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The Muse of Fire: Exploring Origin Stories of Shakespeare Professionals

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THE MUSE OF FIRE: EXPLORING ORIGIN STORIES OF SHAKESPEARE
PROFESSIONALS

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of TV, Radio, Film and Theatre

San José State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

William J. Brown III

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PROFESSIONALS

by

William J. Brown III

APPROVED FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF TV, RADIO, FILM AND THEATRE

SAN JOSÉ STATE UNIVERSITY

May 2012

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ABSTRACT

THE MUSE OF FIRE: EXPLORING ORIGIN STORIES OF SHAKESPEARE

PROFESSIONALS

by William J. Brown III

This thesis is an exploration and examination of the origin stories of various Shakespeare professionals currently working in either theatre or academia. It asks the basic question: Why have they dedicated their lives to these four-hundred-year-old plays? For this study I conducted twenty-four interviews, drawing from various ethnographic methodologies to do so. Working under the supposition that we, as human beings, mythologize our own lives in order to justify our actions, I analyzed the interviews, seeking themes through a framework drawn from Paul Ricoeur's *Time and Narrative*. Paying particular attention to his ideas about the threefold present, I examined the interviewee answers in terms of the "past present," "present present," and "future present," as explained by Ricoeur. This thesis demonstrates that there are, in fact, similarities between those who have committed their lives to Shakespeare. As the interview questions were analyzed, it became apparent that, though the details differ, there is a common experience that connects these professionals in the culture of Shakespearean performance and study. Finally this thesis explores how we, as humans, narrate our own lives and how we create our own "truths" to explain who we are and how we became that person.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter One: The Nature and Function of the Origin Story	1
Chapter Two: The Ubiquity of Shakespeare’s Plays and Potential Effects on Readers	15
Chapter Three: Methods and Framework for Oral History Analysis	32
Chapter Four: Identifying and Mapping Themes in Personal Narratives.....	50
Chapter Five: Author’s Reflection.....	87
References	98

CHAPTER ONE: THE NATURE AND FUNCTION OF ORIGIN STORIES

“What’s past is prologue.” -The Tempest II.i.250

Shakespeare’s influence is ingrained in modern, Western popular culture from our vocabulary to nearly all forms of entertainment. There are Shakespeare festivals across the United States, and his plays are studied at all levels of education. A vast number of films, books, and articles are written every year about him. The English language is peppered with words and phrases coined by Shakespeare and with references (oblique and direct) to his works, and most of us think little of it. Shakespeare is simply part of our culture as has been well documented in many books and articles, such as Marjorie Garber’s *Shakespeare and Modern Culture* (2008) and *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare and Popular Culture* (2007), edited by Robert Shaughnessy.

What is not well documented are the reasons why certain theatre professionals--in their own words--have committed their careers to sharing Shakespeare’s work. To a large extent, they are the people who have created the Shakespeare market and the ones who frequent it. There are thousands of them. They even have a yearly conference (the Shakespeare Theatre Association Conference) that moves to a new city each year and features Shakespeare companies from all over the world, ranging from the U.S. to the Czech Republic to Spain to Australia. With this in mind, the central research questions of this thesis are: How do these people describe the reasons for their commitment to a Shakespeare-centric career? Can they trace their passion to a single moment in their

lives? Do they have an “origin story,” a point at which they say they “fell in love” with Shakespeare, so to speak, and decided to dedicate their lives to the study of his plays? These are the key questions that motivate my research and the thesis that follows.

Specifically, this study focuses on twenty-four, living Shakespeare-centric actors, directors, and educators from across the United States and the United Kingdom. It began by simply gathering the stories of these professionals. These stories are inherently valuable as they give insight into why the individuals have made the choices they have. Moreover, by comparing these stories, this study seeks to draw parallels and illuminate universal themes in the larger culture of Shakespearean professionals. All of them have different “origin stories,” yet in the end, they have the same passion: a desire to share Shakespeare with others through education or performance.

Comic books--and the movies that they have spawned in recent years--have made modern Western audiences very familiar with the concept of the origin story. It is the backstory that reveals the incidents that made the hero/villain who he or she is. It does not take long to find someone who is able to explain that “Spider-Man” is really just Peter Parker, a young man who was bitten by a radioactive spider and gained his powers. Nor does it take long to learn that he was set onto his path of crime fighting when his Uncle Ben was killed in a mugging by a criminal that Parker allowed to escape during an earlier incident. Superman is a space alien who gains his powers from the Earth’s sun,

while Batman turned to crime fighting after watching his parents' murder. These are all well-known origin stories in popular culture.

Origin stories date back to before the ancient Greeks, with one of the oldest recorded being the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, from Mesopotamia, which was recorded circa 3000 B.C. Greek mythology, however, features many of the most readily accessible examples of ancient origin stories, so I have chosen to focus briefly on them as representative of ancient origin stories as a whole.

The Greeks used myths for many reasons including chronicling history, as a means of worship, to illustrate moral lessons, entertainment, political propaganda and, notably for the purposes of this thesis, to explain the world around them. Seeking an answer to why the sun appears to cross the sky, they created the story that the sun is really a chariot driven by the God Apollo. To explain why the seasons change, they told the story of Persephone, the daughter of Demeter (Goddess of the harvest) being forced to live in Hades for part of every year. While Persephone was in Hades, Demeter's mourning made harvest impossible, thus causing winter. They used myths and stories as explanatory metaphors for the various aspects of the world around them.

French theorist Paul Ricoeur argues that one cannot discuss narrative and storytelling without a consideration of time. In *Time and Narrative* (1984), Ricoeur notes that narrative is an essential part of our understanding of time. He writes that "time becomes human to the extent that it is articulated through a narrative mode, and narrative

attains its full meaning when it becomes a condition of temporal existence” (Ricoeur 52). Time does not exist for human beings in any real sense until they recognize that it does and then only when it has been shaped in the form of a narrative. Without narrative, time does not exist. This idea is central to the importance of the origin story to my study.

Ricoeur borrows from Augustine’s theory of the threefold present. He states that “there is not a future time, a past time, and a present time, but a threefold present, a present of future things, a present of past things and a present of present things” (60). For Ricoeur and Augustine, the past, present, and future are all understood in the present. We are always experiencing what we have done and what we will do; therefore, the past and future are intimately connected to our present. The threefold present makes the origin story not just a verbal reflection of an event that happened; rather, the origin story is something happening in and affecting the present.

Ricoeur’s theory presents the threefold present as existing at the same time, and suggests that humans alone create the linear view of time with which most of us are familiar. Ricoeur writes, “time becomes human time to the extent that it is organized” (3). In order to more easily explain Ricoeur’s theory, I will organize it in a linear fashion. To do this, I will begin with Ricoeur’s own explanation. He wrote, “The present of the future? *Henceforth* [...] I commit myself to doing that *tomorrow*. The present of the past? *Now* I intend to do that because I *just* realized that [...] The present of the present? *Now* I am doing it because *now* I can do it” (60). The past, present, and

future are always integral to our choices, and in that way, we experience our past and future in the present. The “past present” refers to things from the past, whether they be events or realizations that explain our current actions; the “present present” refers to things that we do now, and are able to do now because of the past present; while the “future present” refers to things that we are going to do in the future because of what has happened now, or in the past.

This connection that joins past, present, and future, brings to the forefront the importance of the “origin story.” Rather than just being an interesting anecdote about their past that stands alone in the tellers’ experience, origins are connected to both the present and the future; they are integral metaphors in the lives of storytellers. The origin may be seen as a justification for the storyteller’s actions, and in the cases of those I interviewed, their life choices.

Ricoeur develops a way of looking at time as narrative. He begins with the idea of “events,” which are “more than just singular occurrence[s]. [They get their] definition from [their] contributions to the development of a plot” (65). This definition of “events” leads to the following question: what significance do these “events” have in the larger story, or in the case of my interviewees, the narrative of their professional lives? Ricoeur continues, “a story, too, must be more than just an enumeration of events in serial order; it must organize them into an intelligible whole, of a sort such that we can always ask what is the ‘thought’ of this story” (65). This leads to Ricoeur’s idea of “emplotment,”

which is the process by which we can draw patterns from narratives. However, this is only possible when each individual “event” is seen as connected to the whole of the original narrative, which is then connected to the whole of the storyteller’s experience.

All of this leads back to the original idea that time only exists as it is perceived and narrated by people. Like time, a story only exists as it is recognized and told by the teller. The events that the story retells *happened* to the teller, but when it is *told*, in the words of Ricoeur,

[the] beginning has to be chosen by the narrator. This ‘prehistory’ [...] is what binds it to a larger whole and gives it a ‘background’ [...] Told stories, therefore, have to emerge from this background. With this emergence also emerges the implied subject. We may thus say, ‘the story stands for the person.’ (75)

The idea that the story stands for the person, makes an origin story suddenly much more important. The teller is, therefore, choosing where to begin the story, what parts to gloss over or emphasize, in order to present who they are and how they became that person. I do not mean to imply that any of my interviewees were being misleading in their stories; rather I believe that the choice to exclude or embellish a part of the story is often a choice of which the storyteller is unconscious.

The interviewees tell the stories that they want to be known. They change, and alter them to explain who they are. Why does it matter that the audience hears the story the teller wants to be heard? Ricoeur provides an answer: “we tell stories because in the

last analysis human lives need and merit being narrated” (75). I believe that the origin story is a story about the past that serves to legitimize today and guide tomorrow. It is not necessarily the “truth.” Rather, it can be a version of the “truth” that the teller has created for themselves to explain, maintain, or legitimize their actions in the present.

I referred to Greek mythology earlier, however, I have chosen to avoid the word “myth,” in relationship to the interviewees’ stories, due to the modern connotation that a myth is often completely imaginary or made up. Though to this day there are those who believe the myths are history rather than made up stories. I do not believe that the stories presented by my interviewees are fictitious and will avoid the word to avoid misconception. The question, for Ricoeur, is not whether the story is made up or not; rather, the question is: what parts of the story are left out, or glossed over? What parts are focused on, or enhanced? How does the telling of the story change over time? Does the story create significant justification for the interviewee’s present life and where they are headed in the future?

While few scholars of theatre would disagree, this study will also demonstrate that Shakespeare is a vital part of Western culture. Shakespeare’s influence manifests in obvious ways, such as stage and film productions of the plays, and in less obvious ways, such as graphic novels and television. Almost every Western student, who graduates from high school, has studied one or more of his plays, and likely has seen at least a film version of one of them. “Shakespeare” is big business, and as such, requires the support

of people whose careers are dedicated to his works; however, unlike many other “big businesses,” Shakespeare is not a business that showers many of its participants in wealth. In fact, not a single person I interviewed or have spoken to claimed to study, teach, or perform Shakespeare for the money. For the purposes of this thesis I ask: If not for money, then what did get them dedicated to the works of Shakespeare, and why do they continue to do it?

In short, I seek to analyze the origin stories of Shakespeare-centric professionals. While there are, no doubt, many biographies and autobiographies that include such origin stories, the list of publications that focus solely on them is relatively short. In the hundreds of different topics and studies around Shakespeare, there has not been a study on the *people* who dedicate themselves to his work and why they say they do. They have chosen a career focused on Shakespeare, so how do they describe the origins and evolution of this career? What, if anything, is similar in how they describe their introductions to Shakespeare?

Chapter Two explores the importance and the ubiquitous nature of Shakespeare to modern, Western, popular culture. It explores a few of the various forms of popular entertainment in which Shakespeare has left his mark, which are the most accessible to the general population. To do this, I draw from *Shakespeare and Youth Culture* by Jennifer Hulbert, Kevin J. Whetmore Jr and, Robert L. York and *Shakespeare in Modern Popular Culture* by Douglas Lanier.

In addition, Chapter Two provides two examples of previously published origin stories directly relating to Shakespeare professionals: *Hamlet's Dresser: A Memoir* (2002) and *Me and Shakespeare: Adventures with the Bard* (2002), by Bob Smith and Herman Gollub, respectively. These two stories demonstrate the significance of the Shakespearean origin story. Through Shakespeare's plays, Smith found a way to understand himself and his own life challenges, while Gollub discovered a new driving passion in his life. Smith's story, and the difficulty in finding similar publications, other than Gollub's, served as the inspiration for this thesis.

Chapter Three explains the methodology of this study. From an ethnographic standpoint, I drew heavily from Soyini Madison's *Critical Ethnography* in deciding how to gather my data. I also turned to several ethnographic sources as models, namely: *Sweet Tea: Black Gay Men of the South* by E. Patrick Johnson, *Radical Compassion: Finding Christ in the Heart of the Poor* by Gary Smith S.J., and *Telling Bodies-Performing Birth* by Della Pollock. The chapter explains why I chose these sources and what specifically I modeled from each scholar in my analysis of the stories. The chapter also demonstrates three separate models for presenting the gathered data. Gary Smith presents a narrative model that weaves his data into the stories he tells. In contrast, Johnson surrounds his source material with analytical essays that are illustrated by the stories in between. Pollock alternates between her analysis and something like a play-script that retells her experience conducting her interviews. Finally, this chapter explains

what aspects I have chosen to take from each model to create my own framework for presenting my data.

Chapter Four presents my findings and analysis. In it, the stories of the interviewees are presented in three sections. The first section offers an analysis of the stories that the interviewees themselves identify as their origin stories with Shakespeare. Additionally, the first section also examines the interviewees “successes.” Finally, this first section covers the interview material that falls into the category of the “past present.” The second section is a discussion of what they say they have learned from working with Shakespeare and why they believe his work is still so prevalent today. It covers the interview material relating to the “present present.” The last section looks at how the interviewees view their relationship with Shakespeare, and how they will move forward with Shakespeare, and represents the “future present.”

I seek to locate similarities and differences in each story and discuss how the storytellers’ careers unfolded from them. In some cases, these similarities are obvious, while in others, they are more obscure, or non-existent. Throughout each subsection of the chapter, I will attempt to view the stories through the lens of Ricoeur’s *Time and Narrative*, and discuss how I believe my definition of the origin story applies to them.

The last chapter, Chapter Five will contain some of my own story as a Shakespeare professional, and attempt to examine how it fits with the others. The chapter ends by reinforcing the importance of Shakespeare to modern, Western, popular culture.

Before any good story can begin, the cast of characters must be established. They are listed below as they are found at the beginning of most published plays in a format similar to the *Dramatis Personae*. Presenting them this way captures a little of the theatrical spirit, which seems appropriate for this study.

Some of the interviewees on this list I know personally, and they are the people with whom I began my interviews. I selected them because they are passionate about Shakespeare and have earned some degree of respect in the local and national theatre communities. After their interviews, many of them were able to direct me to others that they thought would have “good stories” to share. A few of those on the list I was familiar with by reputation and I contacted them via email and requested an interview. The remaining interviewees responded to a mass email that I sent to the Shakespeare Theatre Association.

Interviewee List

Aldo Billingslea - Member of Actor’s Equity. Has performed in over 30 professional Shakespearean productions, and 22 of the plays.

Laura Cole - Director of Education and Training at the Atlanta Shakespeare Company. Has worked as an educator at the Atlanta Shakespeare Company for 15 years.

Bob Currier - Artistic Director of The Marin Shakespeare Festival for the past 21 years.

Rebecca J. Ennals - Artistic Director of Education at the San Francisco Shakespeare Festival. Has worked at the Festival for nine years, in addition to two years at the Napa Valley Shakespeare Festival.

Sarah Enloe - Has been teaching Shakespeare for 13 years and has work with the American Shakespeare Center for six years. Currently, the Director of Education for the American Shakespeare Center.

Jan Gist - Resident Voice and Speech Coach for the Old Globe for the past ten years. Professor of Voice and Speech for the University of San Diego Graduate Theatre Program.

Michael D. Jacobs - Equity Actor. Performed in over 25 of Shakespeare's plays in 30-40 different productions.

Emily Jordan - Member of Actor's Equity. Has performed in 18 professional productions of Shakespeare.

Scott Kaiser - Director of Company Development and head of Voice and Text at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival for the past 21 years.

Kenneth Kelleher - Resident Director of the San Francisco Shakespeare Festival and Artistic Director of Pacific Repertory Theatre, the home of the Carmel Shakespeare [sic] Festival. Director of 25 productions.

Colleen Kelly - Director of Training at the American Shakespeare Center and the acting Head of Actor Training at the University of Virginia. In addition, she has

taught in the professional training programs at the Old Globe and Alabama Shakespeare Festivals.

Joan Langley - Director of Education at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival for the past 23 years.

Jennifer Le Blanc - Member of Actor's Equity. Performed in 15 different plays, many of them multiple times.

Karen Libman - Professor of Theatre and Artistic Associate at the Grand Valley Shakespeare Festival for the past 11 years.

Gary Logan - Director of the Shakespeare Theatre Company's Academy for Classical Acting at The George Washington University, and Voice, Text and Dialect Coach at the Shakespeare Theatre for the past five years. Also spent 12 years coaching at the National Theatre Conservatory. Author of *The Eloquent Shakespeare: A Pronouncing Dictionary for the Complete Dramatic Works, with Notes to Untie the Modern Tongue*.

Julian Lopez-Morillas - Member of Actor's Equity. Has completed the entire canon and performed in over 90 productions.

Michael Lomonico - Master Teacher for the Folger Shakespeare Library with 30+ years of teaching experience from High School to College.

Bill Rauch - Artistic Director of the Oregon Shakespeare Festival for the past six years.

James Shapiro-Author of *Rival Playwrights: Marlowe, Jonson, Shakespeare*; *Shakespeare and the Jews*, *Oberammergau: The Troubling Story of the World's Most Famous Passion Play*; *1599: A Year in the Life of William Shakespeare*; and *Contested Will: Who Wrote Shakespeare?*

Philip C. Sneed - Producing Artistic Director of the Colorado Shakespeare Festival for the past six years. Member of Actor's Equity. Directed, acted in, or produced over 80 productions and 23 of the plays.

Patrick Spottiswoode - Current Director of Globe Education at Shakespeare's Globe in London, where he has worked for the past 27 years. Current President of the Shakespeare Theatre Association.

Rene Thornton Jr. - Member of Actor's Equity. Has performed in over 70 productions and 31 different plays in the canon.

U. Jonathan Toppo - Member of Actor's Equity. Company member at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival for 20 years. Has performed in over 40 professional Shakespeare productions.

Cynthia White - Freelance Director. Has directed over 15 professional productions.

CHAPTER TWO: THE UBIQUITY OF SHAKESPEARE'S PLAYS AND POTENTIAL
EFFECTS ON READERS

“Aught that I could ever read...”-Midsummer Night's Dream I.i.137

The influence of Shakespeare and his works is nearly ubiquitous in Western popular culture. As defined by Douglas Lanier, “popular culture” includes “commercial entertainment in mass produced media addressed to a general public” and “widely regarded as entertaining and enjoyable” (Lanier 5-6). Using this definition, Shakespeare and his works appear in many forms. A brief internet search finds that the global film industry, since 1980 alone, has released well over one hundred television and feature film versions and adaptations of Shakespeare's plays, in countries ranging from India [Gulzar's Bollywood adaptation of *Comedy of Errors* (1982)], to Japan [Akira Kurosawa's Lear adaptation *Ran* (1985)], to the United Kingdom [Kenneth Branagh's *Hamlet* (1996)], to the U.S. [Gil Junger's *Taming of the Shrew* adaptation *10 Things I Hate About You* (1999)]. Disney's *The Lion King* (1994) is a retelling of *Hamlet*, casting Simba in the role of Hamlet, with Scar filling in as Claudius. There are even several Oscar winners on the list including Kenneth Branagh's *Henry V* (1989) and John Madden's *Shakespeare in Love* (1998) (imdb.com).

Shakespeare's influence is not just confined to movies; his works make many appearances on the small screen as well. In the longest running cartoon in U.S. television history *The Simpsons*' episode “Tales from the Public Domain” (2002) Bart is cast as

Hamlet. Shakespeare also shows up as both a reference in multiple “Treehouse of Horror” episodes--the yearly Halloween special--and even as a zombie to be slain by Homer. In this episode, the town of Springfield is overrun by zombies, one of which is Shakespeare. Homer makes a point to take out the Shakespeare zombie shouting, “Show’s over Shakespeare!” to which zombie Shakespeare dramatically responds, “Is this the end of Zombie Shakespeare?” (Hulbert 27). This particular reference to Shakespeare humorously portrays the public’s fear of dealing with Shakespeare. Homer does what many school children have dreamed of doing, perhaps: getting rid of Shakespeare forever.

Shakespeare has also been brought to the stage, via *The Simpsons*, by comedian Rick Miller, who is currently, and for the past decade, touring his adaptation of both *The Simpsons* and *Macbeth*, called *MacHomer*. The script is “85% Shakespeare” combined with impressions of 50 different characters from the television show to satirize both, according to the show’s website. The production has been highly successful, playing in both small theaters as well as larger, well known Shakespearean theatres, such as the California Shakespeare Theater.

The Folger Shakespeare Library’s Shakespeare in American Life website gives several examples of classic television shows that are filled with references to Shakespeare. Adam West’s Batman in the 1960’s series *Batman* hid the secret entrance to his Batcave in a bust of William Shakespeare. In the *Gilligan’s Island* episode “The

Producer” (1966), the cast put on a musical version of *Hamlet*. *Happy Days* featured the Fonz taking a turn as Hamlet in “A Star is Bored” (1974). Even the ghost of William Shakespeare has turned up on television in an episode of *The Twilight Zone* “The Bard” (1963).

Shakespearean references appear in at least twenty-six episodes and film versions of *Star Trek*. Thirteen times the titles are either derivative: “Dagger of the Mind” (1966); or direct quotations from Shakespeare: “Thine Own Self” (1994), and “Once More Into the Breach” (1998); eight times, either direct quotes: “Angels and ministers of grace, defend us”; or paraphrases: “All the galaxy is a stage” can be found. In another episode “Elaan of Troyius” (1968) the plot is an adaptation of *The Taming of the Shrew* with Captain Kirk (William Shatner) playing the role of Petruchio. Shatner, coincidentally, began his career as a classically trained actor; one of his first professional acting jobs was at the Stratford Shakespeare Festival in Canada. Additionally, in three episodes of *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, complete scenes from Shakespeare are performed within the episode. These episodes include: “Emergence” (1994), “Time’s Arrow Part II” (1992), and “The Defector” (1989). In addition, Captain Picard (Patrick Stewart) has a copy of the complete works of Shakespeare in his “Ready Room” on the *Enterprise* (StarTrek.com).

Stewart, who is arguably best known for his portrayal of Captain Picard and Charles Xavier in the *X-Men* franchise of films, has a very long history with Shakespeare.

Before he took on the role of Picard, he had established himself as a top Shakespearean actor in the United Kingdom as a member of the Royal Shakespeare Company under John Barton, but was otherwise an unknown. Since concluding the series, he has performed in film versions of *Macbeth* and *Hamlet*, even as the voice of William Shakespeare in the film *Gnomeo and Juliet* (2011). Additionally, in the film *The King of Texas* (2002), Stewart plays John Lear, a wealthy cattle baron, who divides his land amongst his daughters only to be forsaken by them. In this respect, the film bears a striking resemblance to *King Lear*.

Continuing with the *Star Trek* theme, Douglas Lanier, in his book *Shakespeare and Modern Popular Culture* (2002), opens with a discussion about the use of a quote from *Hamlet* in the major motion picture *Star Trek VI*.

Why allude to Shakespeare in a work directed at a mass market audience, a reference we aren't expected to 'get' without Mr. Spock's help? Why Shakespeare and not John Milton, Jane Austen or Maya Angelou? [...] Why so much attention to a long dead British writer in an American production from an American television series? (Lanier 2)

There are, of course, many possible answers to Lanier's query: the plays are timeless, exceedingly well crafted, intellectually challenging, and as Lanier puts it, "concerned with lasting truths of the human condition" (Lanier 3). Though, perhaps, the answer is as simple as Shakespeare is truly a fixture in western popular culture.

Often Shakespeare is seen as an icon of “high culture,” meaning his plays are viewed as “aesthetically refined, complex,” as opposed to “pop culture,” which is “aesthetically unsophisticated, disposable, immediately accessible [...] aimed at the lowest common denominator” (3). Lanier argues that Shakespeare as “high culture” is a creation of our own educational institutions. We are taught that he is the epicenter of culture. Lanier argues that audiences experience Shakespeare, as he puts it,

[...] from within institutions that ally his work with a certain cultural power-bloc, constituted chiefly by schools [...] Schools teach ‘proper’ appreciation of Shakespeare, establishing which modes of interpretation, aesthetic values, and technical knowledge are deemed necessary to understand Shakespeare correctly [...] [and] impart a posture of seriousness and deference toward texts deemed “literary.” (51)

Many are taught and, in some cases, force-fed Shakespeare for years as the epitome of high culture. Ironically, because of that, he is familiar enough that he is able to be a fixture in *popular* culture, as well.

In their book *Shakespeare and Youth Culture* (2006), Jennifer Hulbert, Kevin J. Whetmore Jr., and Robert L. York argue that nowhere is this institutionalization more apparent than in the American education system, in which even in popular portrayals of the classroom, such as *Malcolm in the Middle* [“High School Play” (2000)], Shakespeare is an institution (Hulbert 15). The authors continue to cite several examples of film and

television in which students are seen to read and perform Shakespeare in class. These examples include films, such as *Dead Poets Society* (1989) and *Porky's 2: The Next Day* (1983), and television, shows such as *3rd Rock from the Sun* (1996) and *Arrested Development* (2003). It is a commonly accepted storytelling trope that students study Shakespeare. Hulbert, York, and Whetmore use our own popular portrayals of the classroom to demonstrate the prevalence of Shakespeare in the school system. These films and television shows support Samuel Crowl's argument that Shakespeare is the "one constant fixture in American High School classrooms" (15).

Hulbert, York, and Whetmore also observe that the entrenchment of Shakespeare in the classroom causes Shakespeare to become entrenched in youth culture as a whole. The necessity to keep up with the changing youth culture has led to "an entire industry [springing] up for the purpose of marketing Shakespeare to youth and to market products to market Shakespeare to educators and scholars" (2). This market is massive, and includes products ranging from various editions of the plays from multiple editors, board games, software and "translations" of the plays. Many of these products are designed to bridge the gap between *us* (the educators) and *them* (the youth). A search of the Barnes and Noble website for "Hamlet" yields at least six different "translations" or study guides, five different manga (manga are popular comics created by Japanese authors) or illustrated versions, as well as over thirty different editions of the play, including one written in "Klingon."

Kevin Whetmore does an extensive study of Shakespeare's influence on music. He begins with the musical *Hair* (1967), which was billed as the first American musical to use rock music. In this seminal work of American musical theatre, one that defined the genre of the rock-musical Shakespeare makes several appearances. The song "What a Piece of Work is Man," from Act II, is a direct reference to one of Hamlet's speeches. "Eyes Look Your Last," sung by Claude, is a direct reference to Romeo's last speech in *Romeo and Juliet*, and in "The Flesh Fails," the chorus repeats the last lines of both Hamlet ("The rest is silence") and Romeo ("Seal with a righteous kiss") (118). Whetmore continues to argue that the musical takes the template of Hamlet and Romeo as young men, "born to set things right" and to live free and love free who are slain in conflicts not of their own making and turns them into the image of youthful rebellion (119). Much of the music from *Hair* became synonymous with the anti-Vietnam War movement, a movement associated with American youth.

The Bard's influence on music is not limited to Rock and Roll. It extends into Jazz with Louis Armstrong's musical retelling of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, "Swinging the Dream," "Catch my Soul," a jazz version of *Othello* by Jack Goode and Richard M. Rosenbloom, and other works, such as The Troubadour Theatre Company's *All's Kool that Ends Kool*, a version of *All's Well that Ends Well* set to the music of Kool and the Gang (151). Throughout American history, African-American culture has strongly impacted broader American popular culture, through music. This is especially

evident in jazz's popularity in the 1920's and early 30's amongst the youth culture.

Shakespeare's influence on legendary jazz artists, such as Armstrong, strongly points to the ubiquity of Shakespeare.

Shakespeare's style has also been compared to hip hop and rap. The presentational form of rap is sometimes used by educators to teach Shakespeare to students in terms with which they can readily identify. A common refrain amongst teachers is that "Shakespeare would use rap if he were alive today." Alan Sitomer, in his instruction guide *Hip-Hop Poetry and the Classics* (2004), uses rap lyrics from artists, such as Eminem, Mos Def and the Notorious BIG to illustrate this in comparison with poems, such as Sonnet 18 to "demonstrate the comparative use of alliteration, allusion, hyperbole, imagery, irony, metaphor, simile, mood, personification, onomatopoeia, and symbolism" (155). The comparisons show students the use of the same literary tools by both the rap artists and Shakespeare. This, in turn, lets the students relate to the poetry of Shakespeare, which originally might have seemed foreign to them, in the same manner that they do to the poetry of the rap artists that they might initially better understand.

Continuing the theme of popular culture, there are several "celebrity" actors who have dedicated a large portion of their lives to Shakespeare: Patrick Stewart and Kenneth Branagh, for example. It seemed a safe bet that I would be able to discover what drew these celebrities to Shakespeare in one published form or another. However, contrary to what I expected, even Shakespeare experts as well-known as these do not have their

introductions to Shakespeare on record. Branagh, for example, was nominated for an academy award for his work as a director and actor in his film version of *Henry V*. He has since made several of Shakespeare's plays into films following *Henry V* (1989) including: *Much Ado About Nothing* (1993), *Hamlet* (1996), *Othello* (1995), *Love's Labor's Lost* (2000), and *As You Like It* (2006). It did not seem too far-fetched to assume that there would be a fascinating "origin story" in his autobiography *Beginning* (1990). Yet there was none. My expectation was that Branagh would dedicate a significant portion of his autobiography to the root of his passion of Shakespeare. Instead, he only briefly mentions Shakespeare specifically in his autobiography. Before he left for drama school he spent time "visiting second-hand bookshops and assembling a [...] collection of Shakespeare" (31). There was no mention about why he felt the need to collect Shakespeare. He writes later of seeing his first Shakespeare and finding that it was "rough and thrilling, completely dispelling the classroom image of Shakespeare as boring" (36), and later seeing his first *Hamlet* and again being "completely bowled over," describing the occasion as "momentous" (36). Perhaps witnessing these productions really sank the hook, so to speak, but Branagh does not verify that. In his autobiography, he continues to make brief mentions of Shakespeare, most often about his desire to perfect his performance of Hamlet, but never does he dig deeper or elaborate.

In his introduction, he writes that the sole purpose of writing the *Beginning* was to earn enough money to rent an actual office space for his Renaissance Theatre Company,

which performed mostly Shakespeare. Obviously, Shakespeare has had a huge impact on his life. Throughout Branagh's book, he often mentions that he liked Shakespeare, but repeatedly he wrote that upon graduation from the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art (RADA) he "would have done pretty much whatever came along: panto, rep, telly, radio, Shakespeare, whatever" (Branagh 84). He even turned down a slot as a company member at the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC) for another play. This seemed completely counter to everything that I expected from the man who has gained so much fame through his Shakespeare films. The story ends when, eventually, he auditioned for the RSC's *Henry V* as King Henry, he was offered and accepted the role, and has been closely linked with Shakespeare ever since.

While fascinating, Branagh's account did little to explain why people dedicate their lives to the study and practice of Shakespeare's plays, so it was logical to begin looking at other books that deal directly with Shakespeare's influence on their authors. Surprisingly, a search for such books comes up rather short: *Hamlet's Dresser: A Memoir* by Bob Smith and *Me and Shakespeare: Adventures with the Bard* by Herman Gollob. These two books represent an authoritative voice on the Shakespearean "origin story," as the two most widely available and known works on the subject. Both authors had moments with Shakespeare's work that changed their lives. And while each has a similar result, dedicating their lives to sharing the Bard's work, the stories leading to this result occur in completely different ways. Bob Smith "met" Shakespeare as a boy and in many

ways grew up with him, and as an adult, the plays continue to be a large part of his life, while Gollob “met” Shakespeare much later in life and has made the study of his plays and life his second career.

Growing up in Connecticut in the 1940’s and 50’s, Smith writes about an unhappy childhood. His youth was consumed by care for his mentally disabled sister. He recalls having to change his sister in the back of their car on long road trips when he was as young as six years old. He lived with a guilt that he did not understand, after hearing that it was his own birth (he was an abnormally large baby) that had damaged his mother’s reproductive system and caused his sister to be born the way she was. He even lived in fear of getting sick because his mother would not allow him to be so. “You are not sick,” she would tell him, “There’s nothing wrong with you. I have one sick child! I will not have two!” (B. Smith 74). His mother went through a period of mental instability due to her own feelings of guilt about her daughter’s condition, and the consequences of her instability were often taken out on Smith.

When Smith was ten years old, his parents sent him to study at the library, despite the pouring rain outside. The librarian had left a copy of *Merchant of Venice* on the table next to him, after she had delivered his newly dried socks from the radiator. He opened the book and was initially repulsed because, “When I was ten I hated plays. Starting as a scratchy six year old crepe paper carrot [...] I’d been making my reluctant, shy way

through nerve-racking Christmas plays and Spring Festivals” (111). He opened it nonetheless, and read the first line:

ANTONIO: In sooth I know not why I am so sad. (I.i.1)

Suddenly, he wrote, the world made more sense to him. As a ten year old, he had, despite not knowing what “sooth” meant, found a “simple, declarative sentence that could not more perfectly describe the kid reading it” (111). The line is not very remarkable in itself. But the simplicity of it, at that moment in time, described Smith perfectly. He was a sad child, because of his home life and his family’s situation but he had no way to describe it as a ten year old. That line reflected him. He knew that he was sad, but could not explain it. Smith says that particular line was his hook into Shakespeare.

Shakespeare was able to describe his feelings exactly with an otherwise unremarkable line of text, and it was only the beginning. This experience motivated Smith to continue to explore Shakespeare, and eventually make it his career.

As he grew older, he began working/interning at the American Shakespeare Festival in Stratford, Connecticut. In that festival, he found a home away from home. Smith had a home, but it was a troubled home. It was a home in which his parents were “overwhelmed and otherwise engaged and paradoxically hopeful that I’d find a way to escape from them, and from Carolyn [his sister]” (31). So to escape, he lived at the festival as a homeless person lives. He spent time sleeping on various porches where “sweet old ladies used to leave pillows and bedclothes” (31) and in park benches, just to

stay close to the festival. After several months he was able to convince the night guard at the festival to let him in to sleep inside the theatre, and that was where he found peace.

One of his favorite memories is of the summer that the festival was workshopping *A Winter's Tale*. He was touched by the scene in play in which, Paulina attempts to calm Leontes' rage and jealousy by bringing him his new born daughter. In this particular production, she wore a large green cape that she used to cover the baby. After the festival was closed for the evening, when he was

alone in the dressing room those night's, [he] would put it [the cape] on the cool, washed cement floor and, still wet from the shower, sleep naked inside it. In the sixteen years of my boy's life it was the first place that I'd ever felt safe, inside Paulina's cape in the black backstage at four A.M.. (36)

Smith continues to tell how some twenty years later he found the very same cape at a costume rental shop and immediately it was like meeting an old friend again.

These two brief excerpts from Smith's book perfectly illustrate the purpose of the origin story: they serve to explain his past and then justify his present. His retelling presents the hook, of the discovery that Shakespeare understood who he was at a young age, and then, perhaps, a justification to commit himself to a career in Shakespeare, by labeling that time backstage at sixteen years of age as the first place he ever felt safe. So, of course, he stuck with the career that afforded him both understanding and safety: two

things that had always escaped him in his youth, due to his lack of a stable home environment.

Gollub, on the other hand, was entering retirement, as a book editor, when he was first truly introduced to Shakespeare. As he drew closer to retirement he found that “a certain weariness had begun to overtake me. In fact I’d begun to resemble my briefcase: outside, battered and worn; inside, musty and cluttered” (Gollub 4). He was tired of his career and no longer had any passion for it. Excitement had been replaced by a sense of dread.

Gollub convinced himself that retirement would change things. He envisioned, as he puts it, a “Messianic Age, a time of peace and contentment and goodwill to all [...] I would read that library of books, watch that hoard of video tapes, listen to that cache of CD’s [...] It would be a time of self-enlightenment, self enlargement” (5). Perhaps, seeing a mid-life crisis coming on, as he lost his professional identity, his wife guided him to seeing a therapist to more fully understand himself and who he was, and hopefully what he really wanted to do with himself in retirement. To put it bluntly, therapy was not for Gollub. When asked about his family, he responded, “That’s personal” (6), and that was the end of therapy for him. And, at the time, it appeared to be the end of him actually finding some direction for himself in his retirement.

By chance, he went to see a production of *Hamlet* starring Ralph Fiennes at the Belasco Theatre on Broadway in 1995. The excitement surrounding the performance was

palpable enough that he actually waited for over an hour in line to get tickets, and as he did so, it occurred to him that he had never seen a stage production of *Hamlet*. He left the performance excited and energized about what he had seen. Gollub was dumbfounded that he had been surprised by what he had seen and heard. Fiennes's performance as Hamlet had actually surprised him. Despite having seen several film versions of *Hamlet*, it was as if he had never seen or heard a production of *Hamlet* before. The next day, he went into his office gushing about the performance and lamenting his limited knowledge of Shakespeare; a coworker then directed him to the BBC series *Playing Shakespeare*. He obtained a copy and after watching it he found that he was "an old man made mad by the love of Shakespeare" (3).

Specifically, he was drawn to a segment of the series in which Patrick Stewart discusses his performance of Enobarbus in *Antony and Cleopatra*, notably how his performance was different the second time he played the role, particularly the moment of the play in which he describes Cleopatra on her barge. Stewart described that moment as, "a transformation on that river which lifted him and all the observers [...] out of the real life into something very much deeper, much more profound" (15). To which Gollub responds,

the passion I'd begun to develop for Shakespeare was a mystical experience [...] not unlike my return to Judaism seven years previously, a spiritual reawakening

[...] during which I began to form ideas about the human condition [...] that were to influence the way I understood Shakespeare. (15)

In this moment, Gollub, too, has presented an origin story that justifies his present and guides his future. He is able to trace to a single moment, the beginning of a second career, a complete change of lifestyle. He uses it to explain why he made the career shift originally and then his continuation in it. His story has identified a moment that sparked a passion for Shakespeare, thus curing his boredom; further, he found, through Shakespeare, a literary way to understand and describe his own newfound understanding of his faith.

It has now been established that Shakespeare is a prevalent force in popular western culture. It has had an impact in many major forms of entertainment: from television, to film, to the stage, both as adaptations and productions of the plays. Shakespeare is also a major presence in our educational system.

Additionally, I have considered two examples of a Shakespearean origin story and presented them in the manner that reflects the Ricoeur's ideas in *Time and Narrative*. Both Smith and Gollub are able to pinpoint a single moment from their pasts as their attraction to Shakespeare. These single moments led to larger experiences that shaped their lives. They are moments that seem sensational, or at least are narrated as such. These moments also justify their present careers, which in turn guide their future ones. I

conducted a series of interviews to find out the extent to which other theatre professionals have similar origin story moments.

Before I move on to an analysis of the interviews, I will discuss my methodology for gathering them. Key questions include: How were the interviews conducted? How was access to interviewees obtained? Once gathered, what did I look for in the interviews? How did I analyze the data and what is the best form to present my particular findings?

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS AND FRAMEWORK FOR ORAL HISTORY

ANALYSIS

“...yet there is method in’t.” -Hamlet II.ii.209

One of the inherent challenges with this study was determining whom to include in the interview pool. I chose people who have a certain professional gravitas with regard to Shakespeare and can speak with an authoritative voice on the subject of his life and plays. Specifically, I focused on 1) **educators** who have taught Shakespeare for at least four years, 2) **directors** who have either spent the same number of years employed by a Shakespeare Festival, or directed at least fifteen productions, and 3) **actors** who are members of Actor’s Equity Association (the professional union of actors and stage managers) and have performed in at least fifteen Shakespeare productions, or spent four years employed by Shakespeare Festivals as company members. Special attention will be paid to those actors who are seeking to be in every one of Shakespeare’s plays.

Performing in every play in the canon is a goal held by many professional Shakespearean actors. In my search for interviewees, I only came across two people who had actually accomplished the feat, though I was only able to interview one-Julian Lopez-Morillas.

My research is based on oral histories. These oral histories fall into the larger subject of ethnography, which is, according to Karen O’Reilly, “research [...] [that involves] direct sustained contact with human agents, within the context of their daily lives [and cultures], watching what happens, listening to what is said and asking

questions” (O’Reilly 3). Ethnography, as a methodology, calls for a deep level of personal engagement between the researcher and the people with whom he meets that goes beyond a mere interview. According to Dick Hobbs, “personal engagement with the subject is the key to understanding a particular culture or social setting” (qtd. in Jupp 101). Usually, ethnography requires the researcher to interact with the interviewees over an extended period of time in order to form a connection with them: however, in this case, my connection to the interviewees is formed through my involvement in the Shakespeare-centric culture, or as Charlotte Aull Davis puts it, in the “broader socio-cultural circumstances under which they [the interviewees] work” (Davis 5). This is similar to the method used by E. Patrick Johnson in his book *Sweet Tea: Black Gay Men of the South*.

Johnson’s book is a collection of interviews with over 70 African-American, homosexual men from the southern United States. He demonstrates that there is a thriving culture of homosexuality in what is, arguably, the most socially and politically conservative region of the country. Additionally, Johnson illustrates how southern culture has been appropriated into the homosexual sub-culture. The research conducted by Johnson, and my own research, is informed by, and in some ways legitimized by, the shared personal experiences that we have with the interviewees. Johnson’s legitimacy comes from his being an African-American homosexual from the south, while mine

comes from my work as an actor, producer, and teacher of Shakespeare in multiple companies in California and the Middle East.

Another key to this research is going beyond merely interviewing, and conducting an ethnographic interview. Barbara Sherman Heyl marks the distinction between interview and ethnography in the following way, “ethnographic interviewing is conducted in the context of an established relationship with a research partner [...] the relationship must be respectful of each other, as equal as possible, ethical and sensitive” (qtd. in O’Reilly 4). The key to making this happen, for Heyl, is that the relationship should allow for both sides to *exchange* their views in a dialogic encounter, as opposed to the interviewer just asking the interviewee to share his or hers.

O’Reilly gives a concise breakdown of three broad ways of conducting an ethnographic interview. The first is the “structured” interview. In this style, all of the questions are presented in the same order and with the same wording in each time, to each person interviewed. This allows for the interview to be repeatable with different people over the course of the study. The second is the “unstructured,” which, in many ways, is similar to a conversation. The interviewer begins with a list of topics that he or she hopes to discuss and as the conversation develops he or she asks subsequent questions as needed. The third type is the “semi-structured,” which is a combination of the first two. Some questions will demand a fixed response while others are presented merely as topics to be discussed (O’Reilly 126).

Both the structured and less structured methods have their benefits. The structured style can create, for many, a less stressful environment. Questions can be sent ahead of time, so the people being interviewed know exactly what is going to be asked of them, and they do not have to worry about coming up with “good” answers on the spot. A less structured style lets the interviewees have greater control over the story that they tell. They are more easily able to focus on what is important to them rather than being railroaded by the interview questions. Many ethnographers, such as Soyini Madison, Karen O’Reilly, William Foote Whyte, and Steiner Kvale recommend using a less structured model for similar reasons. O’Reilly argues that effective interviews are “informal and relaxed; they take time, and are usually enjoyable for all parties” (127). Madison supports this, writing that “the interviewee is not an object, but a subject with agency, history and his or her own idiosyncratic command of a story. Interviewer and interviewee are in a partnership and dialogue as they construct memory, meaning and experience together” (Madison 25). Since I hoped to discover the stories that the interviewees are excited to tell, I determined that a semi-structured method is the most effective for this study. My goal was to encourage the interviewees to tell the “stories” that they want to tell.

In conducting the interviews, I borrowed from two separate interview models: The Patton Model and the Spradley Model, as presented by Madison in her book *Critical Ethnography* (2005).

The Patton Model

1. **Behavior or Experience Questions** revolve around obtaining more information on a specific action or behavior. These questions do not address “why” the action or behavior occurs.
2. **Opinion or Value Questions** address the opinion, value or belief toward a phenomenon. The opinion tends to be an individual question, while the values have to do with the guiding principles that lead to the individual opinion.
3. **Feeling Questions** address the emotion and sentiments of the interviewee. These questions are not concerned with “truth,” but how the interviewee is emotionally affected by the issue.
4. **Knowledge Questions** focus on the pool of knowledge the interviewee has on the issue and where their knowledge is garnered.
5. **Sensory Questions** deal, literally, with the senses.
6. **Background/Demographic Questions** address concrete details concerning population statistics (Madison 27-28).

The Spradley Model

1. **Descriptive Questions** seek a recounting of a specific phenomenon. These questions are further broken down into subsections: *tour questions*, which seek a broad description of the phenomenon; *example questions*, which seek a specific example to illustrate part of a *tour* answer; *experience questions*, which ask the interviewee to talk about their individual experience of the phenomenon; and *native language questions*, which pertain to the usage of terminology relating specifically to the native language of the interviewee (not applicable to my study).
2. **Structural or Explanation Questions** elicit further explanation of the context in which the phenomenon occurred for the answer to be understood.
3. **Contrast Questions** seek comparisons (28-30).

Madison also provides several other types of questions that, while they do not fit into either *model* above, are relevant to my specific study. These are “advice questions,” and “once-upon-a-time descriptive” questions. The “once-upon-a-time descriptive” questions seek a story that illustrates the drama of an experienced event and are most effective when the context of the story is already established and understood. The “advice” questions seek advice from the person being interviewed and are useful in discovering philosophies and disposition of the interviewee.

According to Madison, it is important to remember that the stories presented by the interviewees are not the “truth.” As these stories are recalled, I have to account for the interviewees’ memories. How well do they really remember? Are they sensationalizing anything? Are they generalizing? Are they creating broad “truths” out of specific events? Finally, I must account for their subjectivity: do their feelings on the event alter their telling of it? The short answer to these last two questions is “yes,” but this is not something the researcher should attempt to counter in the name of “truth-seeking;” rather subjectivity is an inherent part of human storytelling and memory. Part of the point of these interviews is to learn what memories and events are relevant and significant to the interviewees. Moreover, as Madison points out, it is important to “honor the fact that each individual memory will be remembered in different forms and to different degrees” (34). As an ethnographer and performer, Johnson understands this very well, and is thus, able to cut to the core of the oral history. He writes that he is

interested in “understanding the meanings and symbols embedded in the act of storytelling [...] [and] interpreting the significance of that story” (Johnson 8). To Johnson, *how* the story is told is as important as what is said.

The challenge of interview-based research often is finding interviewees. What is the best way to obtain interviews? To find a model for this study, I turned to three other authors: Della Pollack, author of *Telling Bodies: Performing Birth* (1999); Gary Smith, a Jesuit priest and author of *Radical Compassion: Finding Christ in the Hearts of the Poor* (2002); and E. Patrick Johnson, author of *Sweet Tea: Black Gay Men of the South* (2008). These three books use the stories of multiple interviewees, all centered on a single topic. Each also used a different methodological strategy to gather interview material and to present it.

Of the three books, Gary Smith’s is the only one to study a culture that the researcher is not a member of. He utilizes the more common style of ethnography by gaining trust of a group of people over time, in his case, over a ten-year period, in the 1980’s and 1990’s, working as part of his assignment as a Jesuit Priest with the poor in the greater Portland, Oregon area. He slowly built up a level of trust among them. His book recounts his experiences with the poor throughout his time in Portland. Smith recalls, he lived and worked in:

[...] a section of the city called Old Town, through a scene played out in the poor areas of every large city in the United States: the unemployed looking for work;

drug dealers furtively hawking their heroin, cocaine and meth-amphetamines; burned out alcoholics coming off or beginning another day of panhandling and drinking and misery; addicts engaging in the endless hunt for another fix.

(G.Smith 2)

This is not an environment that an educated priest is usually welcomed into with open arms. However, over time, he is able to share incredible experiences with the poor. In his first narrative, he retells a visit to a man named Stewart living in a motel. Smith mentions that he was there to help Stewart get to a doctor's appointment, and to do so he had to help him bathe and get dressed. This implies a deep trust between him and the people he interviewed. All of his stories have an undercurrent of the same deep trust built over time. He gained access to his interviewees by living with them and becoming part of their lives, even though he is not poor himself. He gathered his data, not in a conventional interview setting, but rather, through speaking with them over the years he worked with them. He shared stories with them as he helped them in their daily lives.

Johnson's book is quite different from Smith's, as he did not build a rapport with his interviewees over time; rather, he was able to gain access to them as a member of the black, gay, southern, community. He explains, "I knew that I would be comfortable interacting with these men, and I knew I could get them to open up to me in a way they might not open up to a non-southerner, a nonblack" (Johnson 7). The challenge he faced by not building trust over time was gaining access to individuals of a relatively secret

group. His initial plan was to enter gay chat rooms online and ask if anyone was willing to participate in his research. He quickly discarded this idea as potentially misleading and unsafe. Eventually, he settled on a word-of-mouth, or snowball method. He was never more “than one person removed from those [he] interviewed” (11). He began by interviewing friends he had in the black, gay, southern community. He then relied on his friends to contact their friends to see if they were willing to be interviewed. This snowball method eventually gave him contacts in all of the southern states.

Frequently, these contacts were African-American women with their fingers on the pulse of the community, who would aggressively seek out men for Johnson to interview. “During one of my visits [...] Ann McCarthy actually called one of her neighbors [...] to inquire if he would be interviewed for this book” (4). After he protested that he was not gay, she reminded him, “Johnny, why are you acting like you ain’t gay? Everybody know that you and June Bug been carryin’ on for years, including Betty Sue. You know you need to come on over here and talk to this child” (4). After he hung up she continued to flip through the phone book to find other men that the whole community “knew were that way.” This snowball method yielded interviews with seventy-two different men, each interview lasting from forty-five minutes to three and a half hours.

Pollock took a different approach to finding people willing to share their stories of childbirth. Rather than relying on word of mouth, she sought out men and women for her study in various groups available to her. These included: a new mothers group, a hospital

based prenatal class, a singles mothers support group, and a network of her married students. Just over half of her interviews came out of one of these groups. The rest however were “friends, friends of friends, and people I didn’t know-who had heard about the project and called me” (Pollock 20). Like Johnson, Pollock was able to relate to her interviewees by being a member of the culture. She had given birth, and therefore could relate to the parents with whom she spoke; however, unlike Johnson, she was willing to interview people with whom she had no personal connection. This is a result of the openness of the culture that she sought to study. There is less secrecy, stigma and, generally, shame attached to being a parent than there is to being a African-American, southern homosexual. This removed a significant portion of the danger associated with meeting an unknown person.

I found myself in a situation similar to both Pollock and Johnson. I am a member of the Shakespeare Community, as an actor (having performed in thirteen of Shakespeare’s plays, in nineteen productions), as an educator (having taught Shakespeare for over five years), and as a member of the Shakespeare Theatre Association of America (STA), due to my work establishing and developing my company, Arabian Gulf Shakespeare. My company taught workshops and performed in the United Arab Emirates to college women in 2010 and 2012, and is working toward taking full productions to the Arabian Gulf part of the Middle East. The goal of these productions and workshops is twofold. The first is to take the plays of Shakespeare to a region of the world that has

limited exposure to them. The second is to demonstrate that the plays, though four centuries old, are still relevant today, even to cultures for whom they were not originally written. This allows me to have an immediate rapport with my interviewees. As a Shakespeare-centric professional myself, there is an understanding that I have with them which allows them to comfortably open up to me.

Like Johnson and Pollock, I made use of “snowball sampling,” which Rowland Atkinson and John Flint define as “a technique for finding research subjects. One subject gives the researcher the name of another subject, who in turn provides the name of a third and so on” (Atkinson 1). The success of this technique is built upon the assumption that there is a social tie or network between members of a culture, and by tapping into this network, various people, that might usually be more difficult to come by, can be consulted or interviewed.

This was my first method to finding interviewees who fit my criteria. Out of my twenty-four interviews, eight were either friends or colleagues whom I had worked with professionally; seven came out of recommendations from my original interviewees; five more came from professionals that I met at the yearly STA conference; and two came directly from recommendations from that group of interviewees. Of the remaining four, one was obtained from a cold email sent to him, and the last three came through the STA email list, to which I sent an email request. There were also another nine or ten

individuals with whom I was not able to schedule interviews before my deadline to complete them, though they were interested and willing to speak with me.

I conducted my interviews in person or over the phone, and either video or audio recorded them. I then transcribed them and sent them to the interviewees to review. This allowed the interviewees the opportunity to clarify statements that they made, or more often, fill in blanks in the transcript that were indiscernible on the recording. After conducting the interviews, I decided that I wanted to make sure the individual voices of the interviewees were heard, and remained prominent, rather than my own voice telling the reader what I discovered. As a guide for this, I again looked at Smith's, Johnson's and Pollock's works as examples.

Smith's work reads as a journal and his analysis is given in self-reflective vignettes at the end of each section. His work is less an ethnographic analysis and more an ethnographic description. It serves to show the reader the culture that he is writing about and the effect it has had on his life. It allows and encourages the reader to make his or her own decisions. Smith shares stories from his ten years of living and ministering to the poor in Portland. His book is organized into chapters, each focusing on a different theme, within which, the stories of the people he interviewed fit. For example, he has a chapter on "Death," another on "Drugs and Alcohol," another on "Mental Illness," and another on "Love and Relationships" on the streets. He uses the experiences of different people (and his experiences with them) in each chapter to paint a broader picture of life

on the streets. Many of the interviewees share stories in several different chapters. *Radical Compassion's* combination of primary source interviews with the author's narrative retells the stories of the interviewees from the author's perspective. Smith's goal in these retellings is to paint an accurate picture of the culture of the poor.

It serves as an excellent model for my work because Smith is not trained in ethnography in a formal capacity. He found himself submerged in the culture of the poor and discovered, what he thought were, amazing stories, and felt compelled to share them. After a brief anecdote about a homeless flutist he writes:

This book is about my song. It's not all of the music in me but there is a lot of it here. It is a song about the people with whom I have lived and worked over the past several years [...] I have changed most of their names but their stories, their compelling stories, I could never change. (G. Smith 4)

In my work, I tried to model the way in which he effectively communicates an honest picture of the culture that he is passionate about. He manages to make each individual's voice heard without simply quoting their stories,. However, there is a methodological weakness in that it lacks the direct analysis that a study of this type requires

Johnson, in the introduction to *Sweet Tea*, writes in response to the idea that he is creating a history: "I am less interested in creating such a [...] narrative, placing a priority on my interpretations than in understanding the meaning and symbols embedded in the act of story telling [...] and interpreting the significance of that story" (Johnson 8).

Johnson believes that his task as an ethnographer is to listen to the stories he is given and then interpret the importance of the story, rather choosing what story he believes is important to tell, as he believes a historian does. Roger Sanjeck would agree saying that “in constructing ethnographies, anthropologists do more than merely ‘write up’ the field notes they record as part of the process of doing fieldwork” (qtd. in Barnard and Spencer 243). It is what is done with the history *after* it is recorded that gives it validity as ethnography.

Similar to *Radical Compassion*, Johnson’s *Sweet Tea* presents the stories of many different people around a single theme. The main difference, other than subject matter, of course, is that Johnson did not spend years working with the men he interviewed. Instead, he relied on being introduced to the men in his narrative and, in many cases, met them for the first time during the interview. Each chapter discusses a different aspect of life for African-American, gay men in the south, such as living in the “closet,” sex, or family life. Johnson opens each chapter with a broad overview of what he hopes to discuss, such as “growing up in the south.” Following this, he further breaks down the section into smaller parts, such as “education” or “parenting and family drama” each with a short explanation. The rest of the chapter is comprised of the stories of his interviewees, each with their own introduction to who they are and their brief history.

Johnson foregrounds the voices of his interviewees, as the book is mostly composed of direct transcripts. He opens each chapter with an essay, in which he uses his

own voice and analysis to create the framework in which the following interviews fit. He analyzes, in these essays, the aspects of southern, black, gay culture on which the chapter focuses. He presents the main points he wants the reader to take away about the chapter at its beginning. This allows the reader to approach the interviews with an understanding of the culture in a broad sense, which allows for a subsequent understanding of how the voices fit into and shape that culture. In addition, Johnson uses these introductory essays to share his own experience of the topic he is discussing. The strength of Johnson's work, in comparison to Smith's, is that he clearly lays out his view on the culture he is presenting, rather than relying on the reader to infer it. He also effectively weaves his own narrative into his analysis where appropriate. Both of these elements are employed in my study.

Both Smith and Johnson are able to render the voices of the interviewees, individually, while managing to synthesize all the voices into one complete and clear work. However, it is the individual voices that are the "stars." In contrast, but equally important is the more formal style of ethnography demonstrated by Pollock. While reading her work, the reader has the feeling that he or she is hearing Pollock's voice, while the stories themselves are the "supporting cast." These three works present their oral histories in subtly different ways. I believe that the key to telling the stories of the Shakespeare professionals is to allow both my voice and the voices of the interviewees to interact.

The research for Pollock's book *Telling Bodies Performing Birth* also comes almost entirely from personal interviews that examine different birth stories that, like "origin stories," are "[ways] of securing identity by tracing it to its roots" (Pollock 92). Like Johnson, she did not already know the interviewees in many cases, or at least not well, but by being a part of the culture of "pregnant women and mothers," she was immediately connected to them. Nor was she particularly scientific in her selection of interviewees as she "made little or no attempt to secure a scientifically valid sample, in part because I depended on a level of rapport built on prior acquaintance and/or identification" (20). She writes, "I heard my first birth story near the end of my first pregnancy-when my round belly and hips betrayed the fact that I would soon be the subject of similar stories, that I was [...] already inside this particular narrative ring" (1). Furthermore, she feels that by listening to someone else's story it becomes a part of her own "experience," thus bringing her closer to the interviewee and building trust (3).

In addition to examining what her interviewees say, Pollock also spends a great deal of effort describing how her interviewees say it. She even goes so far as to include various parts of the interviews in her text as if it was a play. Her own methodology seems to read between the lines of what her interviewees are saying, and how they say them to draw her conclusions. For example, she describes some of the more animated interviewees as, "[launching] into a horrific tale" (2) or having "all the flourish of a Shakespearean Comedy" (4). Others, she describes as being "very careful. Her use of

the words [...] seemed to sterilize the process of threat and danger” (54) and “carefully controlling what the listener *sees* and indicating as much in the closed tones and tension” (55). For Pollock, the way they tell their stories is another way to understand the experiences of the interviewee.

I entered into this study, like Pollock, expecting an analysis that is “suggestive and rarely conclusive” (23). One that illustrates similarities and differences in the interviewees’ experiences with Shakespeare, in order to better understand the culture, without imposing any of my judgments upon them. I also began this series of interviews, without a pre-determined framework for the final analysis. Like Pollock, I recognize that I cannot “take any of the stories [...] to be generally ‘representative’”(24). What follows is a compilation of many individual voices from individuals that I find to be “representative” of the culture.

Pollock’s main contribution to my analysis is a textual format. Her quotes are succinct and it is always made readily apparent why each passage was chosen. It is key, in my study, to clearly separate my ideas from the ideas of the interviewees, and her work is an excellent example of this.

My work, like Smith’s, seeks to make the stories “come alive,” while, also seeking to keep the voices very clear and separate from each other, and from the researcher’s, like Johnson’s. These voices will be placed in a framework that clearly sets up the point each story demonstrates. However, like Pollock’s, mine is a work that tries

not to rely too heavily on those voices. My analysis runs concurrently with the stories of the interviewees in order to illuminate the culture of Shakespeare professionals and why they say they do what they do. Simultaneously, the experiences of these professionals will be filtered through Ricoeur's premise of the three-fold present, and thus, I seek to connect their narrated "origins" to their presents and their futures. What follows are the stories of the interviewees carefully fit into the framework of the threefold present.

CHAPTER FOUR: IDENTIFYING AND MAPPING THEMES IN PERSONAL NARRATIVES

This chapter is the examination of the interviews. The questions are grouped into sections based on Ricoeur's threefold present. The first section looks at the "past-present" and covers three questions posed to the interviewees. It examines requests for their stories about their introduction to Shakespeare, when they became passionate about Shakespeare, and their greatest "successes" while working with Shakespeare. The second section looks at the "present-present." It covers questions that relate to what the interviewees find rewarding about working with Shakespeare, and why they believe we are still performing Shakespeare today. The last section deals with the "future present" and looks at how the interviewees feel that they relate to Shakespeare's work.

PART 1: The Past-Present

"The cock that is trumpet to the morn..." -Hamlet I.i.170

The First Meeting

The first question I asked of all of the interviewees was a very simple one: do you remember your first exposure to Shakespeare and how did you feel about his work then? The interviewees split almost exactly down the middle in their answers: eleven of them said that they initially either did not understand Shakespeare, did not like his plays, or were confused by them. The other thirteen said that they were fans from the first moment that they were exposed. No one was initially indifferent about Shakespeare.

I begin with those who were not immediately fans. They initially found Shakespeare boring, off-putting, dry- or as Jan Gist, the Resident Voice and Speech Coach at the Old Globe Theatre, said, “not meant to be understood.” Most strikingly, almost every interviewee, in this group, was able to trace his or her dislike for Shakespeare to the way his plays were presented to them in school. I will refer to this group as “converts.”

Amongst the converts, a memory of trepidation about tackling Shakespeare in school is common. James Shapiro, author of *1599: A Year in the Life of William Shakespeare* (2005) and *Contested Will: Who Wrote Shakespeare?* (2010), among others, explained in our interview, that “I was confused [...] I didn’t know what was going on [...] There was no sense that this was a theatrical text that we were studying, and I wasn’t taken to see any plays.” Shapiro echoes a common refrain delivered by students. The ways in which the plays are taught are sometimes off-putting to students, and they know it before they begin. Laura Cole, the Director of Education and Training at the Atlanta Shakespeare Company, recalled going into class about to begin studying *Romeo and Juliet* with the feeling that it was going to be boring. Yet she had never read or seen a Shakespeare play; she was just “parroting what other people had said.” The built-in aversion to Shakespeare amongst students also extended out of the classroom and onto the stage. Actor, Michael D. Jacobs, remembers being very “uptight” about the drama

department at his school doing Shakespeare and having to be forced to perform in a production of *Twelfth Night* by his high school drama teacher.

All of them identified a specific moment that they mark as the shift into when loving Shakespeare began, but it would take time before they became devotees. There were three different ways that the interviewees had their minds changed about Shakespeare: (1) seeing a performance, (2) performing in a Shakespeare play, or (3) having a “more enlightened” teacher down the road, as described by actor Emily Jordan,. A large portion of the converts note that the act of seeing the play performed allowed them to overcome their preconceptions about Shakespeare; whether they saw a film production, like actor Aldo Billingslea: “Michael York [Tybalt], haulin’ ass down the dusty streets, in tights. And then, the striped tights aren’t nearly as funny when you like, ‘Oh my God! Is he? Is he gonna catch him?! I hate that guy!’” or a stage production, like Jordan: “ it was a day of *1 Henry IV*, *2 Henry IV* and *Henry V* all in one day [...] it blew my mind, absolutely blew my mind [...] They were using Shakespeare’s language but it was so vibrant, so alive. And they were very cool outfits [...] it was cool and hip.”

Conversion through performance is not limited to seeing a production. Actor Rene Thornton Jr. recalls being completely and utterly bored by Shakespeare in school. But when he found himself cast as Oberon in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* in a summer theatre program, he discovered that he had fallen in love with the play and that “clearly this is what [he] wanted to do [...] [And he] knew that it was a better play than any of the

plays [he] had worked on in [his] life up to that point.” Jacobs was forced into a production of *Twelfth Night* by his high school drama teacher, in the role of Andrew Aguecheek. Admittedly, he went through the entire production not knowing what he was doing, or saying, and even managed to knock himself unconscious during the production. Jacobs tells the story of not paying attention during one of the last rehearsals and missing a last minute change to one of the scenes in which his character was on-stage. He remembers:

I was waiting for my entrance and I never heard my cue [...] and all of a sudden it dawned on me that, ‘Oh my God, they’re [the actors onstage] asking where I am?’ [...] And it was the very first show I’ve ever done sans glasses. It finally dawned on me that I was supposed to make an entrance, I was on the wrong side of the backstage where I should I have made the entrance from. So, I ran across to make my entrance and ran into the wall and knocked myself out.

Despite this debacle, he had fun and his performance was well received. It was enough to leave him open to experiencing more. The respective performances that the converts had seen, or in which they had performed had shattered their notions that Shakespeare’s plays were not “cool” and could not be enjoyed, often because they “bore no relationship to the experience in the classroom,” says Shapiro.

The rest of the converts credit a teacher with grabbing their attention, and for many of those who were first grabbed by performance, it fell to a teacher to keep their

budding interest alive. Without exception, every single teacher that the interviewees talked about treated the plays as dramatic works that needed to be *heard* rather than just *read* as literature. The ways that teachers in the stories presented Shakespeare varies, but each interviewee remembers the classroom experience clearly. Billingslea recalls his teacher saying that parents did not like their kids reading the plays because they “were a little bit dirty.” Then immediately, Billingslea read the whole play to find the dirty references. Bob Currier, Artistic Director for the Marin Shakespeare Festival, tells the story that he immediately began to fall in love with Shakespeare’s plays when he was forced to “perform” for the class. He was chosen to read lines from *Macbeth* in front of the class and says that he “was completely floored by what [he] was reading. I had just a faintest glimmer of comprehension but I knew it all made sense. I knew that there was stuff there that I was just too ignorant, uneducated to get [...] So I was intrigued.” Similar to those who credit a performance, those that were converted in the classroom found that their preconceptions about Shakespeare being boring or too hard were incorrect. With this realization they found that they were willing and eager to explore the plays more.

The other half of the interviewees claim to have no memory of ever not liking Shakespeare. However, the same themes emerge as to what that first experience was. Either, as Jordan put it, a “forward thinking teacher,” or a performance grabbed them before they were able to develop negative preconceptions. Rebecca Ennals, the Artistic Director of Education at the San Francisco Shakespeare Festival, for instance, remembers

seeing her first Shakespeare production at five or six years old, when she was free of pre-conceived notions about Shakespeare and his plays. She saw a one-hour version of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, knowing nothing more than she was about to see a play “about Faeries.” Thirty years later, she distinctly remembers details about the set and costumes, even specific actors. Though her main memory of the play is that “it was beautiful and romantic and I loved it! I thought it was very funny as well [...] and I understood it.” Oregon Shakespeare Festival Artistic Director Bill Rauch’s, first exposure was also *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. He attended a production at Yale Repertory Theatre while he was in the 7th grade and says he was completely sucked in. In stark contrast to the gossamer faeries that so attracted Rebecca Ennals, these faeries were “slivery and reptilian” and really brought out the darkness of the play. Rauch says he loved the production so much, that he found he became frustrated with his classmates when discussing Shakespeare’s plays, because they so often just did not understand what was going on. This frustration inspired him to rewrite the entire play in the colloquial English of a 7th grader.

In each instance, these interviewees told me that they recalled seeing something that was highly attractive to them. And in these particular instances, even though it was the same play, what they saw were almost polar opposites. Both recalled the faeries fondly; though in one case they were the “traditional” faeries that come to mind when fairy-tale imagery is evoked, and in the other they were dark and, perhaps, frightening.

One production was romantic and beautiful, while the other was creepy and sinister. Their imaginations were engaged by seeing the text embodied and at play.

Some of the converts grew to love Shakespeare because they had their first positive interaction with Shakespeare by performing in one of his plays, others had their introduction to Shakespeare by performing. Philip Sneed, the Producing Artistic Director of the Colorado Shakespeare Festival, could not recall his first introduction to Shakespeare's plays, only the first time he performed in one. His introduction to Shakespeare grew out of his childhood dream to be the next Lawrence Olivier, not because he loved Shakespeare, but because he had gotten "this idea that he [Olivier] was the greatest actor" and that was what he wanted to do. His first opportunity to perform Shakespeare, like Olivier, was when he played all the servant roles in *Macbeth*. He found that he did enjoy it in actuality, whereas before it was only his belief that he wanted to pursue it.

The next subset of this group of interviewees are those who noted that they were immediately fascinated by Shakespeare due to the influence of a school teacher. In some cases, the interviewees remember the teacher very well, and in others, they only remember their feelings about the experience. But all of them quickly credited their respective high school or middle school teachers. In each instance, they reported that the teacher was able to tap into something, intentionally or otherwise, that held a deep meaning to each interviewee.

For Patrick Spottiswoode, the Director of Globe Education at Shakespeare's Globe, performing Shakespeare in the classroom put him center stage, and once there, he got to witness the power of the lines while doing something that he normally would not get to do in school. He recalled,

I was twelve years old [...] standing on a desk. And my Latin teacher gave me a little Shakespeare to read out. There were two things that struck me...one is that...at my feet standing around the desk [...] not mesmerized, but quiet. They [fellow students] were silent as I spoke and I think it was for two reasons. One that I was speaking Shakespeare and the lines were quite powerful, but the other was that I was standing on a desk...which was quite anarchic.

Spottiswoode's teacher was attempting to give his students a feel for a speech being made to a crowd, so he had Spottiswoode do it as a vehicle for the students to better understand Shakespeare. Spottiswoode, to this day, has an ability to command attention when he enters a room. So as a young school boy getting the chance to do that in class, with the permission of the teacher, was a delight for him.

For Gary Logan, the Director of the Shakespeare Theatre Company's Academy for Classical Acting at The George Washington University, and Voice, Text and Dialect Coach at the Shakespeare Theatre, the study of Shakespeare's plays tapped into his passion for drama. He got to experience right away how the text can sound. As he told me:

I had a teacher [...] who had the foresight and wisdom, even though she was an English teacher and was approaching it as literature rather than drama, she had the foresight to have us read aloud. And reading aloud made all the difference in the world, as opposed to reading it as a piece of literature. I was already interested in drama at the time so I very much enjoyed it.

He got to experience, right away, how the text can sound. How the text sounds, he would later discover, would become one of his life's passions.

Actress Jennifer Le Blanc was recognized due to Shakespeare's plays. She was not "persona non grata anymore." For the first time in her school career she "was visible." She noted that her teacher,

[...] was walking around the room, handing out the next book for our next assignment. And I was just very accustomed to being invisible [...] and as she was putting it on my desk she said 'I chose this one for you. I really think you're going to like it.' And put it on my desk and it was *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

After having spent most of her school life as the unpopular kid who did all she could not to be picked on, someone had "seen" her, and recognized something in her.

The final subset of this group is that of those who grew up with Shakespeare. Their families were already passionate about the plays and shared them at an early age. They were either taken to see performances from a young age, or their parents shared the stories with them. Actor U. Jonathan Toppo recalled that, "in order to go to sleep my

father would tell us stories. And he would tell us this story about these three witches and this king [...] and I didn't realize till high school that he was telling us the story of *Macbeth*." Or, in the case of actor Julian Lopez-Morillas, he commented that his parents "knew Shakespeare." He continued "my parents were both fond of quoting *Henry V* [...] they started taking me to productions of Shakespeare when I was about ten [...] and I just loved seeing it on stage [...] even then." In these cases, Shakespeare was presented to them as stories to be seen and heard. They never were faced with the idea that Shakespeare was difficult. It was simply part of their lives growing up, and they were taught to enjoy it through their parents.

"To tread a measure with you..." Love's Labor's Lost V.ii.193

The Hook/The Life Changer

The previous section explored the stories that the interviewees credit with engendering a positive attitude towards Shakespeare. However, they were not, for the most part, the parts of their stories that they credit with launching them into a career with Shakespeare. These are the moments that hooked the interviewees on Shakespeare, and when they realized that Shakespeare would be a part of their lives from that point forward. Unlike those in the previous section, the stories here are all wildly different. What emerges, however, is the following theme: each person found in Shakespeare's

plays something or someplace that understood them, or fascinated them, or surprised them, or ensorcelled them.

Despite enjoying studying Shakespeare in high school, Billingslea struggled with his feeling that there was really no place for him in Shakespeare. He explained, “the problem was: what’s this dead white man’s words got to do with me?” Billingslea enjoyed Shakespeare, but as an African-American, he was turned off by the lack of characters who were not white. Following the advice of a fellow student, he read *Merchant of Venice* expecting to find another character he might be able to play other than Othello (he had not read *Titus Andronicus*, and had no idea of the existence of Aaron), and he did: Morocco. But it was not Morocco that spoke to him. He recalled:

[Shylock] spoke to me like nothing else had [...] Because the specificity of this 16th century Jew saying ‘You deny me my humanity’ is speaking to this twentieth century guy in Texas who sometimes feels like people deny him his humanity, is pretty powerful.

In Shakespeare he found a voice that was able to express his own frustrations about race relations in his life. Billingslea discovered that Shakespeare fully understood discrimination, as evidenced by his description of it in his plays, and what it can do to the victims of it. This ability of Shakespeare’s plays to fully show the human condition attracted him and made him want to learn more about them. This particular attraction of Shakespeare will show up again, when I discuss the “present-present.”

Thornton, also an African-American, found early on that Shakespeare could offer him something that he could not get elsewhere. He felt that there were more opportunities in Shakespeare for “an actor of color” than there would be in film, television, or contemporary drama. While he was in school the “color-blind casting” movement in theatre had really taken hold and it opened doors that had never would have been available to him in other areas. “I love to play kings. And I get to do that in Shakespeare [...] I like playing royalty, it’s fun for me.” Through Shakespeare’s plays, Thornton was able to play roles that were not available to him outside of these plays.

In Shakespeare, Le Blanc had already found a way to be “visible,” but a trip to the Oregon Shakespeare Festival made her realize that Shakespeare was even more important to her. She told me that when she attended her first production, in person, that she cried through the entire performance *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, featuring Billingslea as Demetrius. When asked how she liked the show by an usher she recalls unabashedly telling her that it was “changing her life.” She remembers it as a magical introduction to Shakespeare in performance but for her it was something that “she could love and still be a nerd [...] because that’s what I am [...] but to recognize that there are other people that would play along in my nerd life.” The experience had confirmed for her that she could be who she wanted to be and that there was a place for her to be that person.

Logan’s passion was intensified when he first discovered scansion (determining the emphasis and rhythm of a line of verse). He had always enjoyed puzzles, and

scansion revealed to him that there was code in the language of Shakespeare. It was not necessarily a hidden code, or a mystery, but it was there. That there was information about the way the characters act, or how they speak, or even how they feel, written into the poetry, sparked his imagination. After completing graduate school, at the American Conservatory Theatre in San Francisco, he was not working on Shakespeare, though he was working as an actor. He wanted to keep in practice with scansion, so he determined to “scan Shakespeare.” He began with five of the plays in which he both phonetically transcribed and scanned every single line in them. This was in an era before computers and on “typewriters and all that kind of stuff took forever and really absorbed [his] time.” He did it because he found that he took a lot of pleasure out of playing with the words. He was fascinated by how words sounded alone, versus how they sounded in conjunction with other words, as well as the different aspects of Shakespeare’s poetry. Logan went on to write a book, *The Eloquent Shakespeare: A Pronouncing Dictionary for the Complete Dramatic Works, with Notes to Untie the Modern Tongue*, about the language of Shakespeare, and the impetus to do it can be traced back to his discovery of scansion. Shakespeare turned out to be a linguistic sandbox for him to play in, and once he was in he has never wanted to get out.

One of the few organizations that comes up more than once is Shakespeare and Company, as well as several references to key figures there, if not the company itself. Colleen Kelly, the Director of Training and Sarah Enloe, the Director of Education, at the

American Shakespeare Center, as well as Emily Jordan, mark their time working with Shakespeare and Company as moments that guided them along on their path towards careers in Shakespeare. Jordan found, for the first time in her training there, that Shakespeare's language was being connected with emotion, and the "way you physically experience emotions." Kelly worked with Shakespeare and Company, when they were still relatively new to the scene, and "establishing a reputation as a contemporary connection to Shakespeare [...] that was new in this country." Enloe was introduced to a whole new way of teaching Shakespeare and, more important to her, teaching others how to effectively teach Shakespeare. All of them managed to find, through an intensive program, a new way to relate to Shakespeare. Jordan had finally found a way to emotionally connect to the text that fascinated her, while Kelly was having her first experience performing Shakespeare's plays, and it was in a way to which she could easily relate, while Enloe discovered new and better ways to teach a topic that had "always resonated with [her]."

Shapiro's story is unique. He alone, did not have two distinct sections that can be identified as first, attracting him to Shakespeare and second, causing him to dedicate his career to the study of his plays. His story combined both sections into one. He spent time traveling to London from New York during the 1970's. While there, he saw several productions and found himself "very excited by these." For the next decade he traveled to London every summer and saw, he estimates, around two hundred productions. While

there, he would go to the theatre “every day, twice on Wednesday and weekend matinee days.” He estimates that at least ninety percent of the shows he saw were Shakespeare in those “exciting days.” Shakespeare was, he explained, his “drug of preference.”

Eventually, he felt that he was no longer a casual “observer” of the plays. He felt he was on the inside of the plays. He was beginning to understand how the plays were put together, how characters related to each other and the language more fully than he was able to appreciate the first times he saw the plays. As his understanding grew, he began to work harder and harder to continue to grow and develop that understanding. Shapiro commented that he had found something that he was good at, and he wanted to pursue it. This is a sentiment echoed by Joan Langley, the Director of Education and Scott Kaiser, the Director of Company Development and Head of Voice and Text, both at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival.

While Langley grew up being read Shakespeare’s stories by her parents, and grew up with a positive opinion of Shakespeare, which was reinforced by the time she saw her first professional production, it was not until she got hired teaching at Shakespeare festivals that she began to specialize in Shakespeare’s text. She found she was not only good at teaching Shakespeare text, but she loved doing it. Kaiser, similarly, was consistently being hired to act, and teach Shakespeare and found that he had a “knack” for it, which led him to specialize in it more and more. His career, he claims, is more one of happenstance than pursuit, and is reflective of Branagh’s in this respect. He went

wherever he was able to find work, which, more often than not, was something to do with Shakespeare.

“Things done well, and with a care...” -Henry VIII I.ii.100-101

Successes

One of the final questions that I posed to the interviewees was, “What is your greatest success working with Shakespeare?” I encouraged them to attempt to pick just one. Some of them were able to, while others had to give more than one answer. This question more than any other had the greatest variety of answers.

Almost half of the interviewees pointed to a particular production or role in which they were involved in. The reasons for that being their greatest success, of course, varied. However, in general, all of them were able to discover something new about Shakespeare or about themselves. Director Cynthia White singled out a production of *Othello* in 2004 at the Marin Shakespeare Festival (featuring Billingslea and Le Blanc) as the moment that “cinched [sic] [her] love of Shakespeare.” In other cases, the respondents believed the production or performance simply opened up the plays to the parts of the audience in ways they did not expect. Ennals, for instance, said she discovered a way of looking at the Kate and Petruchio relationship in *Taming of the Shrew* that made sense to her, while Kenneth Kelleher, the Resident Director of the San Francisco Shakespeare Festival and

Artistic Director of Pacific Repertory Theatre, felt that his production of *Richard III* in 2005 achieved a “communion between the audience and the players.”

Thornton and Jacobs pointed to particular roles that they performed that they felt altered the way the audience understood a character. For Thornton, it was playing Claudius in *Hamlet*, and for Jacobs, it was Iago in *Othello*. Several years ago, Thornton was approached after a performance by a college professor (he did not remember what college), who had been teaching *Hamlet* for over fifteen years. She began by telling Thornton that she had called her husband and was going to quit her job because of his performance. When asked why, she told him, “Last night you taught me something about [*Hamlet*] I didn’t know.” That moment has stuck with him through the years. Jacobs points to the audience’s accepting of Iago as his great success. “I got the response that I wanted from my audience every night, which was for them to enjoy the evil, enjoy the psychopathic part of Iago.” Iago is well known as one of Shakespeare’s great villains, but Jacobs feels that he was able to get the audience on his side each night.

There was one answer that came up over and over. Eleven of the interviewees were able to point to a moment or moments of teaching and opening up Shakespeare to people who were not familiar with the plays or had had bad experiences with them in the past. For Shapiro, it is his ability to write books that he feels everyone can read, which allows more people to become engaged by Shakespeare. Theatre Professor at Grand Valley State, Karen Libman, describes Shakespeare as a “cultural currency,” a way for

different cultures to have mutual experiences that speak to them all. For these interviewees, Shakespeare's plays serve as a bridge that is able to draw audiences who would rarely, if ever, attend a play. Two examples are shown in the answers given by Spottiswoode and Currier. Currier points to a production of *Macbeth* that he and his wife produced in Baja, Mexico, in "this little drinking town with a fishing problem, called Los Barilles. They managed to pull off a full production in a town of 'non-actors.'" This particular production was the first of what is now an eleven year festival. Spottiswoode, points to an entirely different culture to whom he was part of opening up Shakespeare. Shortly after the World Trade Center attacks of September 11, 2001, he began a series of lectures on Shakespeare to the Muslim community, especially the Muslim youth. The lectures focused on Islam during the Elizabethan age, but also included a section that included Islamic children designing handkerchiefs for *Othello*, using traditional Islamic design. Spottiswoode, felt that he was able to share Shakespeare with a culture that had had limited exposure, but after the handkerchiefs were created, they were then shared with a group of American Shakespeare professors, who were then exposed to Islamic culture. Spottiswoode's story details American professors and European Muslim youths interacting with each other, something that, most likely, would not have occurred without the common bond of *Othello*.

The last way that Libman's "cultural currency" manifests, is in allowing children to find a place where they can be themselves. Cole points to the times teaching when a

child would come to camp, who is not comfortable in his or her own skin, or shy, or just socially awkward. They spend time at a Shakespeare camp where they immerse themselves in one of Shakespeare's worlds, often with other children who are just as shy or awkward, and they start to discover that they are not alone. Cole sees them having experiences with Shakespeare that makes them "become more social people and they'll not feel so awkward when they go back to school the next year." Jordan had almost the identical answer. She says that participating in the Shakespeare camps that she teaches is

like being a member of a special club [...] when I'm teaching these young kids...they are part of that club too, and for 50 weeks of the year they're geeky kids, but for two weeks of the year they get to be MacDuff, or [...] one of the witches and they're with people who think that is cool.

When viewing these stories through the lens of Ricoeur's theory on the threefold present, all of them fit very well into the "past-present." All of the interviewees were able to identify a moment in which they were first attracted to Shakespeare's plays, and further, they were able to identify what it was that truly gave them their desire to make Shakespeare a significant part of their careers. Additionally, all of the interviewees commented upon their great moments of working with Shakespeare's texts that still inspire them today. They have, to varying degrees, mythologized their own pasts. I do not use the word "mythologized" negatively, nor to imply that they are not being truthful in some way; rather, I use it to highlight the ways in which these stories function to

legitimize where the storytellers see themselves in the present. The people I interviewed have picked out specific moments and experiences that they credit with setting them on their current career paths. They have chosen the stories that they wish to tell, stories that reveal the most about who they see themselves as and how they want to be seen by others. Are there elements that were not included in their stories that had an effect on their lives? Almost certainly. But that is beside the point, because the stories provide a function as they are in the here and now.

Part 2: The Present-Present

“Bounty as boundless as the sea...” -Romeo and Juliet II.ii.141

The Reward

Towards the middle of the interview I asked all of the interviewees “what is rewarding about (performing, teaching or directing) Shakespeare?” The question was meant to discover what it is about Shakespeare that keeps them coming back and working with his plays, instead of moving on to focus on another area of theatre. I also purposely used the word “rewarding” because the word itself is fairly broad, and I allowed them to define it however they chose to. The resulting answers represent half of Ricoeur’s present-present.

A few interviewees, for one reason or another, did not answer this particular question. In most cases, it was my failure to word the question correctly and another

question was answered. In another case, the interviewee did not feel he had a “good” answer and responded with a joke: the money is all the reward he needed. Sometimes the question was skipped and we ran out of time before being able to come back to it. As a result, only twenty of the interviewees responded to this particular question.

However, with the exception of Toppo and Lopez-Morillas, every single interviewee implied that the unlimited possibilities of the work is the reward. Although there are only 37 plays (39 if *Edward III* and *Double Falsehood* are counted), the variety in them keeps them fresh and new. There is always something new to be discovered. Before I move into the different ways the interviewees described these “unlimited possibilities,” I will touch on the two interviewees that had different answers. Toppo gets his reward from the audience. He is rewarded the most when the audience “doesn’t feel that they’re seeing Shakespeare.” This reply connects back to the common refrain that Shakespeare is too complicated to be understood. His reward comes when the audience comes in expecting to have to work to understand the play, but they are quickly able to realize that they are just seeing “human beings fraught with problems [...] that everyday people have to deal with.” He continues to comment a little on the beauty of the poetry and the language. Lopez-Morillas, very concisely, answered the question by simply saying, “Shakespeare’s language is, by general consensus, unparalleled.” He then continued to talk about his facility with languages from growing up in a multi-lingual household. Had I pressed the point, I would not have been surprised if I received an

answer similar to those I received from Michael LoMonico (a master teacher for the Folger Shakespeare Library), Jordan, and White.

All three of them, focused on the versatility of the language as the key to the versatility of Shakespeare. LoMonico replied, “it’s the words, it’s the language, it’s the poetry.” White feels that the language is “deeper, richer” and “the way in,” while Jordan latched onto Shakespeare’s ability to use language and poetry to create visceral and emotional responses in the audience.

LoMonico finds it fascinating how Shakespeare is able to create amazing works, without providing a lot of detail about the staging. Unlike some of the great modern playwrights, such as Eugene O’Neill or Tennessee Williams, Shakespeare very rarely wrote down stage directions, though in some cases, they are indicated in the lines. For example: a character saying “I go” implies that he or she is moving off the stage. Additionally, Shakespeare did not specifically imply the tone or mood that lines were supposed to be delivered in. Though again this kind of direction is often implied in the text. As a result, LoMonico believes, “there’s so many possible variations of a particular scene. So that you can see five different *Hamlets* on five particular nights and they’ll be different because, there is no one way to do it.”

White echoes much of what LoMonico says, but focuses more on how to interpret the lines, and deliver the lines in comparison to modern works. She says:

I've worked on occasional plays where the language *seems* really rich. And then you say it half a dozen times and you try to pull it apart and see what's underneath supporting the language and there's nothing there. Whereas with Shakespeare [...] the language is very rich and full and there is something underneath [...] supporting it.

She believes, that, with Shakespeare, there is support to deliver the language in an almost countless number of ways, and because of the "richness" of the text, the actor, or director can use it to support their choices. Whereas when she works with many modern works, she feels that there are fewer ways to deliver and perform the lines that can be supported by the text.

The remaining interviewees all focused on the wide variety of possibilities that can be found within the plays. They all termed this in different ways; many mentioned the reward being, seeing "new choices" made, while several specifically said the reward was seeing all the "different layers" that can be discovered in Shakespeare, while others simply said that there was always "something new" or "fascinating" to be found, if you look for it. In the end, however, I believe, that all of them have latched onto the same general idea.

Gist, for instance, sees Shakespeare as a pathway to a stronger society, though at the core of this belief is Shakespeare's versatility. She says that the purpose of performing Shakespeare today is:

Multifaceted. To open up the humanity of the audience and to bring the humanity of the audience into a wellness, a harmony [...] within society [...] [Shakespeare] is socially medicinal, but in a way you don't feel you are getting medicine [...] the audience is becoming a better society, because, there is a vision of how humanity can function really well.

On the surface this seems to be outside of the theme of the “unlimited possibilities.”

However, Gist continued to reveal what it is that she believes makes this possible: “if you say Shakespeare out loud, you go on a journey within your own body and within your own imagination, that takes you places you couldn't imagine without the language.” The audience and the actors are able to take this journey through their imaginations, due to the versatility of the language, the “unlimited possibilities,” presented by Shakespeare. Like LoMonico and White, Gist has tapped into the ability of every separate performance to be different because of the versatility of the language, its ability to evoke different images to different people, however, she also sees it as a way to have a greater effect on society as a whole.

Kelleher focuses on the versatility of character in the plays, even the smaller roles. He sees the *Dramatis Personae* of the canon as an “incredible universe of story and character [...] even the smallest characters [...] are so vibrantly written, and they draw something to the audience's attention about the human experience.” This “universe” of characters, to Kelleher, is so dynamic that the plays have the versatility and ability to

“focus the events of humanity in startling, in comic, in dire, and amazing” ways.

Billingslea echoes this. He sees the reward of performing Shakespeare as getting to see new choices made by actors, as they interpret characters in different ways.

Rauch, Logan, and to a lesser extent Sneed, focus on Shakespeare’s ability to be staged in so many different ways. As Rauch puts it, “if you want to dig into the spiritual plane, the writing is very spiritual. If you want to dig into it psychologically, there’s incredible psychology in the writing [...] If you want to attack from a socioeconomic point of view...you can do that.” For Rauch, there is always a way to tell the story that you want to tell. Again this theme is echoed by so many of the interviewees: there is always something new to be found within the plays and subtle changes can completely alter the story presented. Logan elaborates on this idea:

[...] a director puts a template on a Shakespearean play...and when you look at the play through those conditions the play responds differently. So that I can’t say that I know what a line means, I can only know what that line means within the conditions of the play [...] that the director is creating.

These interviewees believe that Shakespeare’s plays cover the broad expanse of the human experience. Sneed notes that it is “very seldom that you run across an idea or perspective...that Shakespeare hasn’t already covered in one way or another.”

Kaiser sees this versatility manifest in a different way. To him, the versatility shows when you revisit the plays at different stages in your life. He said, “every time

you look at one of the plays they take on different meanings depending on where you are in your life...you can keep cycling Shakespeare's plays through your life...There are not a lot of works of art that travel with you through your life." The characters and stories are written with so many personal details that there is something with which people from every stage of life can connect . Kaiser uses *Midsummer Night's Dream* as his example. When he was younger, he said he had no sympathy for Egeus and his frustration with his daughter's disobedience, but when Kaiser got older, and had a daughter of his own he was able to connect to the character in new ways.

Only one interviewee described Shakespeare's versatility in a wholly unique way: Spottiswoode reflects on it from the perspective of how it allows him to communicate to the public. Shakespeare opens doors to have any number of conversations with any number of different communities. He believes that, "Shakespeare makes you consider...and I think that he demands that you ask questions....But because Shakespeare is so open ended...I can go into a whole range of interest groups...it opens up [opportunity] for constant conversations [and questions]." Spottiswoode feels that the versatility of Shakespeare's plays allows him to approach and engage with a wide range of different cultural groups and there is always some way for him to connect Shakespeare to them that is both current and relevant.

The reward, which is a large part of what keeps them engaged in their Shakespeare-centric careers, is their ability to be surprised consistently by Shakespeare's

work. The versatility is what allows them all to continually work on the same thirty-nine plays over and over again.

“Forever and a day.”-As You Like It IV.i.151

Shakespeare’s Ubiquity

The follow-up question related to the other popular playwrights of the Elizabethan era, and represents the second half of my look at the present-present. At the time Shakespeare was writing, Ben Jonson, Christopher Marlowe, Thomas Middleton, and John Webster were as popular as Shakespeare. However, none of their plays are being performed today with anything approaching the consistency that Shakespeare’s plays are. The question that I posed to the interviewees was: “why?” Why are we still performing and studying Shakespeare so often, but the other playwrights of his era are so rarely done, in comparison?

Many of the interviewees began with the response along the lines of “Shakespeare was a better writer” and as Jacobs claimed, “Shakespeare is the closest thing we [have] to modern playwrights from that generation...that we can relate to.” However, once they began to elaborate a bit, all of them answered the question in one of four ways, though a few gave two answers. Nine interviewees answered that Shakespeare simply understood humanity better than any other author of the time. Seven of them answered that it is mainly due to the sheer size of Shakespeare’s canon of plays. There are simply more

plays of his that we have to look at than those of the other writers of that era. Six answered that Shakespeare both understood and wrote for the audience. Finally, another seven replied that it is really just a matter of the name recognition that Shakespeare has.

I begin with the most common answer: Shakespeare understood humanity. In the opinion of this group of interviewees, if given the time to see a production, everyone is able to relate in some way to the characters that they are seeing on the stage. As Kaiser puts it, “the secret of Shakespeare’s longevity is, quite obviously, really in his deep understanding what human beings go through in their lives [...] there is something more human about Shakespeare’s characters.” This idea is echoed again by Billingslea, who points to the times that one sees or performs one of the plays and it just hits the “perfect chord.” For Billingslea, every production brings with it, moments that are so true to him or to an audience member’s life that both he and they are drawn back to see more. He believes that people continue to attend Shakespeare plays because they know that there is a chance that they just might experience another moment that strikes that “perfect chord.”

Along with Shakespeare’s portrayal of characters that have great depth and are “real,” Shakespeare manages to tap into the human experience. These interviewees strongly believe that the majority of audiences are able to watch a Shakespeare play and relate to what they are seeing. As Toppo puts it, “we’re not all Macbeth but we’ve all had to deal with ambition, and making the wrong choice and realizing that is the wrong choice and realizing that there is no turning back.” Langley elaborates on this:

Shakespeare “capture[d] humanity and human emotions. [He had] an incredible understanding of what it means to be human.” These interviewees believe that Shakespeare, more than any other playwright, allows audiences to see characters experiencing emotions on stage in very real ways and to empathize with them.

Lopez-Morillas went a little further in describing how real Shakespeare’s characters are in comparison to the less fleshed out characters of his contemporaries. He said:

Among people who know Shakespeare, there are two hundred characters, easily, that you can [...] mention to another person who knows Shakespeare and they know that person. That person has been fleshed out, the psychology is true. And in some very real sense they come off the page.

This answer synthesizes all of the other interviewees answers. In this particular subset, they all said that Shakespeare’s contemporaries did not create characters that are as memorable for the reader or the performer.

The second most common answer is also the simplest: there are simply more Shakespeare plays than there are from his rival playwrights. Only seven complete plays remain that are attributed to Marlowe and no more than ten by Webster; Jonson left nineteen. Only Middleton approaches the number of plays that remain from Shakespeare, and even then, there are only twenty six that remain that he is thought to have written, at least partially. This gives the modern audience and Shakespeare scholar significantly

more variety to study. As Logan puts it, “his body of work makes a juicier pursuit.”

Logan continues to point out that Shakespeare was successful in multiple different genres. Of the three major genres of drama from the era (comedy, tragedy and history), Shakespeare has several, extremely well known plays in each.

The third reason, presented by the interviewees for Shakespeare’s ubiquity is that Shakespeare both understood and wrote for the audience. According to Ennals, “he just was all about the audience, I think. And about engaging the audience [...] every level of the audience.” She argues that Shakespeare wrote plays that appealed to the entire audience, from groundling to nobility. Ennals argues that, while popular with the upper class, the other authors were simply too “structured and erudite.” Ennals explained that the work of Shakespeare’s rivals simply does not leap off the page to her. She finds them well structured, and well done, but never anything more than “interesting.” In the end, these interviewees believe that Shakespeare’s plays are, and were, as Kelleher explained, “not only popular works, but works that were deeply affecting works to a culture. And those two parts of the equation allow those to transcend the period that [Shakespeare was] in and speak to any culture,” while the work of Shakespeare’s contemporaries, Shapiro explains, is “more time bound, more restricted to their cultural movement.”

While Libman agreed that Shakespeare wrote more for the audience than his contemporaries, her reasoning was different. She said, “I think Shakespeare has continued to be more popular than his contemporaries because, he is theatrical.” A

sentiment that Gist agrees with, she said, “Shakespeare’s audiences get fights, and puns, and kings and queens, and servants, and fairytales, and witches.” This is not to say that his contemporaries do not have any theatricality, or aspects that can appeal to different audiences. Rather, what both Libman and Gist are suggesting is that Shakespeare is filled with dramatic elements that appealed then as well as now to all audiences.

The last of the reasons given is simply: name recognition and economics. Or as Jordan bluntly put it, “a theatre company doesn’t want to put on something like Marlowe because they’re not going to get an audience.” Shakespeare has been “branded” (several interviewees used that specific word when talking about Shakespeare’s continuing popularity). Briefly, the “brand” of Shakespeare came into being with David Garrick’s “Shakespeare Jubilee” held in Stratford-upon-Avon, England in 1769. Garrick’s was the first recorded Shakespeare festival and it really marks the point that Shakespeare became more than just a popular playwright of his era. Shapiro explains, “it had a snowball effect and Shakespeare has been staged more, studied more and taught more so that people are more comfortable with him.”

This phenomenon has continued through to today. Kelly believes that the Shakespeare branding and its role in the education system is what has kept his plays alive. She says:

[...] studying Shakespeare in school-it’s required [...] [school systems] have kept Shakespeare alive because it has become a requirement that it be read, but it also

has kept theatres alive [...] the reason we can book student matinees is because the students have to read the plays. And if they have to read the plays, they can come see the plays.

The interviewee responses confirm the idea that modern audiences simply have grown up, whether they realize it or not, being exposed to Shakespeare. This makes them much more likely to be willing to go to see one of his plays than if Shakespeare had not been such a big part of modern culture. Jordan was, at the time of our interview, playing Imogen in *Cymbeline*, and she pointed to the difficulty of getting full houses for it. In years past, when she had performed in some of the more often-studied plays at the same theatre, the turnout was much higher. Audiences will continue to go to plays with which they are familiar. Spottiswoode, in addition to bluntly saying that Shakespeare is “damn good,” compared Shakespeare to a major airport “hub.” He elaborated on this, saying, “if I want to fly to New York, it’s damn easy....Likewise, if I want to buy a book of Shakespeare...I can go to one bookstore. If I want to go say, to...Buffalo, New York, I can’t fly direct from London. Likewise, if I want to buy a play by Ben Jonson, it can be just slightly trickier.” There is an ease of access to studying, or seeing, or performing Shakespeare that keeps him relevant.

For all of the interviewees, the way they answered these questions go a long way to illustrate why they continue in Shakespeare-centric careers. When examining the how they answered the questions the following emerges as clear themes. First, there is the

“reward” in working with Shakespeare. They claim that they are continually rewarded by their work and it keeps them motivated to stick with it. Second, is the continuing prevalence of Shakespeare over all other playwrights, of both the Elizabethan era and today. The continuing reward justifies their “present-presents,” while the prevalence allows their chosen “present-presents” to continue to exist.

Part 3: The Future-Present

“I would not wish any companion in the world but you.” -The Tempest III.i.65

Relationships with Shakespeare

One of the last questions that I asked the interviewees was: “How would you describe your relationship with Shakespeare?” The majority of the interviewees answered this question by personifying the work of Shakespeare. The interviewees who personified Shakespeare’s work described Shakespeare as “a trusted friend,” “a collaborator,” “a lifelong companion,” “best friend that had never been met,” “the best teacher,” “a friend,” as “family,” and two interviewees responded to Shakespeare as a master to whom one is apprenticed. Ennals replied that she feels that part of Shakespeare’s spirit must have been reincarnated in her. She feels this way because, “no one has ever understood me so well, or written my heart so truly.” This particular question actually was not a planned question. During my fourth interview it evolved naturally out of the way that the interviewee was responding to my questions. I

attempted to contact my first few interviewees and follow up with the question and was able to get a response from three of them.

I include this particular response as the “future-present,” because, I believe, the way that they all described the work shows how they hope to interact with Shakespeare in the future. The majority of the interviewees were easily able to personify the work, and often spoke of the plays both in terms of how they interact with it now, as well as how they will interact with it in the future. Not all of the interviewees personified Shakespeare, rather they identified how they view their relationship with the Shakespeare community as a whole. The “Shakespeare community,” refers to the entirety of professional Shakespeare. This includes actors, educators, directors, designers, producers, etc. Only one interviewee did not answer the question in a way that implied any kind of relationship. He did, however, make it clear that he spends a large amount of his “waking hours” reading, studying, and seeing the plays performed, which certainly implies that he will continue closely working with Shakespeare’s texts into the future.

I define the “future-present” as what one does now that guides their future. These personifications of a relationship with Shakespeare are just that. By creating a relationship, the interviewees have all shown how their future is being guided. For those who defined Shakespeare as a friend or family member, I assume they are expecting to continue to have a relationship with him in the future. Further, they described Shakespeare as someone they can always turn to, who will always be there for them. For

Toppo, Enloe, and Cole, who described their relationship as apprentice/master and collaborator, they, too, have the intention of working with Shakespeare into the future. As an apprentice, or a “journeyman” specifically, Toppo will continue to strive to become a master himself. Enloe echoed Toppo by responding that she feels right now that she works for Shakespeare but seeks to work with him in the future, while Cole has found great success in her collaborations with Shakespeare and will continue to do so.

Jordan, on the other hand, had a very visceral, though lighthearted, response. She quickly said, “I fucking hate the bastard!” before laughing and explaining that Shakespeare has ruined her. She is now no good for anything else but him. She went on to explain how since she started with him, nothing else compares. Her description of her relationship to Shakespeare calls to mind a lover’s plot line from one of his plays themselves.

The other interviewees who answered the question responded in ways that evoke how they interact with the plays in their work. Thornton succinctly said, “it’s my life’s work [...] without Shakespeare I would have a completely different life.” Thornton does not personify Shakespeare, because his identity has been shaped and formed by the work. Kelly, similarly, credits Shakespeare with strengthening her social community. She referred to her friends and colleagues with whom she has a stronger relationship because of the work. She said, “part of our friendship is this work [...] there is something about working with Shakespeare that has brought us together, that steals part of our

conversation and part of our history and part of our friendship.” Neither Kelly nor Thornton defined a specific relationship with Shakespeare, but both of their descriptions strongly suggest their future intents.

Finally, I want to look at Gist’s answer to the question, as I believe that she was able to pinpoint a feeling that, most, if not all, of the interviewees might agree and identify with. She said that her relationship with Shakespeare is an:

[...] ongoing public intimacy. I am personally, internally growing because of my work with Shakespeare. My philosophy, my perception of my life, my perception of how I can contribute to the world, or even what it means for me personally to be a human being, grows every time I touch Shakespeare [...] so that’s personal. And while that is happening, and in the mix of that, there is a public kind of fit. I found a place where I fit in the world of the public performance of Shakespeare. I fit in the audience, I fit in the rehearsal room.

This answer is the epitome of how the “future-present” relates to the Shakespeare professionals. It illustrates how Shakespeare has created for them a place and feeling of worth. Additionally, it clearly shows the benefit of continuing to work to be involved with Shakespeare into the future.

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worth. Additionally, it clearly shows the benefit of continuing to work to be involved with Shakespeare in the future.

Each of the Shakespeare professionals has created and developed their own “mythology,” which has led them to where they are today. They are able to identify the moments that led them to choose their careers. These stories are the representation of their “past-presents,” and may or may not represent the whole “truth.” However, it is the story that they have chosen that explains and legitimizes how they got to their “present presents.” They also were able to quickly share reasons which demonstrate why they remain on their chosen paths. Finally, all of the interviewees have developed a relationship with Shakespeare that demonstrates that they intend to continue their work with his plays in the future, clearly identifying their “future presents.” These origin stories serve to justify the present and guides the future of the storytellers.

CHAPTER FIVE: AUTHOR'S REFLECTION

“We know what we are, but not what we may be.” -Hamlet IV.v.32

Author's Story and Reflection

One of the pleasures of conducting the interviews for this thesis was hearing the stories of colleagues and others whom I greatly admire, and then seeing how my own experiences line up with theirs.

I found that the interviewees fell into two general categories. The storytellers either liked Shakespeare from the start, or they had to have their minds changed about Shakespeare. Looking at my own story, I find that I fit into the second category. My first significant memory of Shakespeare was during my freshman year of high school, and it was studying *Romeo and Juliet*. I did not expect to enjoy it. And I did not. I recall not putting in much effort to understanding what was going on in the play, not being interested in what the teacher was saying to us, nor the assignments that we were being given. Throughout the rest of high school, I read a couple more plays, and even enjoyed a few, but was never more than indifferent toward them.

Then I got to college. At Santa Clara University, I was a theatre major. After my sophomore year, I learned about a program through Washington University in St. Louis that would allow me to study for a month at the Globe Theatre in London, England. I chose to apply, not because of any passion for Shakespeare, but because I thought that if I was going to ever be an actor then I better be able to do Shakespeare.

When I look back on that month I spent in England, I am fond of picking a single moment when I realized that I actually became a “fan” of Shakespeare. At the end of the program, we performed our final on the Globe Stage. It was very late at night. Afterwards Patrick Spottiswoode got up on the stage with us and told us that he was going to wrap up the program with a tradition they had. He was going to call out to the night the names of Shakespeare’s original company, as listed in the front of copies of Folio editions of Shakespeare’s works, while we all politely stood or sat and waited. He began, “Edward Alleyn, Robert Armin, Christopher Beeston . . .” He continued, until he suddenly said, “William Brown,” and he continued to include our names with the names of Shakespeare’s company until all were done. I recall thinking that this was a magical moment. Suddenly, I was part of Shakespeare’s space, his company. I had been mentioned in the same breath with his legendary actors. Now I was interested, and ready to give Shakespeare another try.

Looking at my own story, as I have the other interviewees, as not necessarily the “truth,” but rather my own mythology, I have to ask myself a few questions. Am I being completely honest with myself that it was this one moment that changed my opinion of Shakespeare? Probably not. More likely, it had to do with the entire month I spent there, studying new-- to me, anyway--acting techniques with master teachers, watching plays performed by the Globe and Royal Shakespeare Company, and simply spending my time immersed in Shakespeare’s work with people who were making the same discoveries that

I was about how to work with Shakespeare. However, somewhere along the line, I decided that the moment of hearing my name read aloud in the Globe, as one in a collection of Shakespearean actors, made for a better story.

My origin story fits in with the themes I presented in Chapter Four. I, originally, was not a fan of Shakespeare, but I had an experience with teachers that changed my mind. However, I do not pin my development of a true passion for Shakespeare at that moment. In my study, almost all of the interviewees had an experience later on in their lives that they credited guiding them to a career in Shakespeare. I am no different. I attribute my passion for Shakespeare to my first experience performing a significantly large Shakespearean role

That experience came with my fourth and fifth productions of Shakespeare, and three years later. It happened by random chance. I had not had my contract renewed at the children's theatre company in Sunnyvale, California that I had worked for since graduating from college. My previous contract had ended just before Christmas, and over the holidays, while visiting my family, I did a random internet search to see what local Shakespeare festivals there were. I chose to do this not out of love of Shakespeare, but because I was well aware that the San Francisco, Bay Area, where I lived, was packed with various festivals of all sizes. I discovered a small company called Festival Theatre Ensemble that was based in Los Gatos. They had a three-show season, and that year it was to be *Scapin*, *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, and *King Lear*. I contacted them via email

to inquire if they were still holding auditions. As it turned out, they had already cast their season, but the actor playing Edmund in *King Lear* had dropped out and they had not filled one of the leads in *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, Valentine, as well as various smaller roles. I auditioned, and landed the role of Edmund, as well as one of the smaller roles in *Two Gentlemen of Verona*. I then managed to talk the director into letting me play the role of Valentine as well. Though I have long suspected that this was more due to a lack of someone else, rather than any brilliant arguments on my part.

Their season lasted about seven months and included playing at three different Shakespeare festivals in California. One in Menlo Park, one in Los Gatos, and the last in Benbow Lake. Throughout that year, I learned more about acting in Shakespeare's plays than I thought possible and had great success on stage. I recall leaving stage after performances of *King Lear*; absolutely thrilled that the audience had cheered when my character died (I was playing the villain). I finished that season and immediately got cast as an ensemble member at the California Shakespeare Theatre in a production of *The Tempest*. While that production was going on I auditioned for and landed the lead in Festival Theatre Ensemble's production of *Hamlet*. In each production, I found that I was learning and discovering things about performing Shakespeare, and more importantly, I was excited about doing it and had found something that I was both good at and that people appreciated. These two years of performing introduced me to the Shakespeare community, and since then, I have actively pursued working in it.

Once again, I find that my own story coincides with one of the themes presented in Chapter Four. I discovered that I was fascinated and had a facility for Shakespeare. This feeling was reinforced as I began to teach Shakespeare shortly thereafter. I will now discuss what I see as my own “greatest success” working with Shakespeare.

For many years, I counted my performing on the Globe stage as the highlight of my theatrical career. However, in December of 2010, I had what I now consider my greatest success. It was the culmination of the pilot project of Arabian Gulf Shakespeare. Two other teacher/actors, Aldo Billingslea and Annamarie MacLeod, and I traveled to Al Ain, in the United Arab Emirates to work with Arab college women. We spent two weeks teaching them various workshops on different aspects of performing Shakespeare, as well as performing scenes that illustrated the topics that we taught. For example, for the workshop about “Communication,” we performed the scene from *Henry V*, in which Henry attempts to woo Katherine of France, but they do not speak the same language.

The two weeks culminated with a performance of the favorite scenes of the students. Additionally, we had planned on having students fill several roles in the scenes and join us on stage. The beginning of the “success” came when we had to add an entirely new scene in order to accommodate all of the volunteers. The culmination of the “success” came in several different aspects of the final performance. There was the sheer popularity of the final performance. We had set out seventy-five chairs and felt if we filled half of them, we would have done well. When the performance began there were

somewhere between two and three hundred women in the audience. The courtyard where we were performing was a sea of women in their black abayas. There were so many audience members that our proscenium stage was on the verge of becoming a three quarter thrust. There was also the overwhelming audience response. Admittedly, we made a few changes. Instead of having Katherine of France speaking French, we had Katherine of the U.A.E. speaking Arabic, but when I wooed her in broken Arabic, there was a thunderous cheer from the audience, and palpable excitement as well. The audience seemed to be completely invested in the story.

Finally there was the influence that the performance had on the women at the university. For the previous two weeks, Billingslea and I never made any physical contact with the women. We had even made a point to keep track of how many women on campus would turn and walk the other direction, or at the very least, would make sure their head coverings were in place when they saw us. After the performance ended, I had a woman that I had not met come up to me and take my hand, physically touch me, to tell me how much she loved the performance. The women there were able to relate to what they were seeing on stage, something that I would not have believed could happen before I arrived. I was told again and again, by students and faculty, how well the plays related to the culture there. I, like most of the other interviewees, had discovered something new about Shakespeare. I had learned that Shakespeare's plays transcend culture. Somehow the work of this four hundred year-old dead Englishman spoke on a deeper level to

modern, female Arabs, than it does to many American students with whom I have worked. Perhaps Shakespeare himself put it best in *Julius Caesar* when Cassius says, “How many ages hence/ Shall this our lofty scene be acted over/ In states unborn and accents yet unknown!” (III.i. 112-114).

I find that my own experience with Shakespeare mirrors many of the experiences shared with me by those who I interviewed, at least in regards to Ricoeur’s “past-present.” When I look at my answers to the questions referring to the present-present, I find my answers again fit the mold. My own answer echoes the most common answer: Shakespeare’s plays are always exciting and new to me, whether I am performing, directing or teaching them.

When I begin working on a new Shakespeare project, whether I am acting, teaching or directing children, I am always very excited by the possibilities. Most often, I know several weeks or months in advance of these projects that I will be doing them, and I spend a significant amount of time thinking through and imagining “possibilities.” When preparing to direct children, which I do most often, I will enter into the first rehearsals with several different ideas of how I can stage and “set” the plays. The reward is seeing what the students then come up with on their own. Almost every single time, I wind up staging and setting the play in a way that I had never imagined after working with the students. I am constantly amazed that these students that often “know nothing” about Shakespeare are able to discover new ways to connect and relate to it.

As to why we are performing Shakespeare but not his contemporaries, I found once again my own story fits into the pre-established tropes. I believe that the characters that Shakespeare created are recognizable to almost anyone, a point I often use to begin lessons to younger students. Very few of us know a king, but most of us know someone who is ambitious. My favorite example that I give to students is Bottom from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. I ask the students to describe him. The most common answers I hear are: "arrogant," "thinks he is the best at everything," "selfish," and "stubborn." Then I will proceed to ask them if they have ever met anyone like that. Invariably they do, and often are quick to share stories to illustrate why someone they know is like Bottom. It can be argued that this can be done with any playwright. Why not identify a character and his or her qualities and then think of people that are similar? The difference between Shakespeare, and his contemporaries especially, is that Shakespeare's characters almost always create more discussion and offer up more qualities that children can relate to. The characters are simply more complex than those of almost any other playwright

That being said, I, like several interviewees, must confess to not being overly familiar with Marlowe, and Jonson, and not familiar at all with Webster and Middleton. I have found, in my limited experience, that there are not as many characters that speak to the masses in the ways that so many of Shakespeare's do. They tend to feel more two-dimensional. To illustrate this, I refer back to Thornton, who was about to portray

Tamburlaine in Marlowe's play *Tamburlaine the Great*, who said that the character arc of Tamburlaine can be explained in one sentence: "Tamburlaine gets what he wants. The end."

To examine my own "future-present" I have to determine how I view my own relationship with Shakespeare. The interviewees answered in two basic ways. Most of them answered the question by personifying Shakespeare's work and how they feel they are related to it. Others described how they interact with the work, but did not personify it. However, all of them intend to continue their work with Shakespeare in the future.

I view Shakespeare in a similar way to the minority of the interviewees. I view Shakespeare as my purpose, my calling. Like many of the interviews, I have found a place that I belong, and where my work is appreciated. Furthermore, after my experience with Arabian Gulf Shakespeare, I believe that I discovered what I am "supposed" to be doing with my life. Once again, my own story illustrates some of the common themes of the interviewees.

"...our minutes hasten to their end." -Sonnet 60.2

Conclusion

What has this study discovered about the people who make Shakespeare such an important part of their professional lives?

It has shown that all of us have a “mythology” that we have created to explain how and why we are in the careers we have chosen. Further, it has shown that, while there is no one reason that people commit their careers to Shakespeare, there are several general themes that exist, and all of them have stories that are similar to one another. In other words, it is not simply coincidence that so many have dedicated their lives to the study of some thirty-seven odd plays.

Moreover, I have revealed some interesting themes in how members of the Shakespeare community narrate their personal mythologies. Through the lens of Ricoeur’s *Time and Narrative*, we can see how people create their origin stories to be filled with absolute “truths,” when the reality is that these “truths” are nothing of the sort. Many an interviewee, myself included, has said that we would not be happy if we were not working with Shakespeare. We say this with no question in our minds that this is the case. But how do we know? We do not, nor cannot. This does not mean that we are not honest, or that we are deluding ourselves in any way; rather, it is a perfect illustration of how we, as human beings, understand and tell our own personal narratives.

I wrote in the introduction that I intended to end with reiterating the ubiquity of Shakespeare in modern, Western, culture and to do so, I will end with an abridged adaptation of Bernard Levin’s “Quoting Shakespeare,” in which he demonstrates just how much of Shakespeare has made its way into our everyday vernacular. If you peruse this thesis and exclaim, “It’s Greek to me!” If forcing you to read this “sets your teeth on

edge,” leaves you “tongue tied,” or causes you to “laugh yourself into stitches,” then I may find myself “in a pickle” wishing that I could “vanish into thin air” before I find myself a “laughing stock!” By now you are probably wondering if there is any “rhyme or reason” to this thesis, or that perhaps I am playing “fast and loose” with language and am attempting to “hoodwink” you with “too much of a good thing.” Then it is “high time you knew” that the “long and short of it” is that I am quoting Shakespeare.

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