the two throughout the story as both a sixteenth-century woman and a creature of the undead, made extraordinarily powerful by supernatural means. We can see Shakespeare's original Katharina, but her new undead form is that of someone outside the old bonds of Shakespeare's world, a character unsure at many points in the narrative of how to forge or create a bridge between two imperfect orders--the old (Padua/patriarchy) and the new (the wolf pack/matriarchy).

Shults's writing begs the question of whether there is a way to navigate a possible mid-point between these two extremes. If gender equality is a central goal for our culture, Shults seems to be asking, how exactly do we get there? Is a social contract like marriage the problem or a solution? Does marriage inevitably privilege one gender or does it, at least ideally, promise equality? To see how such a development of the

plot becomes much greater than simply a YA werewolf novel, we must also seek to understand the ways that werewolf behavior has become a metaphor for bridging two violently different worlds. Shults' use of the werewolf image is not unique in this light; as we'll see, the idea of the werewolf and its representations in literature have almost always carried a similar symbolic weight.

The central plot of Shults's work retains some of the Shakespearean original, but by looking closely at which points are retained we can also identify a number of issues that the author wishes to violently revise--even when they are instantly recognizable. Katharina's story is that of a young girl who was turned into a werewolf at an early age. After her tragic bite and transformation, Kate's father, Baptista, secludes both of his daughters from public view. Kate and Bianca develop differently in solitude, with Kate dominating her sister in physical and mental power. Kate's introduction into this supernatural sphere serves as a metaphoric knowledge of her feminine power. Just as she saw when running with the wolf pack outside of Padua, Kate's femininity is no longer seen as the traditional submission that Bianca shows within her home. Kate's refusal to bow to her father's wishes, the demeaning isolation, and anyone else's authority is seen as a part of her werewolf form. When Kate becomes angry, she transforms into a terrifying wolf--and everyone submits to her power. This transformation is a representation of Kate's knowledge manifesting in physical form.

“There was no pain. The whole process just felt like a glorious, prolonged, rejuvenating stretch. I could feel every muscle tensing, then relaxing with an inner sigh of relief and pleasure” (65). When she can no longer bear the weight of patriarchy, she transforms into a larger than life, supernatural, and frighteningly strong undead monster. This new form has allowed her to see that she need no longer constrain herself to her father's or her future husband's authority.

Petruchio's entrance into the story serves as another obstacle to Kate's freedom. During the novel, we are treated to Kate's first-person views of her life, most of which is misery imposed by masculine authoritative figures and dominant female figures. Her father, the city's guards, and an alpha wolf take turns forcing her into various forms of submission. When Petruchio arrives, ready to carry her off into marriage, Kate's fury as a werewolf adds an explosive touch to the pair's famous first meeting. Kate's analysis of the introductory situation is another way of seeing Shults's argument about werewolf hybridity as an escape from binary social structures: “[Petruchio] couldn't be my equal. I didn't *want* him as my equal. He cared nothing for me, nor I for him. I just wanted him to go away, to leave me in my misery. So what if the entire town of Padua thought I was an unbearable, intolerable, unweddable bitch? It was easier this way” (46). Kate's desire for freedom from the dominant forms of authority in her life serves as a clear moment where young adult readers can identify with an unease toward rigid

structures of patriarchal authority. Kate's rage at Petruchio's attempt to wrest another form of freedom from her erupts in the verbal skirmishes that populate the play--often presented within the novel word for word. By the end of the story, Kate's quest for freedom is subverted by her love for Petruchio, and she changes him into a werewolf so that they can share a telepathic bond. This telepathy allows Petruchio and Kate to orchestrate the final moments of the play/novel, and unmask Bianca as the terrible shrewish wife. In the end, the humans are seen as the corrupt hypocrites who have dominated Kate's young life and authority figures who ask for her unquestioning submission out of their own fear of her hybridity, while reveling in their own freedom and power. In contrast, Kate and Petruchio as the undead are able to rise above the humans' limited understanding of power, freedom, and authority:

'Kiss me, Kate!' he roared, and folded me in his arms. Reason, pride, self-consciousness all slipped away as our lips met. I melted into the fire of his kiss as the world dissolved. Dimly, I heard applause rise around us, a growing tide of approval. I smiled into Petruchio's kiss. Yes, he had tamed me. But he had also let me be as wild as I needed to be. And he had matched my wildness with his own. We were equals at last. (113)

At these final lines, we can see a very different Kate than the miserably alone figure in the novelization's opening pages. She has

accepted equality with Petruchio, rather than freedom or dominance. The equality mentioned in the final lines is still unproven and untested at novel's end, yet any reader would accept Petruchio's rule over her father's any day. Ultimately, Kate's early violent behavior is explained away as part of her supernatural form, and the solution to her problematic rebellion is to tie her irrevocably to another rebellious authority figure. Does this *deus ex machina* ending trouble modern audiences just a bit too much? The werewolf within Kate explains her violence and her need to find someone who is an outcast from multiple worlds like herself.

Kate's internal werewolf is a specific way of challenging Shakespeare himself. Shults herself foregrounds the perennial questions posed by Shakespeare's play in the "Curtain Call" chapter at the end of her work--a type of explanatory note for her young readers on Katharina's backstory: "Why was she so dead-set against getting married? What turned her into such a frightful shrew in the first place? Why did she have such an antagonistic relationship with Bianca? And what was the nature of the agreement reached by Katharina and Petruchio that led him to consider her 'tamed'?" (114). Shults's final words echo a similar argument to her readers, "How better to explore all of these questions than by turning Katharina into a werewolf?"

While Shults is probably being facetious here, she was not far from the literal mark. By bringing the werewolf to life within Shakespeare's

play, Shults provides a supernatural solution to a troubling ending--an ending that seems misogynistic or patriarchal to twenty-first century eyes. After a short marriage filled with violence and abuse, why would Kate submit even slightly to her husband by novel's end? The answer lies clearly within the addition of the werewolf mythology. Kate's violence and dominance is supernatural, not human in origin, nor strictly speaking either feminine or masculine. The realization that both Kate and the reader achieve by the final pages is that her only hope of gaining freedom is to force Petruchio into the realm of the undead and supernatural, as well. Only in that moment does Kate see her chance for equality within the relationship. Only then does Kate see a chance for freedom—a freedom from human constraints. The realm of the undead in this novel is a way to escape the human norms of gender, age and power that Kate has been forced to accept her entire life.

In "Werewolves in Literature for Children," Jeanette Myers argues that monsters are always symbolic within folklore and fairy tales. Critically, she argues that we tend to forget this simple idea when the works are transformed into other genres such as drama or chapter books—or, as I would argue, YA fiction. Myers argues specifically that werewolves often represent a young audience's struggle to accept complex realities such as death, a transformation from one form to another that is often unexplainable. Such a process manifests as reversible since young minds often search for ways to bring the dead

back to life, even if just in metaphor. "Death is reversible in the sense that the spirit of the deceased exercises power over the living, and the influence of the personality does not end with the death of the body. The body is not destroyed but metamorphosed into new forms" (556). A werewolf, then, appears as a mutable symbol of the state between life and death. According to Myers, "the idea of the 'undead' who visit the living for the purpose of feeding upon them, either physically or psychically, brings together the concept of reversibility and the concept of the magical power of the death wish and death fears borne both of aggressive and erotic tendencies" (555). The werewolf, for Myers, is not a simple construct of death, but a juvenile or YA mind struggling to reconcile the necessity of death as tied to violence, sexuality, or wishing someone dead. "These related concepts may indeed be the unconscious basis for all werewolf and vampire tales" (555). Importantly, the werewolf references a purgatorial state between life and death, a moment where the past, present, and an unknowable future co-mingle. The idea of the werewolf is at core a symbol of the ideas of reversibility, mutability, and change.

The first decades of the twenty-first century saw both a rise in popularity of the dystopian teen novel and in YA films that echoed post-apocalyptic themes. Nigel Jackson argues that folkloric tales of werewolves and vampires have often been popular in moments of transition such as Halloween, New Year celebrations, and *fin de siècle*

parties like those surrounding the turn of the millennium. According to Jackson, werewolves and vampires populate the dark places in between years, centuries, and holidays because they are, in fact, metaphoric creatures of liminality, the eternal return, a type of overlapping time--the old and new joined in monstrous physical form. "Underlying both the vampyre and his alter-ego the werewolf there exists a metaphysics of liminality, a 'mythology of inbetweenness' which underpins traditional witchlore" (27). Such concepts are confirmed by other scholars such as Peter Penzoldt in his book *The Supernatural in Fiction*, in which he theorizes that supernatural fascinations often appear at moments of cultural crisis. As modern societies, we often disavow old superstitions like those surrounding the undead, but "they are ever ready to recapture their ascendancy over the human mind, whenever some momentary illusion upsets man's more civilised beliefs" (6). Penzoldt describes these "momentary illusions" as points of crisis where rational thought is suspended by unexplainable moments of violence, grief, conflict, or terror in our real world. One of the more rational ways of explaining our surge in interest for dystopian and apocalyptic fiction could be explained by a turn of millennium marked by acts of terrorism and war, economic crisis, and political duplicity.

YA series such as Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight* have brought werewolf studies into a new light in recent years and brought critical attention to the ways in which these supernatural creatures frame

metaphors for YA readers. Related works such as Charlaine Harris's Sookie Stackhouse series, L.J. Smith's *The Vampire Diaries* novels and Anne Rice's *The Wolf Gift* novels have also developed rich, werewolf-filled worlds. Previously, J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter books presented two of the more recognizable werewolf names in the early twenty-first century: Remus Lupin and Sirius Black. In each series, the werewolf mythology is characterized by strikingly different ideologies. For Meyer, the werewolves are both romantic symbols that contrast with the vampires and Native American stereotypes that offer a re-telling of the Noble Savage myth. For Harris, the werewolves are violent, sexually aggressive, primitive predators. For Smith, the werewolves serve as a counterpoint or balance to the vampire powers of the supernatural world, a type of Ying/Yang struggle for dominance that is re-enacted when one side re-learns a secret from the past. In these works, Smith often centers the battle upon a struggle for information, history, or knowledge--an educational quest through a literary or folkloric heritage. Rowling's werewolves, Lupin and Black, have been characterized by many scholars as metaphors of disability and disease, or alternatively, as purveyors of education and tradition.

I've offered examples of contrasting werewolf mythologies to draw attention to four particular classifications that recent scholarly attention has attempted to define: werewolves as representations of race, werewolves as metaphors for disability or disease, werewolves as

teachers, educators, or emblems of literary heritage; and last, werewolves as symbols of gender and sexuality. In both YA novels that I discuss in this chapter: *The Taming of the Werewolf* and *Romeo and Juliet: A Vampire and Werewolf Love Story* the arguments offered by each author represent a strange comingling of these current scholarly partitions. It is therefore helpful to see how other scholars have sought to define the ways in which popular culture audiences are seeing and interpreting werewolves--and the ways these werewolf mythologies populate the nether regions between our real world and the fictions of popular culture and folklore.

For example, Sean Brayton discusses the ways that werewolves have recently become symbols of a racialized other in modern narratives--both real and fictitious. Brayton focuses specifically on the ways that the media began to utilize werewolf terminology in regard to the case of John Walker Lindh who was captured in Afghanistan fighting against the Northern Alliance. Brayton argues that the werewolf mythology these narratives depict creates a type of moral panic that forces audiences to choose between two radical ideologies--the religious American Midwest and the Islamic Taliban in Afghanistan. Ultimately, Lindh must appear as a hybrid of both worlds, and simultaneous and independent media depictions of Lindh's life story began to adopt the werewolf mythology to describe this combination. Lindh becomes "a cultural werewolf of sorts: half-human (white American) and half-beast (Islamic). [Each signifying]

a racialized transformation in the press from human to beast" (179). Brayton's analysis shows a simple way that werewolf mythology can migrate from the imaginary to become a real world illustration of a racialized other. The depiction operates on a simple pivot: the white male form is somehow corrupted by a beastly animalistic other, and in the process the new hybrid form is more terrifying than either of its individual parts. I will return to this concept later in the chapter to discuss the ways in which Night builds upon the racialized class wars inherent in his YA work *Romeo and Juliet: A Vampire and Werewolf Love Story*. But even in more familiar YA novels, the idea that werewolves are symbols of a racialized other have taken hold.

Kristian Jensen analyzes the werewolf mythology in Meyer's *Twilight* series and Jacob Black's supposed membership within the Quileute tribe. Jensen argues that Meyer bases her story on the wolf and skin-walker narratives from the Quileute tribe, but that her methodology defangs the werewolves by superimposing the Noble Savage myth over any type of clear Native American source material. In almost every case, Jacob becomes a self-sacrificing, romantic figure who debases much of his own Native American background in pursuit and protection of Bella Swan. Jensen considers the positive aspects of Meyer's depictions, but argues that these are short-lived. If a werewolf mythology is simultaneously a symbol of change and racialization, then many narratives appear to argue that shape-shifters are a type of healing

hybrid purgatorially hanging between this "other" and a "normal" Midwest whiteness under attack. As Jensen states:

Ultimately the line between the human-self and animal-self fades for Jacob. Being a shape-shifter is about reconciling two selves, the animal and the human, about bringing euphony out of this dualism. Rather than the schizophrenic schism of identity of the European and Euro-American werewolf, as a shape-shifter in tune with his protective spirit Jacob has merged both wolf and human selves into a harmonious whole while still being aware of his dual identity. (104)

Meyer's werewolves in *Twilight*--at least on the surface--appear to reconcile their duality as they age within the series. Jensen's final analysis shows that this surface reconciliation within the plot holds further disturbing nuances, as "Meyer's creatures are in harmony with the human society that they exist to serve, like the Noble Savage of Caucasian fancy" (93). For Jensen, the werewolves in *Twilight* reconcile their own internal turmoil through a recognition of their subservient nature to human (white) culture embodied by a character like Bella.

In the second of the prominent werewolf novelizations under analysis in this chapter, H.T. Night offers a convincing and popular depiction of fair Verona in a post-apocalyptic future in which Manhattan has become an island ruled by rival gangs of surviving undead entities.

Within this text, the author is obviously building upon the concepts of race and "other" in his creation of his Verona. The werewolves live in a setting that could parallel the projects or ghettos within a prosperous city of the future. The neighborhoods, to rob them of their personal histories, have been renamed according to mythological communities of the past, here Verona. *Romeo and Juliet: A Vampire and Werewolf Love Story* shifts the familiar Shakespearean material into a gang-ridden future where the Capulet vampires rule from the still-standing mansions of upper Manhattan (Verona), and the working-class Montague werewolves dominate the alleys and undergrounds of the financial district on the lower island.

While the vampires come first in the title of the work, the entire novelization is told from Romeo's first-person perspective as a werewolf. The two sides are not evenly described, as the vampires' wealth and power make them uncompromisingly evil authority figures that resent the incursions of the lower-class werewolves in their perfect world. There are clear parallels between the werewolves in this novel and immigrant or ethnic groups and communities in the real world, as the vampires--often defined by their pale, white skin--want them deported to other realms by supernatural means. The only keepers of the law are wizards who force the two competing undead communities to respect a neutral zone at the center of the island or face demonic punishments.

Just as in Shults's work, the werewolf element in *Night* signals rebellion against authority, represented here by the oligarchy of vampires. As the lupine crowd has very little to call their own, their fight to establish their own culture in a threatening world dominated by white vampiric power is also a fight for recognition and a share of wealth or equality. Part of the complexity of the novel is that the city's name was consciously changed to Verona to remove previous connotations from former neighborhood backgrounds. The participants in the novel are also seemingly self-aware that their choice of residence also connotes their positions in a larger, fictional structure. When a young werewolf falls terribly in love with Rosaline, his friends dub him Romeo. The novel takes this self-referential framework to make strong arguments about destiny or personal will. When Romeo falls for Rosaline, and she leaves him just as swiftly, is he then destined to meet his Juliet? Or must he create her out of a force of will?

The masked ball where Romeo and Juliet meet allows the young lovers a chance to ponder the question of destiny or personal freedoms. Not only do they recognize their place in a larger story, but as cognizant symbols of what their love story will mean for Verona. Romeo introduces this idea as a way to change perceptions on both sides of their antagonistic culture: "This thing that is going on between us is bigger than even us. It can change people's hearts. Have them look through

different-color eyes and see people as equals, regardless of anything outside their character, their species" (80).

When Juliet continues and echoes his idea, their love takes on the central focus of Shakespeare's play: "What is in our hearts could be manifested throughout Verona. A manifesto of unconditional love. A proclamation of its possibilities" (47). Romeo and Juliet potentially fall in love here with their roles, rather than fully with each other. Their undead personas echo a long lost love story in their post-apocalyptic world, a resurrection of lost themes. In this novel, they resurrect from the distant past a forbidden love, a rebellion against cultural boundaries that seems insurmountable.

Near the end of the story, Juliet prepares to leave with Romeo during his banishment from Verona, and as she waits for him, she is attacked by Benvolio and a group of werewolves who see her as a symbol of wealth and power. Romeo arrives just in time to stop Juliet from being raped, but when Benvolio sees Romeo attempting to save their vampiric enemy, he mortally wounds Juliet. A drug-dealer in the lower strata of the Montague section of Verona helps Romeo prepare Juliet for burial, even as she clings to her last moments of life. Romeo, however, needs the drug-dealing apothecary to administer a rumored drug to both the lovers. The drug called Mary's Blessing allows two individuals to enter a mental utopia free from pain and care. The apothecary agrees to keep their bodies hidden, so that the lovers can spend an imaginary eternity

together within their own minds. As the two lovers are both undead, their immortal bodies allow a small utopian possibility within the larger dystopian world. Life and love coexisting within a world where these two things seem impossible.

Night's novel allows readers to see its undead elements as a repetition--life returning in a new form. As Romeo and Juliet, the characters consciously repeat a former story, but also allow readers to acknowledge and understand that their choice to repeat this specific story is also a rebellion against their world's cultural boundaries. This theme of the undead, as repetition of life and pattern, and the Romeo and Juliet plotline, as rebellion form a stronger admonition to young audiences to choose their own stories, their own repetitious patterns, and their own questions for unquestionable authority figures.

Notes

¹ Further analysis of this trope within Shakespeare's own period would be valuable. For further study see Lynn Enterline. "Hairy on the In-Side: *The Duchess of Malfi* and the Body of Lycanthropy." *Yale Journal of Criticism* 7 (1994): 85-129. Print. Or Albert H. Tricomi. "Historicizing the Imagery of the Demonic in *The Duchess of Malfi*." *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 34.2 (2004): 345-72. *Project Muse*. Oct. 5, 2015. Web.

²A term like fourth-wave feminism has been suggested by many recent scholars as a type of "enactment of the ideals set forth by the Third-Wave of feminism" (Baumgardner 5). As Baumgardner also suggests, "perhaps most significant, though, their experience of the online universe was that it was just a part of life, not something that landed in their world like an alien spaceship when they were twenty or fifty" (7). Lastly, authors like Baumgardner have argued that the Fourth Wave feminist movement has been defined by a strong connection with social media, participation in popular culture, and the general idea that "waves of mass change are coming faster and faster" due to a sharp rise in feminine control of these media forms.

³ Denis Duclos in his book *The Werewolf Complex: America's Fascination with Violence* offers an argument that the werewolf serves as a symbol for both violence and masculine rage in equal parts. Duclos argues that our popular culture analyses of the werewolf

must involve both man and the unspeakable violence of his actions. Duclos ties the werewolf to masculine aggression in the forms of rape, abuse, and murder.

CHAPTER IV

SHAKESPEARE'S UNDEAD FLESH: THE UNCANNY, ABJECTION, AND WOUND CULTURE IN YA ADAPTATIONS

R. L. Stine's notorious creation of the Goosebumps chapter books for 9-12 year-old readers ended briefly in the fall of 2013. Stine paused his long-running series to pen a work for slightly older YA readers in which actual murders, decapitations, limb amputations, and supernatural violence became the norm. In his new book, *A Midsummer Night's Scream*, Stine adapted Shakespeare's comedy, but did so by placing the action in a haunted house and revising the plot to reflect a series of slayings during the filming of a horror movie in the 1960s. When Stine's YA novel begins, a new director has returned to the original scene of the grisly murders to film another horror story about the original four lovers who lost their lives while staying at Mayhem Manor. The new actors arrive at the set with full knowledge of the former murdered lovers, but unaware that they are also cogs in the Shakespeare lore, which lurks beneath the action in the drama.

Stine creates a much darker realm for the action in this stand-alone novel than in his previous works for junior high audiences. Readers familiar with Stine's earlier milieu will find few surprises in his macabre settings, supernatural culprits, zombie film allusions, or in his broad, pop cultural metaphors. The surprise rests in the way Stine blends Shakespearean comedy with modern horror and turns the

Elizabethan fairy world into that of the undead. Little of Shakespeare remains in this adaptation, and the film at the center of the plot replaces much of the source material with supernatural and ghostly violence. One can almost hear the preview tagline for such a film echoing in a darkened theater: *Four lovers enter the woods alive, and none survive to tell the tale. . . This Halloween re-live the glory of Shakespeare in blood, guts, and gore. A haunted mansion lurks in the forest, where zombies masquerade as harmless fairies wreaking carnage on helpless teenagers. "Lord, what fools these mortals be!" [Insert ghastly screams, quick edits of multiple limb amputations, a few dramatic squirts of blood, and one final shot of the film director Benny Puckerman removing his fairy mask to reveal the undead monster beneath—and the preview trailer would be complete.]*

Much of what is happening in Stine's work is a blending of genres. Stine does not distinguish between moments of tragedy or comedy, and it is the interweaving of these well-recognized genres that marks a point of departure for these YA novels and films. Each of the novels and films delight in bending and blurring the identifiable genre elements so that the final product becomes something new entirely. This hybrid genre category of horror, comedy, slasher, zombie, vampire, gross-out humor, teen melodrama is almost unidentifiable because of the blurring of traditional genres that normally exist in singular fashion. We can recognize a Western or a musical--and even pinpoint numerous examples

of duality in comedic Westerns or vampire melodramas--but this new anarchic amalgamation is much more about disruption of traditional or recognizable categories than about reverence for formal distinctions.

The disruption of genre boundaries is linked quite powerfully to the revival of the undead and the *mise-en-scene* within the films and novels, as well. Shakespeare's undead status is already a hovering between life and death, a physical existence that is neither one nor the other. Shakespeare's physicality is in a state of blurred distortion marked by his presence in both realms of existence. In these works, the genre becomes an additional symptom of the unresolved nature of Shakespeare's authority. In Stine's work, the minute details of one character's limb amputations or another's electrocution offer disturbing *mise-en-scene* for a teen comedy. Note the way Stine mingles both horror and comedy in this detail of Randy's death, one of the teen lovers in the novel:

The white-hot jagged bolts of current shot around his head, his shoulders, his whole body. Randy's face started to burn. The roar of the powerful jolts grew deafening. His arms flew straight up. Trapped inside the burning, crackling power charges, Randy started to do a wild dance. His arms swung above his head. His legs bent and kicked. The pain of the electrical jolts forced him to dance . . . dance(15)

The horror is clearly displayed in the pain and burning of Randy's death, but the electrocution also details the "wild dance" of Randy's contortions in front of his friends. He is in the process of dying, yet clearly convulsively alive as his body dances within the electric current. Such moments within the *mise-en-scene* allow the YA audiences to distance themselves from the extreme and gruesome horror of such a death, yet the brief humor of the visuals is somehow strikingly at odds with our expectations of the genre. We must encounter Randy's death as both gratuitously violent and momentarily comedic, a nebulous state between life and death and comedy and horror. These moments of genre distortion link too readily with the blurring of Shakespearean texts and Shakespearean undead physicality to be ignored.

In previous chapters, we've seen how ambivalence is centrally at play in this Shakespeare-inflected canon of YA literature and film, a canon at the heart of twenty-first century culture. We've seen how that ambivalence sets Shakespeare in a world of the undead, first through a post-apocalyptic setting, and then in the ways in which interpretive cruxes became a site for adaptation. In this chapter, we'll see how that ambivalence plays out through an unsettling hybridity in genre. While most of the texts/films we'll be looking at in this chapter could be characterized generically in terms such as "the uncanny" or "horror" or "the slasher film"--nonetheless, in the end what these texts share in common is an unsettling blend of humor and gore where the integrity of

the human body and the distinctions between animate and inanimate, life and death are all compromised . . . and where we are invited as an audience either to feed on the Shakespearean corpus, or to heal its open and suppurating wounds.

In this chapter we will explore three texts progressively investigating the violation and deteriorating flesh of the Shakespearean corpus. First, Stine's *A Midsummer Night's Scream* recreates a disturbing slasher film at the heart of Shakespeare's comedy. Ryan Denmark's *Romeo and Juliet vs. The Living Dead* (2009), a zombie rom-com that gushes gross-out humor amid Shakespeare's love story, manifests Shakespeare as a social wound. And finally, Jordan Galland's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Undead* (2009), a vampire comedy that balances the tragedy of *Hamlet* with the farcical enterprises of terrible community theater can be seen as part of YA culture's fascination with "wound culture."

Stine's characters describe a growing sense of the uncanny throughout the text, as if they're somehow familiar with the textual elements--and horrified by them. Each of the characters admits to this duality of presence, both physical and mental. For example, during a costume fitting, the protagonist, Claire, who roughly correlates to Hermia within the *Midsummer* source, notes the way that becoming a character in a horror film also reminds her of the dark crimes that inspired the 1960s film she is re-creating in the twenty-first century. She is horrified

by her depiction of the earlier dead girl, and somehow aware of the great power she will have as a movie actor. When the costume designer says to the protagonist and her friend, "Hey girls, did you know those costumes are from the original movie?" (59) Claire is unable to reconcile her physicality with that of the dead girl she sees in the mirror.

"Did one of the murdered girls wear this skirt? This top? Am I dressed in a dead girl's costume?" (59) Such imaginings hearken Claire back to the previous crime, the previous movie, and her own enviable position as a Hollywood film actor. Claire's reaction is that of a dream-like state, where she is both present and distant, a source and an adaptation. "My eyes refused to focus. I gazed at myself through mist. At first, I thought it was the mirror. I rubbed it with the sleeve of my top. But the fog didn't clear. And I suddenly began to feel very weird, as if I were floating in the mist. Not really floating off the floor but hovering far away" (59). Claire's feeling of in-corporality is a reaction to the uncanny, similar to the moments where the Shakespearean plotline rises to the surface cause a similar effect in the reader.

For example, Stine makes explicit the fine line between the supernatural fairies in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and the undead in *A Midsummer Night's Scream*. The undead "fairies" in Stine's work are also immortal, but they have been brought back in eternally decaying forms. They are creatures that cannot die, but their immortality is detailed through Stine's focus on gratuitous decomposition.

Benny Puckerman, the Robin Goodfellow of Stine's novel, is actually an undead monster posing as a fairy who offers magical potions to unwary teenagers. When the teen lovers first encounter him, he promises an array of potions to those who do his bidding, but in actuality, the potions work in opposition to the users' desires. Love potions are truly hate potions; eternal youth potions are, in reality, speedy aging potions. Puckerman is an opposing force, an undead trickster offering supposed wisdom, while, instead, tendering fester and rot. He is achingly familiar to many of the characters for some reason, and his appearances fill them with dread, although his undead nature is revealed only at the final climax of the novel.

In many sequences of the novel important—indeed metaphysically vital—questions arise about our own quest for immortality, questions that Shakespeare himself analyzed in detail throughout his oeuvre, but most notably within the sonnets. Part of Shakespeare's reputation is in question here, as the characters that are depicted in Stine's work have achieved much of what Shakespeare could not—an immortal and eternal body. However, the bodies on display within the novel are immortally decomposing. The worth of such a status--immortal but eternally rotting--is a challenge to the sonnets and the man who became revered for his own ambiguity. Stine's work is meant all in good fun, but Benny Puckerman is subverting lines such as "Nor shall Death brag thou wander'st in his shade, When in eternal lines to time thou grow'st"

(Sonnet 18, l. 11-12). Shakespeare and his immortal beloved might evade death, but the immortality they seek is corrupted and impure in the YA setting of Stine's novel. The "growth" at stake within the lines appears as a set of tumors, warts, or lesions, rather than the famed transfiguration that Shakespeare claimed. For example, in Sonnet 3 the speaker exhorts a young man to replicate his beauty in progeny as an attempt at immortality: "Look in thy glass and tell the face thou viewest/ Now is the time that face should form another" (3.1-2) However, in these subversive adaptations, the refusal to procreate is much more aligned with the final couplet of Sonnet 6: "Be not self-will'd, for thou art much too fair/ To be death's conquest and make worms thine heir" (6.13-14). The ambiguous immortality offered through procreation or art offers a promise for a world that is flawed or decaying, but in these adaptations the immortality offered just accelerates the rot.

Stine's work should be read as a thinly veiled reference to Shakespeare himself, a member of the undead in many works of YA fiction in recent years. Here, however, Shakespeare is "the King of Shadows." Shakespeare's supposed offering of wisdom is revealed in the end as just so much fester and rot. Such a reflection of Shakespeare's status can be read as an ambivalence to Shakespeare's position and merit for YA readers, an authority figure who refuses to die—but whose physical flesh revivifies with open, festering wounds. If fiction holds the power to heal our world, then the undead and Shakespeare represent

part of a larger, unrecognized social strategy to point directly at damaged portions of our culture that must be addressed. However, the healing that must occur is not directly addressed in any of these works. Instead, Stine and the filmmakers who follow in this chapter expose Shakespeare as a fraud who helps little to improve the world around us.

To identify how this is happening and how Shakespeare and the undead have become ensnared in this depiction of societal wounds, we must look at themes of the uncanny, the visual signs of the abject, and our human fascination with the wound. To clarify such an argument, I will utilize Carol Clover's elaboration on Freudian definitions of the uncanny in horror films, Julia Kristeva's concept of abjection and our definition of self/other and horror/religious reactions, and Mark Seltzer's theory of wound culture. Shakespeare's offered immortality remains a type of open wound, a sore spot for us that has not been resolved; the visual evidence of his body of work covered in blood, open sores, decay, immortal ruin, and pale, perpetual menace should hardly surprise us. Hence, YA culture's adaptations often depict his plotlines in tandem with zombie/vampire novels and films.

The undead should be seen as a category defying concept here, and what we're seeing in these works is a refraction of that blurring through the lens of genre in this chapter. One way to demonstrate such a blurring of genre lines would be to depict the keywords that will allow library patrons to find Stine's *Midsummer* in any library database. A

Midsommer Night's Scream can be found in a keyword search for no fewer than 25 separate library categories (of which I will list only a select few): Shakespeare, comedy, tragedy, romance, murder, ghost, undead, true love, romance, slasher, haunted house. Many of the other YA novels that I have discussed in previous chapters can be defined in three or four keywords: Shakespeare, Young Adult, Dystopian Literature. The werewolf manifestations discussed in the last chapter sought a resolution for Shakespeare, and yet they did not blur the genre lines to such an extent. Most of those works could be found through keyword searches: werewolf, Shakespeare, and YA fiction. Such a disparity in categorization appears here because the novels and films are also subversively populating old spaces and old genres. Each of the works here is seeping outwards, corrupting another genre boundary, and filling what should be familiar spaces with flashes of the uncanny.

Freud's definition of the uncanny might be the most helpful in defining how these works are sparking a moment of fear for us at seeing the Shakespearean corpus so corrupted: "The uncanny is that class of the frightening which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar" (220). Freud describes this fear as remembering a particular place or a particular type of place that is both familiar and somehow alien. The last part of Freud's definition is most helpful when it comes to the point I wish to make about Shakespeare. "Something has to be added to what is novel and unfamiliar in order to make it uncanny"

(221). For example, when we see a haunted house in a forest--such as the one at the center of Stine's *Midsummer*--we recognize both the familiarity of the setting alongside or underneath the newness of the house within the novel, a place we have never seen before. Freud's analysis has suggested that much of what we're afraid of is a repressed or even unconscious memory. "When a man visits a place in his dreams and says, 'I have been here before,' this could be the return of the repressed mother's genitals" (244-45). Tunnels, entrapment, entombment, dark houses, or foggy forests can all be the return of a repressed memory. I am suggesting that Shakespeare and the recognition of his works is one of the elements of familiarity that sparks a bit of terror in us as readers or viewers. We have flashes of our encounters with previous horror novels or films through genre recognition, yet the reference to four lovers entering a haunted mansion in a dark forest, where supernatural, god-like beings play with their fate sparks a flash of the uncanny in us as readers. In our discovery that Shakespearean plotlines hold familiar genre elements in common with horror or slasher films, we're seeing a familiar Shakespeare, but one we experience as not quite "our" Shakespeare. Our recognition of genre elements alongside the Shakespearean plot exposes how closely Shakespearean work resembles our own genre elements of horror and the undead.

Freud references the fact that our notions of the uncanny often tend to be vague and unfocused. “[The uncanny] is undoubtedly related to what is frightening—to what arouses dread and horror; equally certainly, too, the word is not always used in a clearly definable sense, so that it tends to coincide with what excites fear in general” (219). The spark of fear associated with the uncanny in a novel like Stine’s is driven by our inability to recognize or pinpoint a clear genre boundary. The repetition of Shakespeare refuses to settle into the stability of adaptation. This lack of a familiar outline places our understanding of any plot in jeopardy. Instead of being comforted by the knowledge that the main characters will marry in the final resolution, or the tragic knowledge that death will haunt the conclusion of the work--we read or watch these nebulous works in horrified anxiety. And because genre impurity has abounded, we can no longer be sure that there will be a happy or tragic ending. Everything within the plot becomes, accordingly, corrupted.

One of the foremost examples of this uncanny corruption within Stine's work is the final climax in which Claire decides to break in to the set of Mayhem Manor to consummate her relationship with Jake. She has decided to proffer her virginity to Jake after a costume party to celebrate the end of filming. All four teenagers dress as Athenian lovers in full togas, with accessories hinting at fairy magic. Claire runs "back to the sparkly fairyland filled with loud music and laughing voices" (221). In her return to the house within the dark wood, she "had the feeling she

could make one more impossible thing happen before the party ended and the real world came crashing down over" her again (221). Claire's hopes of making Jake fall in love with her, by magic potion from Puckerman, or by offering sexual favors--would all happen by entering the dark forest filled with costumed fairies, elves, sprites, and drunken key grips. Once Claire and her friends enter the house they are trapped by Puckerman, and he reveals himself as the director of the previous film, a real killer who is forced to reenact his crimes for eternity. "'Our film is not complete,' Puckerman said. 'Didn't you read the script? We need four more deaths.' His gaze swept around the room. 'How lucky there are four of you'" (229).

At this point in the novel, readers are clearly within the realm of the slasher film, where Puckerman forces the four lovers to reenact the grisly deaths by film prop: a clock that slices through our hands as we try to stop the pendulum; an electrocution by faulty wiring; a gruesome hanging by a chandelier in the foyer; a slow and bloody death after losing our hands to a suit of armor's falling axe. Yet the horror here is not simply the genre elements of the horror and slasher films, but in the way we see how clearly these supernatural forces alter the fates of the young lovers who entered the forest as elements from Shakespeare's play. Each of the lovers, dressed in Athenian garb, are playthings to the Gods, but the lines are wrong: "as flies to wanton boys are we to the Gods" . . . instead of Oberon's playful patronage (*Lear*, Act IV.i.41-2). In the end,

we hear Puckerman shout, "Can I hear you scream now? Make it real. Because the four of you are really going to die. Come on, people. Can I hear you? Can I hear you scream?" (230).

In her seminal work on slasher films "Her Body, Himself," Carol Clover discusses the concept of the uncanny as a critical part of our fear while watching a horror film. She defines the uncanny in two ways, both slightly different from Freud's initial definition. First, she suggests that our pleasure within a horror film is both in being the killer and the victim, a distinction that varies within the narrative. "We can identify with horror films because we can be the victim (and afraid), but simultaneously the attacker and Other which is a violent and angry portion of ourselves. The dual roles are the key to our joy" (195). In this way, we are pleasurably destructive and allowing our own inner demons to the surface, while also repressing these desires by film's end to become the victim in a final chase for survival. Second, Clover defines the uncanny as part of the setting within these films, a "terrible place." Clover classifies slasher films as the bottom of the barrel within the horror genre. By this, she means that psychological horror films, those of the type that Carl Theodore Dreyer and Alfred Hitchcock make, and even zombie and vampire films rank higher in the critical echelon. Slasher films fall to the bottom of the critical heap because of their ties to the abject and because of their links to the pornographic.

"Horror and pornography are the only two genres specifically devoted to the arousal of bodily sensation. They exist solely to horrify and stimulate, not always respectively, and their ability to do so is the sole measure of their success" (189). Clover defines horror films in general as genres of the body, in which our physical reactions in the real world often mimic or imitate the actions of the characters within the films--screaming in terror or moaning in pleasure. However, Clover's material formulates another point, which is simply that each horror film "may have original features, but its quality as a horror film lies in the ways it delivers the cliché" (190). A horror film must deliver a strong dose of novelty and newness within the plot, but also a glimmer of something familiar. We see the haunted forest as a genre element, but in a moment, when four Athenian garbed youth enter the forest, we have a flash of something, not repressed as Freud would suggest, but a flash of something familiar that disturbs us for some unknown reason. Indeed, Shakespeare as the figure of immortal cultural authority is that element that rises up, confronting young readers as a familiar narrative that they can't quite place, causing a bit of discomfort at the clear, impure corruption of an idol.

For Clover, the expression of terror within a horror film is a response to our own personal nightmares, not those of the director or writer. We acknowledge, while watching a horror film, that the victim is a reflection of our own self "tiny and vulnerable in the face of the

enormous Other; but the Other is also finally another part of ourself, the projection of our repressed infantile rage and desire" (191). In essence for Clover, "we are both Red Riding Hood *and* the Wolf" (191). We react in terror to the best of these films because we have had such nightmares before--in the real world. The diegetic space within the film simply engages our collective personal nightmares, a screen likeness of our repressed fears coming back to life.

For Clover, following Freud in this respect, the dark spaces such as the tunnels, haunted houses, or dark castles are representations and manifestations of the uncanny. She describes them as the "terrible place" that "may at first seem a safe haven" but then almost immediately becomes prison walls "that hold the victim in" once the killer enters (198). The setting is an integral part of the uncanny within these novels and films, as the "terrible place" is both a protected place and one where evil lurks.

While Clover's writing discusses a few vampire and werewolf films as part of her work "Her Body, Himself," the majority of her writing, in this essay and beyond, addresses the slasher film's paradoxical position as a pornographic surrogate, with knives and machetes penetrating bodies in a similar fashion to the penetration in a pornographic film. While I will return to Clover's concept of weapons mimicking sexual penetration later when defining the abject, I wish to discuss the ways that Shakespearean fiction and film for YA audiences has developed its

own uncanny materializations in setting. Even more specifically, I mention the ways in which these narratives raise familiar Shakespearean plotlines to strike the reader/viewer as uncanny.

For example, Stine's *Midsummer* is a detailed manifestation of the uncanny. The setting is probably the foremost example, in which the knowledge of former murders lurks just beneath the surface. The main characters in the film are familiar with the details of the murders. When they enter Mayhem Manor for the first time, the novelty of their return to the place of terrifying past violence is riddled with a familiarity with the murder details from 54 years ago. But the setting pales in comparison to the way that our own movements through the horror house, as readers, are superimposed over the Shakespearean plot details. When we least expect it, at the heart of a costuming session in a backlot, during the filming of an electrocution murder sequence, or at the brutal finale where Puck reveals himself as an undead monster, Shakespeare rises from beneath the surface of the polished objects in Mayhem Manor, a subtle, yet haunting, recollection of the collision between familiar plot and zombie horror film. Shakespeare is the familiar element beneath the undead slasher film that disturbs our consciousness.

When Shakespeare arises within these YA works, his writing is at once familiar and recognizable contained by these new and novel adaptations. But it is a familiarity that simultaneously feels out of place, that simultaneously attracts and repels. That glint of the memorable,

early modern element surfacing within these contemporary adaptations haunts us. An image of a vanquished author appearing within our YA driven pop culture might manifest as that of the undead rising before us.

It did look more like a castle than a house. Dark towers rose up on both sides of a long sloping roof. Were those bats flapping in the evening sky, circling the twin towers? They trotted toward the house eagerly although it didn't appear inviting. No lights. The windows were as dark as the night, and as the four teens drew nearer, they could see that bars covered every one. (7)

The setting of Stine's work is one of the "terrible places" that Clover identifies in her work, a repressed memory of separation from pre-verbal memory. However, it is also the number of teens entering the house that triggers our first Shakespearean confrontation with the uncanny. Shakespeare and his plotline are a revived corpse rotting in the darkened forest at Mayhem Manor. What we're seeing in Stine's work is the corruption of boundaries, not only those of the multiple corpses from the crimes and films from bygone days, but the boundaries of Shakespeare's corpus, as well. By turning this comedic romp in the Athenian woods into a slasher film, we're exposed to the uncanny of both setting and boundary violation. Shakespeare's immortality is here verified and then corrupted, as we're seeing an immortal corpse rather than an angelic resurrection. By the tale's end, our own horror is in

seeing the promise of this Shakespeare filled with impurity and decomposition, a supernatural power that is of no value, impaled by the weapons of the slasher oeuvre. The blood that flows in Stine's work elicits another response, however: that of the abject.

In *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* Julia Kristeva details her theory of the abject, which she defines as the human recognition of complex boundaries between self and Other. Her essay delineates our numerous reactions to human materiality. Most often these reactions occur when confronted with a corpse, physical wounds, or the human effluvia that emanate from wounds or orifices. When these liminal boundaries between self and other initially erupt "a massive and sudden emergence of uncanniness, which, familiar as it might have been in an opaque and forgotten life" is transformed into the "radically separate, loathsome" and the "not me" of the other. "A 'something' that [we] do not recognize as a thing" (2). In our recognition of the abject, meaning collapses.

The prime example of the abject is "the corpse (or cadaver: *cadere*, to fall), that which has irremediably come a cropper, is cesspool, and death; it upsets even more violently the one who confronts it as fragile and fallacious chance" (3). When we see the corpse, especially that of a friend or family member, we are violently reminded of our traumatic materiality. Our vision of the corpse is a recognition of our own future death. "The corpse, seen without God and outside of science, is the

utmost of abjection. It is death infecting life. Abject. It is something rejected from which one does not part" (4). Our encounter with the corpse is a border between that which is living and that which is "above all ambiguity. Because while releasing a hold, it does not radically cut off the subject from what threatens it--on the contrary, abjection acknowledges it to be in perpetual danger" (9). As a border element, the abject forces our recognition of the limits of our materiality continually. When we see the abject, the encounter is not singular but an immemorial and ambiguous horror at that which is not self and that which is not living. Essentially, the abject is irreducibly ambiguous.

Kristeva's theory of abjection allows an alternative perception of the way that Shakespeare has been resurrected within YA literature. While Kristeva focuses on the abjection occasioned by a corpse, the Shakespearan abject, as we encounter it within YA culture, takes a relentless materiality one step further. YA culture gives us the abjection of the living dead; the Shakespearan uncanny in these works appears as the reanimated corpse, complete with permanently rotting flesh and its persistently open wounds. Even in works in which Shakespeare is not present as a character, his corpus of written materials has been infested with zombies, vampires, and creatures of the undead such as witches and werewolves. If Shakespeare is the corpse, physically or metaphorically, that YA authors are raising from the grave, then we must ask what such an encounter premeditates. When we look upon William

Shakespeare's rotting flesh in *Shakespeare Undead* by Lori Handeland, or gaze at the perfection of the Shakespearean vampire in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Undead*, or laugh in shock at the zombie bodies of Romeo and Juliet in *Warm Bodies* or *Romeo and Juliet vs. The Living Dead*, we are encountering the abject. In such a moment, the wounds prefigure our gaze within the perpetual struggle between life and death. We are defining the body of Shakespeare as something both mortal and immortal, amorphously hovering at the boundary between life and death.

For me, Shakespeare represents just such a moment of confrontation with the abject. He is both the immortal Bard and the “dead white European male” that our current cultural moment is fighting against. Our encounter with the figure of Shakespeare when he rises up in these narratives is both an exploration of the enshrining of Shakespeare's cultural capital in a secular sense, but he is also an open wound, a painful reminder of corrupted authority. The YA novels demonstrate the ambiguity of such a reaction by placing Shakespeare at the boundary of the abject. He is the open wound, the gory flesh that refuses to heal, the exposed inner tissue that will never flourish, but refuses to die--and we as audiences are left to stumble upon his presence with mysterious horror. Our reaction to the rising of his familiar and eerie image within these novel works of art encourages us to judge the validity of his authorial value.

Our encounter with the abject, according to Kristeva triggers a knee-jerk reflexive moment in which we either purify the abject or recognize its profane nature. As part of this divergence, Kristeva suggests that the abject "accompanies all religious structurings and reappears, to be worked out in a new guise, at the time of their collapse" as a "catharsis" that proliferates as new religion or art (17). YA writings, at this moment, are struggling with Shakespeare's position at the pinnacle of literary authority, and this struggle, I would argue, is made manifest by reviving his corpse in uncanny abjection. When we see him in such a way, we might move in two opposing directions--similar to a religious purification or a profane destruction. We enshrine Shakespeare once again, steadying the pedestal upon which he sits, faithfully replicating the rituals of his plotlines in adaptation after adaptation; or we seek to detonate his elevated position. We defend Shakespearean myth-making with religiosity, or we destroy the profane article that offends us. "Abjection--at the crossroads of phobia, obsession, and perversion--shares in the same arrangement" (45). If we are "overtaxed by a bad object" we turn "away from it," clean ourselves of it, "and vomit it. In abjection, revolt is completely within being" (45).

In Ryan Denmark's *Romeo and Juliet vs. The Living Dead*, we can view just such a struggle between Shakespearean religiosity and destruction. Shakespeare does not appear as a character within this film, but half of the characters from *Romeo and Juliet* appear as zombies.

The House of Montague is a zombie horde, while the Capulets revel in human wealth and prejudice. Denmark focuses intently upon the decay of the zombies, and takes great pleasure in illustrating the bodily fluids that would leak from such bodies whenever they move. The zombies within the film are gaping open wounds and feasting upon severed, amputated body parts. The tragedy of the original source material is blurred and inverted into romantic comedy within this film, and the undead references clearly reference social issues that have here been replaced by corpses, wounds, and bodily fluids.

The opening chorus of the film rewrites a few of Shakespeare's original lines, and they spool across the screen in yellow text that echoes the famous opening of *Star Wars*. The final lines:

Two Households unlike in dignity
In fair Verona where we lay our scene
From Ancient Grudge, break to new mutiny
Where civil blood makes civil hands unclean.

This opening abridgment illustrates a social wound—social inequality-- that the film attempts to heal. First, the two households are indeed "unlike" in dignity, with the Capulets controlling nearly all the resources within their white, homogeneous, suburban neighborhoods, and the zombies of House Montague living in dumpsters, back street alleys, and demarcated ghettos. Second, the overlapping and numerous definitions of "civil" and "unclean" offer a chance to see how the uncanny and abject

references to Shakespeare arrive. Civil in this setting can mean governmental and polite, and they will both come into play within the film. The governmental laws favor the humans in almost every case, making the zombies an underrepresented minority. Also, the Capulets take great pleasure in demeaning the zombies as lower-class citizens--and these references demonstrate anything but politeness. Denmark's reference to Shakespeare sparks a bit of horror as well, as his film begins with images of fire and destruction while the chorus is read in narration. If we shift attention away from the denotation of these words, the connotation of "civil" with "civil war" is also ever-present when read in tandem with the fiery images underlying the words. Our fears of civil unrest and the zombie apocalypse tend to overlap here, a reference to a Shakespearean plotline that we know will end in violence and tragedy, erupting simultaneously with a zombie horde. Scary stuff.

If there is a word that could describe Denmark's zombies, it would certainly be "unclean." The Montague zombies are always depicted in torn and filthy clothes. Most of the characters can be seen climbing from abandoned warehouses, garbage bins, and street gutters. Each of them is covered in grime, but even more important in blood. Most of the facial features on the zombies are etched with the blood of the humans they have devoured. In the early scenes, the zombie makeup is played for laughs and looks fairly comical. However, this early comedy evaporates once we see the zombies eating a number of human victims--and we can

see how their makeup is actually blood clotting in the crevices and wrinkles of each zombie face. The hollows of each zombie eye appears as a deep well of red so dark that it appears black. Each eye is caked with blood and murky with decay. Moreover, blood within the film takes on a more symbolic role as the action of Shakespeare's play surfaces in the war between the two houses.

In a public park where Paris plays touch football with a group of fraternity brothers, the Capulets show their privilege and power over the lower-class members of the Montague family. Years ago, the Montagues sought to find a cure for the zombie outbreak, but their early successes caused a rift between their house and the Capulets who hated anyone who would side with a zombie over wealth and status. The Capulets gradually decimated the Montagues, and their bitter battle was embedded in the zombie brain as a hatred for all of the Capulets who represent the wealth and privilege that the zombies could never attain. A rough-trod group of Montague zombies, including Romeo, watches Paris trounce his opposition and cruelly demean all of the losing team members by rubbing his sweaty crotch on their faces. The zombies watch in increasing fury, until Sampson and Gregory Capulet encounter them after the game.

When Sampson pulls the confrontational line from I.i.45: "I do bite my thumb, sir," the zombies' mute rage turns to physical aggression. The horde actually bites off Sampson, Gregory, and Abram's thumbs, as

well as a host of other appendages. The feeding frenzy cakes the park with copious blood, as Capulet after Capulet falls to the bites of the zombies. Many of the football team members have neck bites where blood shoots in streams across the Montagues; one by one all of the human Capulets--except for Paris--fall to the ground. Part of the horror experienced here is the blood that now coats the zombies, as the humans in the film realize that this is not a fluid leaking from a rotting corpse, but most likely the remnants of a dead human. This confrontation with the abject is part of our fear of zombies, as they represent both the corpse figure and the exposed wound leaking fluids. Indeed, they represent the corpse itself as a perpetually immortal wound.

Denmark relishes such opportunities to force an abject reaction--and with more than simple blood. When the mute Romeo zombie meets his Juliet at a masked ball, their first encounter is riddled with decaying flesh, deliquescing juices, zombie slime, and feces. Juliet hides in a cramped bathroom to get away from Paris, who kept grinding his sweaty crotch on her while dancing. Shortly after, a masked Romeo follows her to the perceived sanctuary. At their first kiss, Romeo's slime leaks down her face, leaving her green with rotting juices. As they pull away from one another, a bridge of slime connects their mouths, and we are both horrified and comically traumatized by the slick bond between them.

Romeo must hide from the Capulet cousins after his slimy encounter with Juliet, so he hides in the shower stall in the bathroom

while Juliet distracts her family. Just as he is about to escape, Tybalt comes in to relieve himself. The mute Romeo frowns in disgust as Tybalt squeezes something into the toilet just inches away from his hiding place. As the gross-out comedy continues, Romeo eventually fears for his capture and breaks free from his hiding place, scaring Tybalt into a diarrheic attack. Tybalt rushes from the bathroom, leaving a trail of feces amongst the accompanying sound effects--leaving Romeo free to escape. The low-brow humor distracts from some of the more serious moments of the abject within the film. At the strongest moment of romantic connection between Romeo and Juliet, their mouths were covered in rotting flesh, slime, and last feces after Tybalt's escape. Kristeva's reaction to these moments of "the horror within" forecast a knowledge that we ourselves are impure. "Urine, blood, sperm, excrement then show up in order to reassure a subject that is lacking its 'own and clean self'" (53). Our bodily reaction to such a scene foregrounds the conflict between the sacred and the profane. We laugh at the recognition that such fluids and excrement are part of our own unclean self, a reminder of mortality. We are horrified and disgusted at the reality of such a reminder.

Earlier I claimed that these new YA works blurred the boundaries of genre to create a new space for novel identities and innovative ideas, yet in the face of such a reminder of our internal fluids, the abject also blurs our physical reactions. We don't know whether to scream in horror

or laugh at the absurdity--and each such reaction masquerades over the trauma/fear/pain/shock at just such a remembrance. Kristeva's description of the abject is again necessary here as our disordered emotional reaction is at once to push the abject away from our person and to study its significance obsessively or religiously.

As the film progresses, we see again and again the ways in which the wealthy Capulet family abuses the lower-class servants of the Montague house. Such discrepancies in prosperity aggravate the social wound that the film is attempting to destroy or heal. The drive throughout the film is to see a zombie Romeo and Juliet united to heal social inequality and end the prejudice that both human and zombie have for one another. The film finds a way to create a happy ending, but keeps the comedic horror on a grand scale. When Juliet takes the sleeping potion to await Romeo in the zombie tomb, Romeo returns to see her not with a poison . . . but with the fabled Montague cure for zombieism. As Romeo is cured, Juliet awakes and stabs herself with a chainsaw. She falls on Romeo, covering them both in massive amounts of blood.

Strangely, the film culminates in a happy ending which also subverts much of our desire as an audience to see the social inequality wound healed. Romeo, healed, becomes a spoiled wealthy heir to the Montague fortune and wants nothing to do with the now zombified Juliet with chainsaw scars. Only Mercutio takes pity on her, and raises a

family of zombie children with his mute, zombie wife at his side. Their happy family life is played during the credit sequence in postcard events, as Mercutio's zombie children attempt to continually bite him and refuse to eat their healthy lunches of human toes and bloody fingers.

In the end, the social inequality wound is healed, but the film satirizes our need for such a healing event, even while granting it. The second Romeo is allowed to take part in the wealthy lifestyle that has been denied him, he abandons everything and everyone to take it. His own prejudice towards Juliet, in her fallen state, focuses our attention once again on how hard such ingrained desires would be to break. We are able to "see" the new society created after the zombie threat, but we see it defiled by a repetition of the same failings. Our finale is abject even in the final moments, as "polluting as it is reviving--defilement and genesis" as Kristeva remarks (76).

Building upon horror film theorists such as Clover and Kristeva's theories of the abject, Mark Seltzer discusses the recent convening of "public fascination with torn and opened bodies and torn and opened persons, a collective gathering around shock, trauma, and the wound" (3). In "Wound Culture: Trauma in the Pathological Public Sphere" Seltzer argues that we have created a culture around not only the wound but the "torn and exposed individual, as public spectacle" (4). Seltzer's work differs from the previous scholars particularly in his stance that the trauma of exposure or the trauma of violence is just as powerful as the

abject or the uncanny manifestations of repressed memories. For Seltzer, the public sphere of entertainment, in general, revolves around "a culture of suffering, states of injury, and wounded attachments" (5). In essence, we have collectively and socially bonded together based upon our curiosity towards others' physical and mental pain. He argues that mental trauma is tied so firmly to our conception of the wound that they are inseparable. "For if trauma is, first, the wound, it is second, a wounding in the absence of a wound: trauma is in effect an effect in search of a cause" (8). Seltzer's point here is a relatively simple one: he argues that we are drawn to human trauma and suffering insofar as we are searching for its cause. The trauma itself is a type of wound or a signifier of a previous wound that we hope to locate or pleurably view from a distance. Our curiosity surrounding violence, for Seltzer, is a vicarious pleasure. We are drawn to these images of wounds or suffering, simply because our own experience with violence is often by proxy. We rarely see grave wounds in our own flesh, so we vicariously experience the "wound" by indirect means.

Seltzer discusses modern horror film referents, but develops long, metaphorical examples of TV shows such as *ER* that are part wound, part technology, and part perpetual emergency. In our attempts to ascertain how to heal wounds, both mental and physical, our pathology and attempted diagnoses focus ever more closely on shock and trauma, the "victim status" of individuals who suffer from "the abnormal

normality of paranoia and psychosis" and "the erosion of the boundaries between body and world, body and image, body and machine" (21). Each of these concepts deserves further clarification, especially in regard to my argument surrounding Shakespeare as a social wound that we are all attempting to diagnose or heal.

Seltzer locates our fascination as a culture at the start of the twenty-first century as one that seeks a diagnosis for mental trauma, a symptom of a previous trauma or wound. If we view Shakespearean YA adaptations through this lens, Seltzer's work elucidates another reason for eruptions of the undead--a monstrous form with eroded boundaries between body and world.

Shakespearean YA adaptations have both physical and mental wounds/trauma on display, but many of them deal with more understated forms of zombie-like behavior. If these adaptations are attempting a diagnosis of social wounds, in hopes of seeing the source of original trauma, then Seltzer's work allows a more definitive methodology for analyzing undead human states, or diagnosing those "who played the part of a zombie . . . [who] don't appear to be thinking anything at all" (24). In numerous films and novelizations, we have Shakespearean characters who fit just such a description: human zombies suffering from mental or physical trauma . . . and we read/watch waiting to see the wound.

In the final film under discussion in this chapter, director Jordan Galland exposes the wound culture of Hamlet and community theater. He forces our confrontation with the abject as vampires cover the screen in blood and creates one of the strongest examples of "wound culture" and our fascination with trauma and anguish in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Undead*. The film suggests that the real Shakespeare is, in fact, an immortal vampire named Horatio, or Theo for short, who wrote down his biographical details and his origin story as a vampire. This became one of Shakespeare's more important plays, *Hamlet*.

His real reason behind writing the play was to lure young victims, or actors, to the stage in a ritualized way. During rehearsal and early performances, the actors would play at death, and Theo would play with them, much as a cat would play with a mouse before killing it. On the final night of each play's run, the actors would be slaughtered by Theo in an epic bloodbath, one that would transform performance into a new form of reality. As Theo was a vampire, and needed to hide this fact, he created a pseudonym for his writings as a young playwright who longed for fame, but had little talent. As the ages passed and audiences ceased to care about the play in its original form, Theo began to alter the play in various ways. One of the most notorious revisions came when Tom Stoppard dared to refocus the tragedy on two inconsequential players--Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. Each time the play was performed, the new perspective was revealed to the actors—Theo's ever-present and

willing victims—and Theo simply moved the play from community theater to community theater in search of terrible actors that would never be missed in modern society. Theo was not interested in the notoriety of performing the play well; he was only ever interested in pulling in bad actors and tired audiences that would serve as his food source.

The setting of the play serves as the first moment of the uncanny-- both as a haunted backstage set at a community theater and as Elsinore, the haunted castle. The film spends a great deal of time in each place, and no matter how often Galland evokes a strong sense of eerie horror from both.

When the play is actually performed at the climactic finale of the film, Theo takes the stage and completes his conversion of all of the cast members into his coven of vampires. One by one, the actors are slowly turned into vampires or killed before the audiences' eyes. In the play's last act, only the vampire Theo remains on stage, and the audience sees the actor playing a silly vampire version of what happens to Horatio after Hamlet's death. In Theo's version Horatio travels to Egypt to find the lost Holy Grail, which would offer eternal life in a non-vampiric way to its possessor.

At the final lines, a lone audience member begins to clap and rises to his feet in a slow ovation to Theo. The rest of the audience turns to look as the play was hardly deserving of such an accolade. Even Theo stops what he is doing to see who is so avidly cheerful at the play's end.

A blond man in Elizabethan garb walks towards the stage, and Theo gasps as it is the “real” Hamlet, who stole the Holy Grail—and keeps “a good workout routine” to stay healthy after all these years. At the film’s end, Hamlet stakes Theo through the heart, revenging all of the actors who had been sacrificed to his blood curse. Hamlet walks off and congratulates the play’s director on a job well done. When the curtain is pulled back on the great and powerful Shakespeare (Theo), the real figure at work on the gears and levers is a supernatural monster using the written work to lure audiences to certain death.

The blood and gore in the film's finale elicit the horror of the abject. The actors and audience members who are eaten on screen become fodder to the vampire's immortality. Kristeva's work forecasts our own fear at physical limitations, our temporality, yet when confronted with such blood *and* the presence of the undead . . . the feeling of horror is that much more devastating. We are confronted with our own limitations in the face of immortal power, here the strength and timelessness of the vampire.

In the end, it is not simply the evocation of the uncanny, the eruption of the abject, or the collective curiosity we have toward a social wound, but our inability to turn away from Shakespeare that keeps propelling these narratives. Shakespeare's flesh in each materialization, wounded or bloody, decaying or immortal, is that of an author who is not yet dead, drawing our attention to his wounds.

CHAPTER V

SHAKESPEAREAN IMMERSION: SHAKESPEARE'S PERSONA IN VIDEO GAMES, FANFICTION, AND YA DRAMA

William Shakespeare's appearances as a character in Young Adult narratives focusing on the undead have received scant attention in academic scholarship to date. Yet in the last few years, Shakespeare's person has been popping up, rather unexpectedly, in zombie and vampire novelizations, cinemas, stage plays, television shows, and video games. In previous chapters I have documented the entwining of Shakespearean narratives with the undead. Many of these YA works have sought resolutions to the dilemma of Shakespeare's continued authority in the twenty-first century. Other narratives have portrayed Shakespearean works as tainted by patriarchy and antiquated morality, and hence deservedly fallen into obscurity and ill-favor. In each case, however, the authors of these YA works have chosen metaphors of the undead to centralize the struggle between authorial life and death: the struggle of immortality.

Shakespeare's continued presence within these undead narratives suggests that he has become a reflection of a larger schism in academia and within society at large. In this chapter, I will argue that when his person or physical persona manifests within these narratives, he becomes a manifestation of contemporary ideology and our continued debate over the residual cultural authority of the "dead White European

male." When he appears in these individual works, the artists, authors, playwrights, and video game creators take sides within a societal debate about Shakespearean relevance. Shakespeare is either a savior for humanity or a corrupted authority figure who must be vanquished. Importantly, it is his characterization or persona within the narratives that seems most decisively to polarize contemporary authors: i.e. when William Shakespeare himself appears within the *dramatis personae* of the work. Further, the most aggressive and polarized responses occur not simply in YA novelizations, but in the forms of reading and play in which twenty-first century YA audiences immerse themselves with greatest regularity: video games, fanfiction writing, or even the high school plays devoted to these subjects. Within these diverse YA works, Shakespeare's actions as a character show an innate goodness, an impenetrable evil, or a duplicitous shift from one extreme to the other. While the YA novelizations allow a great range of interpretation within a Shakespearean narrative, the actions of Shakespeare the character leave little room for discussion on what his actions mean. Shakespeare in these works is something more distinct--hero, villain, or trickster.

In this final chapter, I will analyze three YA works that show William Shakespeare as a character within the *dramatis personae* struggling with his ties to the undead. Of the numerous portrayals of him as a character, the most intriguing are *The Typing of the Dead: Overkill* (2013), a video game where Shakespeare's mastery of language

allows him to save mankind from the zombie plague; *Juliet Immortal* by Stacey Jay, in which Shakespeare's character swings from savior to devil through the course of the novel; and last, *William Shakespeare's Land of the Dead: A True and Accurate Account of the 1599 Zombie Plague* by John Heimbuch. This YA stage play was originally produced by the Walking Shadow Theatre Company in Minneapolis, Minnesota, and is now performed regularly in high schools and colleges around the United States. In each work, William Shakespeare serves as a central character who aids, destroys, or evades categorization (until the final moments of the plot) in the narrative.

For the uninitiated, the onslaught of zombies in a first-person-shooter video game is truly daunting. Over the last few months I have been attempting to conquer the zombie hordes in just such a game, so that I can analyze the ways in which Shakespeare has infiltrated even the most sacrosanct tiers within the zombie canon: *The House of the Dead* zombie video game series. One terrifying entry in *The House of the Dead* series is titled *The Typing of the Dead: Overkill* (2013).

This particular title is an educational offshoot of the main series geared towards a YA and teen audience. The game is a first-person shooter where the player must kill an ever-encroaching host of the evil dead. The game offers an educational gimmick that sets it apart from most first-person shooting games: instead of aiming a weapon at the zombies the player must type out difficult phrases on a keyboard. Each

zombie is tagged with a phrase, and as the player finishes typing each word within that phrase the undead monsters are destroyed. The larger zombies require longer typed phrases; hence, more skill and effort to kill them.

Surprisingly, the game utilizes language and *auralization* as the only weapon in its arsenal. Game theorist Mark Wolf defines auralization as "turning worlds or imagery into sounds, or translating story material into voices, sound effects, music, and ambience" (258). Within *The Typing of the Dead*, Shakespeare's language is the weapon upon which all players must rely in the latter levels of the game to destroy their enemies. The typed phrases represent bullets or projectiles, or a magical or psychological force that names the zombies true selves. Some of the zombies have become so badly decayed that only a single letter calls them out and destroys them; others are more recently deceased and maintain complex notions of self or thought that a kill requires more virtuosity with a keyboard. To make each kill, the player must name the thought, self-definition, or base physical description that remains active within the targeted zombie. Easy zombies can be killed by typing simple phrases: "Ah. . ."

One can probably assume the level of desiccation has eliminated most conscious thought in such a zombie, but the game offers a few further challenges in its utilization of the keyboard. To type the phrase accurately, the player must use the shift key to capitalize the letter "A"

and then place the periods within the ellipsis with precision (striking the space bar between each period). Even in such a simple phrase, these seven keystrokes and the exact nature of the typing adds intensity to the zombie encounter. The game takes on two separate strategies here: the first is to create a pleasurable immersion within the zombie world, but the second is to create a real world learning objective about typing practice and common usage of the keyboard. For example, in the last simple phrase "Ah. . ." the player must practice capitalization, and also learn the proper way to create ellipses on a typed page.

The keyboard as controller within the game links language and lexicon to the player's power within the game's structure. The firmer grasp any player has upon the specific vocabulary with the zombie canon, the more quickly he or she reacts to possible threats. In most console games, the controller becomes an appendage that is rarely discussed in video game theory.¹ However, more recent scholarly study has begun to analyze the ways the controller or keyboard immerse our experience to various levels based upon our own skill and practice within the game's structure. Andreas Gregersen and Grodal Torben offer that gamers must fuse the conscious and unconscious use of the controller to experience any immersion within a game's diegetic world. Gregersen and Torben refer to this concept as an "extended embodiment and sense of agency" where the player holds "an embodied awareness in the moment of action" and simultaneously "experiences both agency and ownership of

virtual entities" (67). To put this in simpler terms, gamers must master their own bodies to extend their consciousness into a game's fictional boundaries. Or even more interestingly: control over one's physical self equals the freedom to become your avatar within the game's secondary world.

I recognize there has been scant mention of Shakespeare's presence within this game, but it is the concept of fusion and immersion that allows for his entry at this point in the discussion. In an educational, single-player, first-person shooter, zombie- adventure game most players would probably be surprised to see William Shakespeare enter the fray in the final levels of play. Yet this is a game that relies upon keyboard skill and knowledge of language, so in the latter stages of the game, when a culturally acknowledged authority in language, writing, and verbal wit arises from the grave to fight zombies--there is a sense of *rightness* to his presence.

My delay in discussing Shakespeare's character within this game is simple: He does not arrive until the game's final levels, but also the player must purchase him as a character. In fact, his appearance is in direct correlation to how fast a player is able to earn achievements within the game through zombie kill stats. As a player unlocks achievements, s/he's able to fight more difficult zombies and participate in more complex final level or "boss" battles. The spaces within the game have no association with Shakespeare at all--abandoned mansions, zombie-

infested bordellos, derelict factories, and moss-ridden swamps. The game levels are so specifically devoted to the settings famous in zombie horror films that there seems little impetus to include Shakespeare at all.

The game's tone is much in the style of a low-brow, B-movie zombie film, as well, where the cut-scenes and dialogue offer cheesy comedy rather than spine-tingling terror. If you beat the nine main levels of the game, you are able to advance to trophy levels that are only available in DLC (downloadable-content-packs) for additional fees. Within these DLCs, players are able to resurrect characters such as William Shakespeare and his linguistic clout. If a player's typing skills are polished enough, s/he becomes William Shakespeare firing off quips, barbs, and insults from the Shakespearean corpus. Try typing: "Quintessence of Dust" at blistering speed when one of the fastest zombies in the game races towards you, and you'll get a glimpse of what these levels offer. If you succeed, the zombie does, indeed, collapse into dust.

If you want to be William Shakespeare fighting off the undead, then you must beat the original game on all levels and purchase additional content to proceed. While the game-builders did not provide actual sales figures, the William Shakespeare DLC has received 1,802 positive reviews.² For example, in contrast, the Silver Screen DLC content pack, where players must type famous movie lines in a Hollywood zombie onslaught, received only 508 positive reviews. Such a

staggering disparity in these figures provides a quick look at how YA and teen audiences are choosing Shakespeare's character over all other forms of downloadable content available for the game.

My earlier mention that playing the game with Shakespeare's vocabulary somehow seemed *right* deserves further explanation. I did not choose that word lightly, as many of the playable characters within the game have distinct ways of dispatching the zombies within their levels. For example, you have to play the early levels of the game as a foul-mouthed cop, a terse secret agent, a terrified stripper, and a blustery biker before the Shakespearean vocabulary arrives. Each of the characters uses his/her own specialized vocabulary to deter the onslaught of the undead, but somehow none of these are quite so satisfying as Elizabethan English.

When the words are auralized within the game, the player is immersed even further. To see Shakespeare in action we must return to levels that have been previously beaten and conquer previous challenges once again to see the zombies' last thoughts in iambic pentameter. For example, even formerly simple zombie kills within the levels take on a hazardous level of difficulty when the typed phrase to dispatch them is "*A little life rounded by a sleep*" or "*I died many times ere I killed thee.*" When I played these levels earlier in the game as a stripper the same zombies were killed with slangy phrases such as "*Butthead*" and "*Stingy Ape.*" Another zombie attacks while tripping slightly over his rotting

innards and Shakespearean lexicon dispatches him with "*These fatal loins.*" The medieval theme restaurant unlooses a modern horde of costumed knight zombies and among the zingers are "*He wore his beaver up!*" and "*T'was wondrous pitiful.*" The sound design within the game so strongly utilizes the Shakespearean diction that playing the game becomes a contrast between anachronous visual settings and the pleasure of Shakespearean dialogue. Mark Wolf argues that this aural pleasure within a game is what ultimately seals a conceptual immersion within any game. Wolf suggests:

secondary worlds, with their invented languages, new creatures, vehicles, weaponry, and fantastic locations are often strongly associated with the sounds devised for them, and these sounds can be used across a variety of media to bind an imaginary world together even when the visual styles of works in different media vary considerably. (257-58)

When we hear the power of Shakespeare's language deployed in so strange a setting as an abandoned hospital or haunted carnival, the contrast binds us into the world simply because of the cognitive dissonance. We hear the impossible Shakespearean iambic pentameter within a zombie narrative, and that impossibility increases our pleasure because of the rarity of such an experience.

Wolf offers a further reason for such pleasurable associations within this Shakespearean zombie game, and it involves the way we see

characters out of time and place. Wolf argues that transnarrative characters — characters who appear in more than one story or in more than one genre of material — create a conundrum that our brain attempts to unravel. "A character who appears in more than one story links the stories' worlds together by being present in them, and the character's presence in multiple stories suggests that there is more to the character than what any single story reveals" (66). Shakespeare's presence as a transnarrative character in a zombie video game suggests, in Wolf's view, that the game will reveal something about Shakespeare that would have been impossible to convey within a Shakespearean plotline or by telling a story set in Elizabethan England. Further, "when [transnarrative characters] appear in another story, the world in which they all appear becomes larger than either story, and the audience begins to build up expectations based on their previous knowledge, and may begin to fill in the gaps between stories, imaginatively adding to the world" (66).

In these moments of transnarrative interloping, Shakespeare takes on a role that is beyond the frame of his previous works and beyond zombie media. Essentially, Shakespeare straddles the void between these two impossibly connected structures, and we learn that we must know and enjoy literature or poetry or language, even when our world is tragically falling into dystopian decay. Shakespeare appears as a heroic figure destroying and fighting back the hordes of the undead in this video

game narrative, and such a positive connotation is resonating with YA gamers. Graeme Kirkpatrick argues that such an experience can only happen within a game as, "at the deepest levels of our experience, play is what enables us to conjure something out of nothing; it separates us from the void" (13).

Video games, further, offer a more specific chance to analyze the way Shakespeare's character is surrounded by death and is ultimately immortal because of the player's ability to infinitely reset the game. The mechanics of a first-person shooter mask this effect, as we never actually see Shakespeare on screen. We play as his character within the DLC, and the details in the game are simply his visual perspective. By seeing through his eyes, we take on his language and his power. However, when we die, it is as if we are dying ourselves. This blending of character and player's self ties us together in a way that is unique in the media forms under analysis here. Karin Wenz suggests that such a symbiosis with our avatars within the game creates a sense of immortality. "The experience of death in a safe environment without any serious, lasting consequences and its reversibility gives the impression that we are in control" (315).

For my argument, I would extrapolate Wenz's point just a bit further: When we kill Shakespeare, the effects are meaningless within the game. At any moment, we might press another button and Shakespeare will rise from the dead to begin all over again. His ability to

rise from the grave within the game is limitless. The pleasure, in real world terms, however, is in seeing the rise of a dead author who saves us from a decaying world. And somehow, however impossible the task seems, his rebirth has meaning, power, and extraordinary influence. So much so, that we pay to have him rise from the dead to help us.

If video games focus on immersing players in a visual and aural secondary world, the concept of fanfiction offers an imaginary world where we immerse the immortal bard into other secondary fandoms or fanfiction crossovers. These crossovers have engaged the knotted entanglements with the undead even within new worlds where Shakespeare or the undead have little place.

Fanfiction has grown immensely over the course of the early twenty-first century and represents a participatory authorship in conjunction with a previously defined or articulated secondary world or fandom. For example, many fanfiction writers explore the crossover potential of Shakespeare within the television fandoms of *Supernatural*, *Teen Wolf*, or *Doctor Who*. The act of writing fanfiction is itself a type of immersion within a previously created world. Any quick search of the internet reveals the great number of sites focused on allowing fanfic authors to share their fantasies regarding an infinite variety of fandoms.³ This modern, and yet ancient idea of reworking or refocusing a prominent narrative for further speculative analysis and focus, offers an interesting tie to the world of Shakespeare in general. Shakespeare's

prominent place in these modern film fanfics represents a way of reclaiming a "shared resource."⁴ In these terms, Shakespeare's physical presence represents an older resource, which had been reworked and manipulated by multiple authors, and are being once again reworked and manipulated by new and additional authors for new purpose.

For scholars such as Anne Jamison, Shakespeare is simply a "brand, then, a name that indicated a certain standard and style of entertainment" (24). In Jamison's eyes, "writers have always entered into and intervened in familiar stories and styles and collaborated on authorship through discussion or other forms of influence" (32). In each new creation the author that has reworked an older narrative, just as Shakespeare did, received the authorial credit.⁵ Is it any wonder that Shakespeare has been a preferred choice in these filmic fanfics, if he is seen by modern popular culture as a fanfic writer himself? What separates current fanfics from other forms of adaptation is that William Shakespeare's appearance within these alternative worlds is speedily creating the bard as a transnarrative character embroiled in undead fandoms. Whether these fanfic authors are seeing Shakespeare within previous fanfic works or whether they are crafting the Shakespearean character subconsciously as a symbol of ideology, these crossover reworkings are altering the landscape of speculative fiction regarding Shakespeare.

Many of the most prominent YA authors on the bestseller lists today credit their initial interest in writing about Shakespeare to their start in fanfiction. Stacey Jay, Robert T. Jeschonek, and Sarah A. Hoyt began much of their professional writing as Shakespearean fanfic imaginings shared within communities focused on positive reinforcement for new writers. Further, in these online communities new writers are now creating fanfiction crossovers within the worlds created by these professional authors.⁶

Each new fanfic shared on these sites reshapes a Shakespearean narrative or reshapes Shakespeare as a character within an entirely new world. Of note is the way in which his physical presence pairs with the undead not only in video games, but in fanfiction and YA drama, as well. By examining the way Shakespeare is cast as a motivator of action within the zombie and vampire plots, we can see clearly how these new authors, fanfic writers, and dramatists are crafting powerful affirmations or dismissals of Shakespearean authority.

Scholarly attention has begun to shine upon these YA Shakespearean narratives, but has done so only recently. Marie A. Plasse discusses one of the reasons that these narratives have begun to appeal to academic as well as pop culture audiences. In "Crossover Dreams: Reflections on Shakespearians and Popular Culture," Plasse argues that we pull Shakespeare into these popular and improbable narratives to attain a sense of the "true" or the "real" reason behind

Shakespeare's notable works. However, one of the difficulties of ever attaining any true sense of Shakespeare is that a sense of the "real" experience or any authenticity is impossible. These YA narratives are exploring the fantasy of having Shakespeare explain his reasons, purposes, and ideas to us physically. When he speaks in these fantastical stories, he is, instead, illuminating our own present moment of cultural experience. The figure of Shakespeare explains away his former ambiguous plots and purposes to modern protagonists in these transnarratives that align much more firmly with our own current and popular belief systems. Shakespeare in these stories is a gay advocate, a staunch feminist, and environmental activist.

What makes our own moment of cultural experience unique is its reliance upon the tropes and themes of the undead to test or unmask Shakespeare's place within our modern world. She notes:

our desires to witness and respond to an 'original' Shakespearean performance often get displaced onto the processes of witnessing and responding to the popular performances of our own time. As spectators of contemporary popular culture we can come face to face with the real thing—popular works of art created by our contemporaries and performed for the first time for us. (17)

The irony here, of course, is that any "real" version of Shakespeare is displaced or erased by these real transnarratives that lift Shakespeare

from any ambiguous level and give him a twenty-first century voice. Another of the ways that current popular culture has developed interaction with the “real” Shakespeare is by casting him as savior, destroyer, or trickster within the undead dystopias that mirror our own world. This is a Shakespeare who is saving us from our own cultural downfalls--virus ridden zombies or imperialistic vampires--or by manifesting as a rotting corpse that will devour us all if we succumb to his corrupt authority.

Other scholars have seen the manifestation of famous authors as players within their own narratives as a way of redeeming Shakespeare from the connotations of "difficult to read" or "terribly boring." Linda Troost and Sayre Greenfield in their article "'Strange Mutations': Shakespeare, Austen and Cultural Success" offer Shakespeare and Austen as parallel literary images who evoke much of the same power within the tropes of the undead. Troost and Greenfield argue that "adaptation, travesty and fictionalization of the author" are primary methods of transformation that move an author from academic worthiness to "extraordinary fame" in contemporary culture (432). Troost and Greenfield focus primarily on Jane Austen and the recent mash-up novels that have added a great deal of attention to her works such as *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* (2009) adapted by Seth Grahame-Smith, but their scholarship notes a number of similarities to Shakespeare's prime position of authority in matters of the undead.

Shakespeare and Austen survive, according to Troost and Greenfield because they allow "readers considerable latitude in their reactions, but adaptations can make the novels and plays more appealing in the short term by adjusting the works more finely to the dominant cultural environment" (435). Troost and Greenfield target their argument on ways that these adaptations are simply making the original authors more popular. While I must admit some truth in this statement, this misses a larger point entirely: We are not simply making Shakespeare more palatable or popular when we summon him from the early modern period, but the authors who create these works are encouraging — variously — either a type of Shakespearean preservation or an authorial annihilation. Or a preservation that is simultaneously an annihilation: at stake is the undead afterlife of an author who survives for us in polarized terms as savior or monster. As Plasse suggested earlier, when we attempt to pull Shakespeare from his historical period, we do so with the hope of attaining the "truth," and end up dispersing and superimposing our own present cultural truth within the new amalgamated social performance or artistic creation (17).

While I agree with Troost and Greenfield when they propose that, these transnarratives "may intrigue those who may otherwise disdain knowledge of the author, thus widening the circle of celebrity," (439) I also posit that popularity and celebrity are not the reason that we are summoning William Shakespeare into these undead narratives. We pull

Shakespeare from out of the shadows of the past, from the darkness of graves, or from the light of immortal fame so that we can pass judgment upon his present cultural value.

Troost and Greenfield offer the salient point that "travesties provide a service of defining qualities of the author by their contrariness: the qualities that make these texts, at a specific cultural moment, high art are where travesty aims its darts" (439). When we pull Shakespeare into these undead narratives, we are defining Shakespearean value within a twenty-first century world. The academic schism that embraced multiculturalism and eviscerated the dead, white, European, male author as an outdated form of social privilege has had a difficult time banishing Shakespeare. The undead narratives under study in this chapter are the very embodiment of that struggle. Do we maintain our Bardolotry or should we make clear the corrupted flesh of which Shakespeare is heir to? In answer, each of the varied cultural artifacts within this study has provided a glimpse of the possible outcomes for the Shakespearean corpus. As the twenty-first century has progressed, many have allowed Shakespeare to rot and decay, while another set have bound Shakespeare to a more positive form of immortality beyond our era's authority to decide.

One of the more popular works that has risen on the bestseller lists is a teen series that focuses on Romeo and Juliet written by Stacey Jay. The first novel in the series, *Juliet Immortal* (2011), builds upon the

famous romance from Shakespeare's play, but captures the lovers in a paranormal fantasy that explores what would happen if the two lovers were not actually portrayed correctly in the play at all. Here, the lovers are soul mates that are seduced by rival brotherhoods of immortal vampires. One side of the brotherhood, The Mercenaries, feeds on the destruction of soul mates, and the other, the Ambassadors, feeds off the connection made by soul mates once they commit to one another. In this work, Friar Lawrence seduces and converts Romeo to the Dark Brotherhood, a supernatural vampire brood that feeds not necessarily on blood, but on human souls just before Romeo kills Juliet in a vampiric attack. Juliet is taken up by the side of Light and must then fight against Romeo's darkness again and again throughout eternity as they meet to destroy or protect the initial bondings of powerful soul mates throughout history.

This novel should be notable as one of the more popular published works that builds upon our expectations of Shakespeare as a character and then thwarts our expectations, gleefully. A short synopsis of the plot makes the work seem convoluted, but in reading the actual novel, the key concepts are easy to understand and clearly compelling for teen readers. The plot begins just after Juliet's initial death at the hands of Romeo in the family crypt. Here she takes her place within the eternal history of soul mates who are tragically separated at a critical moment in their existence. Juliet's death destroys their soul mate bond and allows

the Dark Brotherhood of Mercenaries to feed on the chaos and destruction erupting from that soul mate bond in its moment of obliteration. If the dark brotherhood succeeds in their quest to destroy a pair of soul mates, then the explosion and destruction of their human souls turns the lovers into slaves for the respective sides in the supernatural battle. Romeo, the murderer, becomes a vampire and soul stealer; Juliet, the victim, becomes a martyr who fights against the dark brotherhood for the side of light. Each of the lovers, however, must travel through history to find perfect soul mates and either feed upon their destruction or make them realize that they are destined to be together. If the side of Light wins by joining two souls mates, then the side of light and order feeds upon the energy released in the soul mate match.

While the timeline of the novel charts the early stages of Romeo and Juliet's actual lives in Italy to an early 21st century high school, the majority of the plot takes place in the classrooms and auditorium of the high school where the two former lovers are battling to protect/destroy another pair of lovers. The novel develops a complex level of intertextuality in analysis, as the real Romeo and Juliet have entered the modern twenty-first century as students who are performing in a high school production of *West Side Story*. The two actors in the high school musical are potential soul mates who must be saved by Juliet to replicate

and maintain order — or be destroyed by Romeo so the Mercenaries can feast upon the victims.

The various layers of intertextual play that Stacey Jay creates within the narrative are intricately bound. The real Romeo and Juliet are playing Tony and Maria in the school play, who are themselves adapted reconstructions of American characters based upon Shakespeare's Elizabethan work. The musical itself is based upon previous dramas and incarnations of Romeo and Juliet, who, indeed, are presented as real characters from history that Shakespeare and other dramatists also transcribed into fiction. The novel is asking teen readers to see the literary equivalent of the eternal mirrors optical illusion, when mirrors face one another and appear to continue infinitely. Reality and simulacra merge here to create a new and unique interwoven transnarrative of Shakespeare and a vampire apocalypse. As this transnarrative exploration of Shakespeare within a vampire world is fairly current, scholarly interpretation of what the vampire-like villains and heroes mean in this context has been varied.

Rob Latham suggests that the vampire metaphor in YA literature is tied to Marxist theory in that "it is literally the factory system, dead labor risen up as undead capital to batten on the workers, draining their vital energies and incorporating them into itself" (4). As both Romeo and Juliet are forced to become undead workers for a higher order, this interpretation is hard to ignore. However, other writers have suggested

in scholarship on other sources such as *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* to *Twilight* to *True Blood* that the teenage vampire crisis is tied more to a YA fascination with romance and the "end times" than any other scholarly construct.

Lynn Schofield Clark theorizes that vampires are a self-referential and often humorous symbol of the end of the world "premised on the idea of an apocalyptic End Times" and "our lurking sense, on the eve of the future, of social disintegration and simmering discontent" (50). In her view, the vampire supernatural craze is "the moment Walter Benjamin warned us of, when humankind's 'self-alienation' reaches 'such a degree that it can experience its own destruction as an aesthetic pleasure of the first order'" (50-51). Susannah Clements argues that vampires allow "us to explore the concepts of temptation, sin, and guilt. The vampire [provides] a means to express the need for redemption, the power of faith, and the necessity of sacrifice. The vampire [gives] us a creative space to understand the fight against evil, spiritual warfare, and what it means for something to be sacred" (162).

In *Juliet Immortal*, vampires represent an element of misogynistic masculine influence set on feeding psychically and sexually upon victims who expect true love. In opposition, in order to survive, the Light (i.e. women) must recognize those who want only physical and sexual gratification rather than the committed bonds and spiritual energy associated with romantic ideals. In a similar vein, Roberta Seelinger

Trites argues that when sexuality is addressed in YA novels it is often didactic and heavy handed. "Male and female authors alike who communicate that sex is to be avoided to protect vulnerable females ultimately end up affirming the patriarchal status quo, no matter how good their intentions" (95). For Trites, only adults are able to talk about sex freely, which only enables further repression. This fear of frank discussions of sexual intercourse and gender roles only encourages further realms of repressive authority. *Juliet Immortal* thwarts much of this repression by making Romeo and Juliet hundreds of years old, with multiple lifetimes of experience. In Jay's work, Romeo and Juliet often reveal their wisdom and experience, and yet they are trapped in a time loop that forces them to relive their teenage years again and again. The protagonists are both adults many times over and subject to their teenage bodies and hormones.

While the plot of *Juliet Immortal* itself is intricate and intriguing from a literary analysis, the way in which Shakespeare is referenced as a character is unique. Jay suggests that Romeo found a devious way to torment Juliet throughout the ages when he found a playwright susceptible enough to his charms to make a drama based upon a fragment of their love story as soul mates. Romeo dupes the playwright Shakespeare by offering up only a fragment of the truth about his relationship with Juliet. Jay explains this conception of authorship

when Juliet first meets Romeo in the twenty-first century and he uses the play to torture her:

'O, she doth teach the torches to burn bright,' he whispers, helping cool the fain shimmer of need. That *horrible* play. That contemptible, *lying* play he helped Shakespeare pen all those hundreds of years ago when he first twisted our story to fit his agenda. It worked far too well. Shakespeare's enduring tragedy did its part to further the goals of the Mercenaries--glamorizing death, making dying for love seem the most noble act of all, though nothing could be further from the truth. Taking an innocent life--in a misguided attempt to prove love or for any other reason--is a useless waste. (Jay 22)

In this work, Shakespeare is, indeed, an author of renown, but Romeo is the "real" Shakespeare for the ages. When we first encounter William Shakespeare, the novel offers us a glimpse of his career as an actor, a drunk who stumbles through his lines, at least until Romeo arrives and offers him the play that will change his career. Romeo's clever storytelling, fine dramatic wit, and powerful poetry turn Shakespeare into a legend. The negative light cast upon Shakespeare is doubly dark, however. Not only is the "real" Shakespeare a terrible actor and weak-minded drunk, but a soulless vampire (i.e. Romeo as the true writer of the play) constructing a play so that he can glorify the breaking

of a soul mate bond to feed upon it when the bond is destroyed in the real world. Jay's work revels in showing us the gritty landscape of Elizabethan theater, but then pulls the rug out from under us. Our expectations are upended when we are offered the choice between seeing Shakespeare as a drunken frontman in a writing scam or as a vampire attempting to destroy true love for the countless audience members who glory in the tragic ending of the play.

Shakespearean fanfiction offers an ambivalent opinion regarding Shakespeare's authority, and the pleasure in consuming these works for me has been in seeing Shakespeare's character touted, derided, or contorted to show us some measure of "Truth" behind the mask. For Jay, the pivot between our expectation of an author who could know and present true love so powerfully, while hiding such a vile purpose, sheds light on the larger social argument about Shakespeare's worth in the twenty-first century. For Jay--and for many YA readers of this popular work--the meaning is simple: We should carefully review literary authority as we move into the twenty-first century.

Video games and fanfiction offer certain levels of immersion in Shakespearean worlds, but in closing let's turn to a final example that takes immersion to its logical extreme: moving beyond the secondary world of written text or gaming program, and into actual participatory enactment. Dramatic works taken from the cold dead page and brought to life on a stage tender a physical world--transient and temporal to be

sure--but a physical world nonetheless that is erected and visible for actors and audiences alike. There could be no more appropriate end to this thesis about Shakespeare's struggles with the undead than John Heimbuch's (2012) play *Land of the Dead: A True and Accurate Account of the 1599 Zombie Plague* — a work devised to be performed with and for high school audiences.

In Heimbuch's *Land*, the Elizabethan world on display presents a tangible opportunity for YA audiences to enter Shakespeare's London. The prospect of acting within a play forces an even deeper level of immersive engagement in Shakespeare's world than that possible in fanfic or first-person shooters. In these moments of theatricality, we are no longer a digital avatar or imaginary figment, but a corporeal resurrection of the historical figures within the theater's walls. To immerse a YA audience in a Shakespearean world, there is no better place than a stage. Many of these Shakespearean undead adaptations have sought distance from the theater as Shakespeare's work has tainted the stage with connotations of boredom, difficulty, and corrupt authority, so this full circle back to the embodiment of characters in a theatrical production is of note. To become Shakespeare, as some YA actors will be asked to do, or to become the zombies that disembowel the Bard, is to take an actual, literal place within the discourse and debates surrounding Shakespeare in contemporary culture.

Heinbuch's London of 1599 sets Shakespeare on a metaphorical tightrope, on which his astounding success has created a new Globe theater in a marshy Southwark field near the Thames. Shakespeare's accomplishments have benefited him financially, but have also enabled a huge field of competitive writers, all who think they are more entitled to Shakespeare's prestige. Shakespeare's early plays have earned him renown, yet in this year, his great works have yet to darken the Wooden O. Heinbuch's play constructs a turbulent world where Shakespeare's reputation is ascending but also threatened by zombie afflictions that must be read as incursions of inferior literary authority.

As the play begins, the world around Shakespeare is in turmoil over the strength of his most recent work, *Henry V*, but aghast at the death of Falstaff, one of Shakespeare's most beloved characters. No sooner has *Henry V*'s last scene fallen, than William Shakespeare is accosted by Richard Burbage, Will Kemp, Doctor John Dee, Francis Bacon, and Queen Elizabeth in various stage entrances for the murder of Hal's lascivious chum. As presented on Heinbuch's stage, Shakespeare's choice to kill Falstaff sets in motion the darker, undead subplots that haunt the London world outside the Globe theater. Shakespeare is congratulated by many for the greatness of this decision, but also railed at for placing the art of *Henry V* over the comedic aspects inherent in Falstaff's physicality. A great remainder of the supporting characters

accuse Shakespeare of unworthiness, decline, and abuse of his authority as a writer when making this unwise decision about Falstaff.

This perspective on the worthiness of Shakespeare's writing is exactly what makes these YA adaptations so powerful. Our academic culture wars are here crammed into a tiny cockpit where "a crooked figure may attest in little place a million" (*Henry V*, Pro.15-16). At each turn in these moments where Shakespeare's writing is questioned, the stage is struck with violence that turns to talk of resurrection, the undead, the afflicted, and the hostilities outside the theater walls. Shakespeare's language is sinister from the earliest reference to Falstaff's death, as the Gadshill thief had returned to life once already. When Will Kemp begs Shakespeare to reconsider the ignominious off-stage death of Falstaff, we're regaled with the tale of Falstaff rising from the grave for comedy:

Kemp: But could you not at least show his death?

Shakespeare: Forget not I had! A great hero's death in the battle of Shrewsbury. But like a base coward thou wouldst not stay dead, but rose resurrected, to say thou dissembled.

(14)

This reference to Falstaff's possible death in the final act of *Henry IV, Part 1*, allows Heinbuch to suggest that Shakespeare is even here defeated by actors who cannot respect the authority of the written word. Kemp's

extemporaneous resurrection is crowned by his later jest to Shakespeare that "the words in the play are but fine trimmings on our [the actors] effort" (15). We readers are meant to take sides here, either with Kemp and the thrill of a certain fanfic adaptation, or with Shakespeare and the traditional authority of the word. In these early scenes, we are quickly pulled into an ideological debate localized around two figures in the play, and the power struggle surrounding Shakespeare's reputation.

That Shakespeare feels this power struggle is apparent only a few short exchanges later when the actors and writers ask what his next play will be. When he speaks backstage with Kate, his attiring woman, after the throng of subversive actors and ambitious writers withdraw, his perspective reveals the sense of imminent betrayal:

Kate: Do tell us, Will - what is your next play?

Shakespeare: It's not about Kemp.

Kate: So it's a betrayal, is it?

Shakespeare: Perhaps. Oh, now you'll laugh.

Kate: Come now, the title!

Shakespeare: *The Tragedy of Julius Caesar.*

Kate: A ha! What did I say - a betrayal! And what a betrayal it is. (18).

Falstaff's death initiates the metaphysics of resurrection within the play, where actors' and authors' forces of will animate the life upon a stage. However, when Shakespeare discloses his next writing topic, his

art seems to embody a psychological perspective much greater than the historical subject matter. As he has just exited a tight and combative scene with his actors and fellow competitive writers, this emotive connection with an all-powerful Emperor murdered by those who seek his power and authority for themselves is one way that this YA work allows us to see a twenty-first century debate erupting in conflict surrounding Shakespeare. What we see here is the multicultural and feminist mindset of the twenty-first century at large struggling to simultaneously displace and protect its icons of authority. Within this YA stage play, this far-ranging debate resonates in the visual imagery of Will Shakespeare dressed as a powerful King being slowly disrobed, uncrowned, and transformed back into non-royal form by a woman--all the while lamenting his loss of revenue, value, and power to a clamoring army of "lesser" dramatists and comedic adaptors. The play sets forth an argument surrounding the value of Shakespeare, while visually divesting him of powerful symbols of authority associated with English royalty. Shakespeare begins the play as a king, but he ends the scene in "Elizabethan street clothes" according to the costuming directions.

The value of Shakespeare within the play is ultimately tied to his construction of the Globe as a source of revenue and livelihood. As the afflicted gradually move closer to his theater, the playhouse becomes a stronghold against a world of external threats. The Globe takes on the symbolic nature of Shakespeare's language withstanding the dangers of a

hostile world. The characters see only a bastion of strong wooden beams keeping a zombie threat at bay, but Shakespeare's dialogue points to its metaphorical stature whenever it is mentioned.

For example, Richard Burbage laments the glory days of comedy with Will Kemp as Falstaff, but Shakespeare doesn't recognize any nostalgia as Kemp destroyed much of the written word to create his comedy.

Burbage: So your verses were trampled. When he'd burst into jest in the midst of the scene, it may have been coarse, but by God it was fun. Things always strung together well enough.

Shakespeare: You See? That's just it! My plays aren't just strung together like flowers on a garland, they're constructed - like this playhouse.

And when Burbage asks him whether Shakespeare's words represent boards for his playhouse, Shakespeare responds: "We both know every plank, board and tile was stolen from Shoreditch and rebuilt in Southwark to suit our needs. So it is for me not with lumber, but with thoughts, words, and deeds" (56). Such a reply allows us to locate Shakespeare's words as stolen, if they do indeed represent the boards. The play references Shakespeare's own participation in a kind of fanfic,

through his massive recyclings of earlier plots and characters. But more important, we can see that the playhouse within Heimbuch's play is also a theatrical depiction of Shakespeare's collected works--in peril.

Shakespeare's dramatic works are surrounded by fire, a teeming throng of afflicted actors and writers, and strangely they remain the only battlements against anarchy in Heimbuch's Elizabethan world.

Later in the play as the zombie threat increases, the Queen's entourage becomes increasingly adamant that their only hope of survival is to abandon the Globe and fight the zombies on their own ground. As the questions mount about whether to leave the theater and fight in the streets or stay protected behind Shakespeare's theater, the symbolic nature of the Globe within the play becomes even more profound. Doctor Dee wishes to flee the theater and fight the zombies in the streets, while others such as Francis Bacon wish to remain in Shakespeare's limelight just a bit longer for safety's sake.

Doctor Dee: If we can reach the river by daybreak and
thence make it to Morlake, we may yet save our
England.

Bacon: Tell me what there is to save? Beyond these
walls it may be that no England remains. No
nation is ought [sic] but the labor of men, and
outside this wooden O we'll find none of that.
Only smoke and shadow.

Doctor Dee's wish to "save our England" is also a wish to destroy the upstart authors, unworthy contaminants, and marauding undead actors who have been plaguing the Globe theater since the play's early scenes. Bacon's jibe that nations are made from the "labor of men" is a final bookend to the earlier mentioned ideology that only the theater provides a last stronghold to preserve the pinnacles of human labor while the world falls into chaos. This last exchange in the final scenes of the play is the most thinly veiled reference to our conundrum over Shakespeare's value and authority. If our external world has fallen into "smoke and shadow," then the wooden O is the last holdout against mayhem.

The final scenes of the play develop the chaos and disorder to such extremes that each of the earlier actors and authors who caused Shakespeare so much doubt and worry return as part of the zombie horde. Even the final holdouts such as Francis Bacon are bitten and devoured by the afflicted townsfolk in the final rampage and storming of the Globe. Kemp attempts to lead many of the zombies away from the theater through a comedic jingling of Morris bells from an old Falstaff costume, but his final ending is unknown. In the final moments, Shakespeare is left onstage, alone, as the last human, while the chaotic world invades and destroys his theater. As the zombies find no further protective barriers, they press closer to Shakespeare's hiding place in the center of the stage. Shakespeare's death appears imminent, when a character that we had forgotten suddenly enters the center of the

balcony. Queen Elizabeth had been hiding upstairs, supposedly protected from the afflicted by her guards, but as the zombies near Shakespeare, she descends the stairs in full zombie make-up. The final stage direction of the play offers an ambiguous conclusion: "[*Sensing the presence of **Shakespeare** all other afflicted crouch as if ready to pounce, or almost as if they bow to their **Queen***]" (67). Marked by "as if" the sign of figurative language, or at least of interpretive ambiguity, this closing minute leaves us with the indecision of either reverence or destruction. The choice of what happens in the moments just after the stage lights go dark is our own. Again, we are left with an unclear and uncertain answer as to what will happen to Shakespeare as the undead encroach ever nearer to his last hiding place.

Just as Falstaff dies in the wings, the playwright repeats the same potential indignity for his creator here. Or, alternatively, I would argue, that Shakespeare's offstage death serves as a warning to the future that we should be careful where we place value. Shakespeare's words as a character suggest his writing as a source contributes more than a starting place for future authorship. What ends Shakespeare meets are still shrouded within the darkness of the play, but then so is his sustained presence as an author of commanding authority in our external world. Heimbuch's play offers little hope that Shakespeare will survive his encounter with the undead, but even in such a dark moment the ending does not dispatch him outright. I'd argue that if there is hope

for Shakespeare, it is in the idea that our imaginations cannot tolerate his death, and that we must pass on his works to future readers.

There can be little doubt that the early decades of the twenty-first century have shown a renaissance of undead works regarding Shakespeare. Buy why? We are immersing ourselves in Shakespearean plotlines to determine more definite resolutions to the cultural debates that are filtering into popular culture. Should we return Shakespeare to the privileged place atop a throne, much like the one Kenneth Branagh grants his Henry V in traditional and "living" adaptation, or should we tear Shakespeare's rotting corpse from off that throne? Shakespeare cannot remain a member of the undead for long, no matter how much we claim these creatures are immortal. Our current cultural moment explores this debate through the metaphors of the undead, but this is not a permanent state of being. Our ambiguous response temporarily holds Shakespeare in flux between life and death, and it appears the choice resides within the upcoming YA generation's force of Will that shall determine his fate. If there is a reason to study these YA works, then it is simply this: By evaluating and analyzing the ways we are transmitting Shakespearean cultural authority, or asking YA audiences to question such authority, we can see a trigger point for cultural change that will impact academia and scholarly research as the next generations come of age.

In the early scenes of Heimbuch's play, Shakespeare's words to a young apprentice, Master Rice, offer exactly the resolution that will be made--and one solid resolution that I can offer at the end of this chapter, as well.

Shakespeare: Plays are nothing but a product of their times, likely to wane with the fashion of the day. No, Master Rice, if anything it is by the strength of the youth that our art shall survive. (19)

Our current cultural climate has placed Shakespeare within an unstable field, and our undead battleground for Shakespeare's continued relevance has not been fought in the familiar spaces for such far-reaching intellectual and philosophical debate. Instead, our own doubts, our own insecurities, and our own fears have been played out in the artistic endeavors created for young adult audiences. In essence, this maneuver has shifted responsibility for Shakespeare's fate away from the ivory tower of academia towards another generation of readers and players. Our unease over Shakespeare's body of written work has manifested in YA culture as the rotting corpus of a zombie, the changing nebulous body of the werewolf, but also as the pale, quick-healing, nearly-impenetrable flesh of the vampire. And this final undead form, even in (un)death, offers the most hope to those creating undead Shakespeare fiction.

In "The Immortal Vampire of Stratford-upon-Avon" Kevin J. Wetmore, Jr., a cultural studies scholar, discusses the way that Shakespeare has always been an author with "vampire-like qualities" (71). For Wetmore, Shakespeare has fed off previous authors and previous texts as if he were drinking the blood of their work to extend his own life. "In this sense, Shakespeare himself is a vampiric author. His works are inspired by earlier works, extending their lives but conversely draining many of them" (71). Wetmore's comparison allows us to see Shakespeare's position in relation to the undead nature of adaptation with the Bard "feeding off those who had come before, creating new vampires, and ensuring that even in death he would live on in a different kind of life" (79).

When attempting to consider what that "different kind of life" will be, we must apply further analytical tendrils into the realm of YA culture. Authors, playwrights, and video game creators have taken our societal quandaries surrounding Shakespeare and delivered artistic products that will fundamentally alter the upcoming generations notions of Shakespeare. Our quandary is much like the one Galland's film *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Undead* presents to a theater full of unsuspecting community theater patrons: Is the action on stage in any Shakespearean play worth preserving for future audiences, or is it presented as harmless, but seething with something more sinister beneath the surface? The danger for Shakespeare is quite real, as YA

audiences see Shakespearean authority as baleful and antagonistic to our current political and cultural ideals. However, the equal number of adaptations that present a heroic Shakespeare slaying the armies of the undead and rising triumphant on his field of battle offer bastions of hope. Defining a cultural moment that imperils our former icons is both traumatic and exhilarating from an academic standpoint. Yet as the struggle for Shakespeare's literary validity passes towards the future, with fate indefinite, I can't help but wonder whether Shakespeare will save us from our own headlong rush into dystopian apocalypse or whether we'll dispatch him with a brutal stake to the heart to ensure our own survival in the new world we're traveling towards.

Notes

¹ Graeme Kirkpatrick suggests "it is perhaps even integral to contemporary computer game experience that we do not rationalize our actions with direct reference to controllers. Good play is about feeling and it seems that being able to feel what we are supposed to be feeling is, at least partly, a function of *not* looking at or thinking about our hands" (97).

² "The Typing of the Dead: Overkill" Community Hub at Steamgames.com provided the 1,802 positive reviews of The Typing of the Dead: Shakespeare DLC pack on 7/6/15.

³ One of the largest and most respected sites in the fanfiction community is at fanfiction.net. By joining the community and sharing your own fanfiction, any writer is able to see the entire spectrum of writing within multiple fandoms. For the purposes of this research, I submitted my own work, so that I could browse the work of other Shakespeare fanfic authors within the Shakespeare fandoms at <https://www.fanfiction.net/play/Shakespeare/>. At the time of this writing there are over 1,900 Shakespeare fanfiction entries available within this single community. Alternatively, fanlore.org offers an intriguing array of fanfic writing, but a smaller Shakespearean community. Also, <http://thisengland.livejournal.com/> offers a Shakespearean fanfic community, where all writings are fanfic offerings tied to Shakespeare's history plays.

⁴ In Anne Jamison's work, *Fic: Why FanFiction Is Taking Over the World*, she argues that "stories were a thing held in common, to be passed from hand to hand and narrator to narrator" (13). For her, and for my argument here, fanfiction represents "the swinging back of the pendulum toward that older way of thinking" that reworks old narratives for

new purposes and new audiences.

⁵ Jamison again suggests here that each new author that reworks a previous narrative, "despite this multiplicity of source and process ceded credit, ultimately, to a single authorial name--and fanfiction, with all its collaborative glee, continues that tradition." Shakespeare may have received ultimate credit for his re-workings of previous dramatic works, but the new authors of fanfiction in the 21st century are having a great deal of fun pulling Shakespeare into their own dramatis personae in secondary worlds that have nothing to do with Shakespeare's London.

⁶ Stacey Jay's secondary worlds are popular places for many fanfiction authors to begin their crossovers with Shakespeare. The fanfiction fandoms are often difficult to catalogue, but at the time of this publication Jay's writings, have sparked dozens of fanfics like, my personal favorite, *Souls Mate Forever* written by the writer IShipIBreath at <https://www.fanfiction.net/s/11139900/1/Souls-mate-Forever>.

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