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The Future in the Instant:

Time as the essence of dramatic tension in Shakespeare's plays and their contemporary stage appropriations

By Amalia Oswald

PROLOGUE

In 2011 Toni Morrison discussed creating through the lens of Shakespeare and her production of *Desdemona*. “Someone asked me if I was intimidated by Shakespeare’s language, and I said, ‘No, it has nothing to do with competing with Shakespeare. I had to find my own kind of language that was worthy of the characters.’”¹ Morrison’s quote outlines the complexities that connect appropriations and their intertexts, and a contemporary approach to creating alongside one of the most canonical writers in Western history. It is these complexities and complications that make appropriations so vibrant within the dramatic creative sphere.

My project looks at the similarities and differences between three Shakespeare plays and their companion contemporary stage appropriations: *Othello* and Toni Morrisons’s *Desdemona*, *The Winter’s Tale* and Mary Elizabeth Hamilton’s *16 Winters or the Bear’s Tale*, and *Macbeth* and David Grieg’s *Dunsinane*.² The specific lens I use to examine these texts is the dramatic

¹ Sciolino, Elaine. “Desdemona’ Talks Back to ‘Othello.’”

² *Desdemona* was first produced and performed in Vienna in May 2011 at the Akzent Theater and subsequently toured around the world until November 2011. The script was published July 2012

16 Winters or The Bear’s Tale premiered in Staunton, VA by American Shakespeare Center in May 2019. The script has never been formally published.

Dunsinane premiered in February 2010 in a Royal Shakespeare Company production at The Hampstead Theater and the script was published later that year.

concept of time, taking the form of different variations throughout the work such as chronology, remembrance, fate, and futurity. My project argues that the multifaceted dramatic concept of time is the foundation for dramatic tension and the principal connecting motif between the three sets of early modern/contemporary plays.

The structure of the project is in three parts; Act 1: *Othello* and *Desdemona*, The Interlude: *The Winter's Tale* and *16 Winters or The Bear's Tale* and Act 2: *Macbeth* and *Dunsinane*. Act 1 looks at temporal privilege as a defining characteristic in the societal system of the plays and how it uses time as a tool for disenfranchisement. The interlude discusses the personification of time within the dramatic narrative and on stage. Ultimately, Act 2 examines futile human attempts to control futurity against an abstract character based in timelessness. Within these examinations, the sections are broken down into brief overviews of the work at hand and then dive deeper into individual characters. The character sections are a close reading of moments and dialogue from both plays that support and strengthen my claim. They closely look at the dialogue and dramatic action of the plays in order to highlight the concept and control of time as the foundation of dramatic tension.

When deciding what plays to choose it mostly came down to paring, which Shakespeare plays had contemporary appropriations. Many Shakespeare plays have contemporary adaptations, such as the film *10 Things I Hate About You* and the musical *Kiss Me Kate*, both adaptations of *The Taming of the Shrew*. I, however, wanted to discuss the continuation of the early modern narratives, not just the retelling of them. I looked for a more complicated and far-reaching relationship when it came to Shakespeare on the contemporary stage. Julie Sanders writes of appropriations and their relationship to a 'mother text' in her book *Adaptation and*

Appropriation. “Appropriation frequently effects a more decisive journey away from the informing text into a wholly new cultural product...(they) tend to have a more complicated, intricate and sometimes embedded relationship to their intertexts.”³ My hope is that this project will highlight the intricate and complicated relationship the appropriations have to their intertexts but also their merit as important contemporary narratives. Many past critics have mis-labeled stage appropriations as adaptations as a way to indicate lesser status and deny claims of autonomous work. Alan Sinfield commented on Stoppard’s *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* and other contemporary appropriations that they “point back to Shakespeare as the profound and inclusive originator in whose margins we can only doodle parasitic follies.”⁴ I wholeheartedly disagree. The contemporary plays I decided upon are not marginal follies. They are all distinct individual works that expand and subsequently run away from their Shakespeare intertexts, and I hope that my work decisively showcases that. However, the main focus of my work is not only to discuss contemporary theatrical genius but to also highlight a foundational abstract dramatic concept that serves to complicate and enhance the complex relationship between Shakespeare’s text and their companions. I liken this textual relationship to a human one; a healthy relationship is one where each party remains individual and complex but whose personality and self is positively complimented and enhanced by their partner and relationship.⁵

The foundational concept of an appropriation of a canonical work, specifically the plays discussed here, is time. All three appropriations are founded upon the continuation of time; the creation of the appropriating narrative in turn creates a future for the canonical work. This

³ Sanders *Adaptation and Appropriation* p. 35-36

⁴ Sinfield “Royal Shakespeare,” p. 179

⁵ The definition of healthy relationship here is based off of contemporary romantic comedies, crime documentaries about unhealthy relationships, and multiple conversations had with close friends, family, and the occasional therapist.

fundamental characteristic of these appropriations are what drew me to discuss time as the essence of drama within them and their canonical intertexts. Both the early modern and contemporary works exist as partners in the conversation around time.. This partnership supports their intertextuality and calls notice to the heightened conversation and illumination that is possible when they are discussed or performed side by side. Together they create a deeper analysis of the past, present, and future. It is important that contemporary dramatic appropriations be seen as creative autonomous works and, simultaneously, be noted as deeper tunnels into the discussion of the human race and its acts against its own community and the planet it inhabits. These appropriations employ a deep and extensive rumination on the negative and potentially problematic concepts that dominate the early modern narratives. It is these concepts that, through the creation of the contemporary appropriations, are discussed and illuminated, deepening the contemporary understanding of their existence in the present world. Overall, I hope that my project does what the plays discussed have achieved for many readers and audiences: a remarkable perspective on time and a closer look at the human condition through heightened and innovative theatrical drama.

ACT ONE: *Othello* and *Desdemona*

Shakespeare's play *Othello* and Toni Morrison's 2012 theatrical work *Desdemona*⁶ both explore the concept of disenfranchisement; Othello and Desdemona are both titular othered characters. Shakespeare focuses on the "otherness" of Othello while Morrison uses Desdemona's refusal of silence in her contemporary play as a vessel to explore the canon play's peripheral characters' stories of disenfranchisement. Both playwrights employ the concept of time and the privileged ability of temporal measurement to create a foundational systemic assessment of disenfranchisement. The privileged ability of temporal measurement translates as the character's societal standing dictating their capability to measure their life and personal story simultaneously through the lenses of past, present, and future. An othered social standing thus disables the character's ability to measure through all three aspects of chronology, and may only allow them

⁶ *Desdemona* is an devised theatrical work created by Toni Morrison, Rokia Traore, and Peter Sellers. The piece itself is a mix between Morrison's text and Traore's original songs and music that overlap each other as the performance is laid before the audience. While the music is a central theme of the play I will be constructing my work primarily around the published "script" of the work, which includes the lines spoken by actors and the translated songs of Traore. Within this published script the meat of the character work is implemented through the text of dialogue and monologue written solely by Morrison. I will reference this text as both a theatrical work and play throughout this project.

one or two lenses with which to measure. While *Othello*'s dramatic action takes place within the reality of time, Toni Morrison's *Desdemona* creates a nonlinear and interminable space that allows for the disenfranchised bodies of Shakespeare's *Othello* to be involved in a socially-leveled discourse.

In Shakespeare's text *Othello*'s otherness is shown through the Venetian society of the play denying him a future. *Othello* is forced to live his life as a fixed point, such as an enslaved African man was during the Atlantic slave trade and subsequent years of Western slavery. Hortense J. Spillers essay "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book" notes that the societal order of the enslaved is one of a fixed time and space, still within the human dynamic of change and progression, commanded by their enslavers and wiped clean of milestones in time.⁷ Such temporal milestones include societal markers of adulthood, such as marriage and the birth of progeny. *Othello* is denied a future of domesticity and procreation from the societal disgust and condemnation of his marriage to *Desdemona*. He is denied the possibility of being reborn as an independent man of the community by his continual servitude to the military faction, his stuck point within a neverending military identity. *Desdemona* is denied the prospect of domestic bliss and procreation because of her attachment to a man fixed in the present and past but denied a future.

Morrison unshackles the disenfranchised characters with her theatrical writing in *Desdemona*, a succinct revision and critique of a cracked and mangled public discourse, by removing time and thus denial and displacement. By invoking the opposite of the enslaved peoples' forced, fixed, and timed space in the world, Morrison creates a world without time.

⁷ Spillers "Mamas Baby,"

This is done in order to have a dramatic world that can be the backdrop to wisdom, conversation, reflection, and unburdening, but, most importantly, a world without caste or societal standing.

OTHELLO

In the beginning scenes of Shakespeare's play, Othello defends himself before Brabantio, the nobles of Venice, and his military peers when he is accused of unlawfully abducting and mesmerizing Desdemona into fleeing her home and marrying him. In scene two of Act One, Othello tells Iago that he is safe from Brabantio's allegations by noting his past deeds.

Let him do his spite;
My services, which I have done the signiory,
Shall out-tongue his complaints...
...I fetch my life and being
From men of royal siege, and my demerits
May speak unbonneted to as proud a fortune
As this that I have reached...⁸

In this passage Othello says that he is judged by his past services in this community and they will "out-tongue" Brabantio's complaints against his conduct with Desdemona. His declaration informs the audience that it is past action not present words that hold weight in the governing courts. Othello has no fear when faced with defending himself because "My services, which I have done the signiory" for the protection and advancement of this society have rewarded him with a currency, or a value, in relationship to his life in the community. He tells

⁸ Shakespeare, *Othello* 1.2. 18-24

Iago that “I fetch my life and being from men of royal siege” as a way to explain that his life is directly tied to the rich and powerful military elite of Venice. This currency of past action and deed can withstand the allegations from a higher civilian class and allow him space to speak before the governing bodies. Othello’s deficiencies can also be addressed “unbonneted” and respectfully before the courts because of his outstanding past service report. Othello admits to taking away Brabantio’s daughter, Desdemona, and marrying her. However, he disclaims his curt admittance and use of speech before the Duke as a tactic to allude to his past deeds, already understanding that it is from his past that he is protected in the present.

...Rude am I in my speech
And little blest with the soft phrase of peace,
For since these arms of mine had seven years’ pith
Till now some nine moons wasted, they have used
Their dearest action in the tented field,
And little of this great world can I speak
More than pertains to feats of broil and battle,
And therefore little shall I grace my cause
In speaking for myself....⁹

His past service to the state of Venice not only affects his social standing but the minute details of his physical person, such as his voice and pattern of speech. This section of his speech explains that though he has been idle “some nine moons wasted,” his lifetime as a soldier cannot be erased from his person. He notes that his words are laced with the years of military

⁹ Shakespeare, *Othello* 1.3.82-90

action “and little blest with the soft phrase of speech” and “little of this great world can I speak/ More than pertains to feats of broil and battle.” Othello embraces being the personification of his past deeds and service as a coping mechanism to move freely and comfortably within a society that fundamentally rebukes and disenfranchises his place in the world otherwise.

Othello’s speech is expository language that defines the world of the play, a world that weighs action heavier than words and defines people through their past before considering the prospects of their future. The wooing of Desdemona is an example of the importance and enchantment of past deeds against the societal debasement of the other. Brabantio accuses Othello of employing witchcraft to seduce his daughter away from her home; “I therefore vouch again/ that with some mixtures powerful o’er the blood/ Or with some dram conjured to this effect/ He wrought upon her,”¹⁰ The accusation of witchcraft is used against Othello as a way to highlight his otherness as a black man living amongst upper class white men in Venice. Othello’s “power” over Desdemona is seen as wrong and deriving from the occult as a way to distance it from the power to control people, such as the birthright power of a monarch or duke, which was seen as a bestowment from God. During the Early Modern period, witchcraft was also seen as a way for an enchanter to serve as a surrogate for God. By becoming the ruling force over a human being, such as Othello is described as controlling Desdemona, witchcraft enables the enchanter to remove a victim’s free will and control their present and future.¹¹ The concept of an othered man in Venetian proper society controlling futurity, which he is systematically denied, is seen as debased and corrupt. Witchcraft and/or practical paganism is the “wrong” in a society that places monotheism and Christianity as the “right.” This lies abreast to the distinction that white or

¹⁰ Shakespeare, *Othello* 1.3. 104-107

¹¹ Clifton, “The Face of a Fiend”

eurocentric is right, and black or afrocentric is wrong. Since Othello is a black man and an “other” or “wrong” in his society, Brabantio concludes that there is no method of romance Othello could employ to woo a woman like Desdemona without the use of witchcraft. In defense, Othello narrates to the Duke and Brabantio how he and Desdemona met, talked, and eventually fell in love, laying special emphasis on why Desdemona loves him: his past.

...My story being done
She gave me for my pains a world of sighs...
...She thanked me
And bade me, if I had a friend that loved her,
I should but teach him how to tell my story
And that would woo her. Upon this hint I spake:
She loved me for the dangers I had passed
And I loved her that she did pity them.
This only is the witchcraft I have used.¹²

Othello explains to the court of Venice that Desdemona is won through skillful story-telling and that in regards to anyone who may try to win her heart that “I should but teach him how to tell my story/ And that would woo her.” Desdemona has put an emphasis on the way the story was told, not just the deeds themselves. However, later in the speech Othello notes that while she was wooed with the skill of powerful storytelling, “she loved me for the dangers I had passed/ And I loved her that she did pity them.” Desdemona was drawn in with narrative but the couple were joined together through Desdemona’s attraction to the romanticized exoticism of

¹² Shakespeare, *Othello* 1.3 159-170

Othello's past. Othello loved her because she saw his past as a vessel for consolation, not societal gain as the Venetian society does.

Morrison's script, however, takes this concept of the romanticization of the past and adds a twist, expanding to include the horror that Othello has lived through and also inflicted. Desdemona includes her audience as a voyeur to Othello's confession to Desdemona, a conversation before their wedding. Othello tells Desdemona a story about his warring past actions, one that was not "strange, 'twas passing strange, 'twas pitiful, 'twas wondrous pitiful."¹³ Othello confesses that after a battle, he and Iago stumbled across two old women hiding in a barn and proceeded to gang rape them. Afterwards they noticed that a young boy had witnessed the assault from a hiding spot and instead of killing him they left him alive, shared a look between comrades, and walked away. Desdemona asks if the look they shared was an exchange of shame to which Othello replies;

Shame yes, but worse. There was pleasure too. The look between us was not to acknowledge shame, but mutual pleasure. Pleasure in the degradation we had caused; more in leaving a witness to it. We were not only refusing to kill our own memory, but insisting on its life in another.¹⁴

Desdemona is shocked and abhorred, calling it obscene and monstrous, but she doesn't balk away from Othello. He asks if she can forgive him and she replies that she cannot; "D: No, I cannot. But I can love you and remain committed to you. O: In spite of what I have described? D: In addition to what you have described."¹⁵ Desdemona says she doesn't love him in spite of a

¹³ Shakespeare, *Othello* 1.3. 161-163

¹⁴ Morrison, *Desdemona* p.38

¹⁵ Morrison, *Desdemona* p.39

mark upon his past but in addition to his past, understanding that he is a man built up from the foundation of his actions. This complicates the previously simplified romantic partnership between Othello and Desdemona that is described in the early modern play. By showing sophisticated emotional depth to their relationship, Morrison works against the attempts of Venetian society to see the pair as simple and shallow in their love.

Morrison's text also allows Othello the opportunity and discussion of his future, something that the canonized text never grants. In a flashback to their brief period of newly-married bliss, Morrison places Othello and Desdemona in their bedchamber discussing the prospect of the new world they will create by procreating. "O: Come to me Desdemona. Here on this bed let us make a new world ... Turn away old world, while my love and I create a new one."

¹⁶ Othello talking about a future, a future he will help build and be the father of, removes him from the fixed point that Shakespeare's text secures him to. Morrison's decision to have Othello and Desdemona dream of a future they create together employs tragic irony. This is a nod towards the future that they simultaneously destroy together, in the early modern play, through jealousy and a lack of interpersonal communication. This co-destruction is foreshadowed at the beginning of the early modern text when Othello happily exclaims that his ecstasy in being with Desdemona is so great that any future beyond that is unnecessary.

If it were not to die
'Twere now to be most happy, for I fear
My soul hath her content so absolute
That not another comfort like to this

¹⁶ Morrison, *Desdemona* p.25

Succeeds in unknown fate.¹⁷

Four scenes later, after Cassio's humiliation, Desdemona foreshadows their imminent destruction when she insists on Othello holding private counsel with Cassio, in an attempt to reconcile the two parties. However, when Othello declares a delay in the meeting, Desdemona requests that it not exceed three days; "I prithee name the time, but let it not/ Exceed three days."

¹⁸ This brief exchange foreshadows that the world of the play will not exceed three days time. The timeline is so brief that it denies a future to the characters of the story, unlike the huge time jumps that Shakespeare utilizes in his other plays. (*The Winter's Tale*, *Richard III*, etc.)

Eventually, Shakespeare's Othello applies the disenfranchising tactics of his society against his own person unknowingly. He concretely slips into the position of a time-denied character by vowing steadfastness in his present opinions, emotions, and thoughts. He swears that his dark conclusions of Desdemona's fictional actions will never alter. "*Iago*: Patience, I say your mind perhaps may change. *Othello*: Never, Iago."¹⁹ The denunciation of change disallows Othello to move back in time to his previous adoration of Desdemona, and disallows him the prospects of constructing a new sentiment of his dishonored wife, thus perpetuating and solidifying the play's characterization of Othello as a fixed point in time.

At the end of the play, before committing suicide, Othello launches into a monologue, pleading for his life to be remembered as it was, not gilded over or edited to show him in his best light. Othello lives in a play that surrounds the titular character with foreshadowing of his own demise, disallowing him to live into the future and cutting off his range of possibility. At this moment in the play, Othello takes the power away from the society that beats him down, and

¹⁷ Shakespeare, *Othello* 2.1. 187-191

¹⁸ Shakespeare, *Othello* 3.3 62-63

¹⁹ Shakespeare, *Othello* 3.3. 455-456

proclaims his own future by addressing the way his past life should be remembered by future storytellers:

When you shall these unlucky deeds relate,
Speak of me as I am. Nothing extenuate,
Nor set down aught in malice. Then must you speak
Of one that loved not wisely, but too well;
Of one not jealous, but being wrought,
Perplexed in the extreme...²⁰

Previously in the narrative, the characters around him, namely Iago, used the rhetoric of the play to forecast their doom and death upon Othello, and deny him a future by only allowing society to focus on his past. Even Desdemona, his love and his wife, fates Othello to this fixed point in time. Finally, at the end of this journey, when he can see no possible way out, Othello proclaims his right over his legacy. He demands that he be who he is, not a figment of a fanciful story, not the sole wronged caricature in the puppet show, but as a human being defined by his wrongs and rights, and his duality; A human being both cruel yet affectionate, confident yet insecure. In his eulogy speech, Othello defines himself as a human being, a trusting and affectionate man whose jealousy was his downfall. The concept of 'human' as oxymoronic is within the base structure of his speech. Othello begins by describing himself as a man, a human, who like all fully realized men and women in society are contradictory and fallible, yet still worthy of mankind's respect. His speech then quickly moves to contradict this idea of humankind

²⁰ Shakespeare, *Othello* 5.2. 339-344

by condemning himself as low as a dog and worthy of execution. Finally, he deals the death blow himself, as victim and executioner all in one, the final paradox.

Othello is surrounded by and defined by the impossible in a possible world; he is not a man who lives in time though he functions as one, and he is not an animal though he is condemned as one. Morrison's play seeks to pull this character out of the defining disenfranchisement of impossibility by doing away with the concept of time itself. Morrison had to create a space of timelessness, a place beyond the living world. She created a place where "Late" has no meaning here,"²¹ an afterworld for the deceased characters which became an underworld, a land of the dead. The play transcends and transforms into an afterlife of wisdom, understanding, and most of all, equality of speech and self. Othello asks Desdemona "And now? Together? Alone? Is it too late?" to which she responds her immortal line of "Late" has no meaning here. Here there is only the possibility of wisdom."²² This removal of a time restraint, a removal of time itself, allows Morrison's characters to not only resume speaking but resume thinking as well. The special space of the afterworld is the basis of the characters potential for an alternative or a second chance.²³

DESDEMONA

Shakespeare's play features Desdemona as vessel; She is a vessel for fault, jealousy, destruction, and the receptive role of women in society. Morrison lets Desdemona speak. Morrison's Desdemona speaks independently at last, explaining her own side of the story.

²¹ Morrison, *Desdemona* p.55

²² Morrison, *Desdemona* p.55

²³ Erickson, "Late"

Through her speech she presently learns from her own mistakes within the Venetian society of her past. In the opening section of the piece, Desdemona addresses the audience saying “I exist in places where I can speak, at last, - words that in earth life were sealed or twisted - into the language of obedience.”²⁴ Desdemona informs the audience why she couldn't speak in her previous world, all her words strangled by the obedient role her gendered body was suppressed to perform. She was the silent, subservient daughter and then wife, both roles defined by their male connection and counterpart. The “why not” of her previous world informs the audience of the “why” for the current. Her role in society was the reason she could not speak, and her inability to speak previously is why she must speak and share her story now. Morrison's characters can only truly be “heard” by allowing themselves to acknowledge their own experiences and pain. By doing so these characters can truly hear others and create the same allowances in their community. I specify the use of community here to define a group of characters that individually live with and have had pain impressed upon them. Desdemona exists in a shared community with Othello; Both characters have the torment of disenfranchisement impressed upon them by the Venetian society in *Othello* because of their othered state.. Spillars's work notes the historical space the enslaved community has been forced to inhabit and how that affects the self-understanding of the black community today. She writes that “in order for me to speak a truer word concerning myself, I must strip down through layers of attenuated meanings...and there await whatever marvels of my own inventiveness.”²⁵ This echoes the work of Morrison in creating her space of speech, her world which disposes of societal meanings and historical order, stripping away layers of nonconsensual societal brands and markers.

²⁴ Morrison, *Desdemona* p.14

²⁵ Spillars, “Mamas Baby,” p.65

Desdemona opens the play by telling her listeners that her name, meaning misery, ill-fated, and doomed, was not her choice. She talks of a realm of pain, of oppression, and that “Men made the - rules; women followed them. A step away - was doom indeed, and misery without relief.”²⁶ Desdemona sharing the beginning of her painful story starts the waterfall of open thought and communication that creates space for her disenfranchised community members. Morrison works against what Sarah Ahmed refers to as “fetishing the wound” within subaltern politics; subaltern peoples and subjects have become so invested in the pain and the wound of pain that it becomes to stand for the identity of said subaltern subjects. The fetishisation to identify subaltern peoples as through the blanket attribute of pain then turns the wound into something that “is” and begins to erase the past history of the pain. This is an erasure of something that has a history and happened in time.²⁷ This evokes the previous concept of enslaved or othered peoples stuck in time as something that “is,” robbed of a past or future, history or narrative. As previously discussed through Othello’s presence in *Othello*, Desdemona is also a victim to blanket characterisation through gendered oppression and enslavement. Desdemona’s first words in *Othello* are on trial. She is finally summoned after almost 100 lines of dialogue to defend her love for Othello and support his claims in consensual seduction.

My noble father,

I do perceive here a divided duty.

To you I am bound for life and education...

...But here’s my husband:

And so much duty as my mother showed

²⁶ Morrison, *Desdemona* p.13

²⁷ Ahmed, *Cultural Politics*

To you, preferring you before her father,
So much I challenge that I may profess
Due to the Moor my lord.²⁸

Desdemona begins her vocal presence in the play by describing her joint bondage of that as a daughter but also a wife. Her speech also alludes to the systemic view of women within Venetian society by referencing her mother's past bondage as daughter and wife as well. Desdemona's speech relies heavily on the word 'duty,' signifying homage and submission to a superior and references her relationship to her father as being held by a "bond" or bondage of female to male. This speech is the only words she speaks to defend her choice in marrying Othello. It is not until later in the scene that she speaks again to ask the Duke to allow her to voice her opinion and preference.

Most gracious duke,
To my unfolding lend your prosperous ear
And let me find a charter in your voice
T'assist my simpleness.²⁹

Desdemona's public opinion of her own thoughts is degraded to simpleness to contrast the "prosperous ear" of the male governmental power of Venice. Her own thoughts and opinions are rendered below those of the men in her society. This gendered suppression of thought and voice is continued throughout the rest of Desdemona's text in the play. Her scenes consist of banter with Iago about men's preferences of women, the rebuilding of a male relationship between Cassio and her husband, and finally her death scene where she allows Othello's jealous

²⁸ Shakespeare, *Othello* 1.3. 180-191

²⁹ Shakespeare, *Othello* 1.3. 244-246

thoughts to override any attempts to voice her innocence and defend her honor. The world of *Othello* succinctly suppresses female bodies and degrades them as below male bodies.

In contrast, Desdemona's gendered state is removed by the same concept that removes Othello's racial state, time. In *Desdemona*, she states "I exist in between now...between all time, which has no beginning and no end...I exist in places where I can speak."³⁰ This directly contrasts the most temporally privileged character of *Othello* and only early modern leading character omitted in *Desdemona*, Iago.

IAGO

Iago is the only character in *Othello* who speaks outside the narrative. His soliloquy at the end of Act Two, scene one stops the progression of the narrative for him to explain his personal thoughts to the audience. This is a privilege that neither Desdemona nor Othello are allowed, nor any other character in the world of the play. This signifies that Iago is the most temporally privileged character by being able to step outside the time of the play to address the contemporary audience. This ability to exist in the future while also existing in the present day of the play delineates him as a character who relies on time to define him. This core definition of self denies him the possibility of existing in the timelessness of *Desdemona* and fuels his constant use of time as the main identifier in his denial of Othello's societal standing.

Iago's words throughout the play denies Othello a future repeatedly, his denial a driving force in the characterization of Othello as a man stuck in the past. Iago disenfranchises Othello in

³⁰ Morrison, *Desdemona* p.14

conversations with members of their community by undermining his position of domestic and military power. He erases Othello's position as general when addressing the ineffectual Cassio; "Our general's wife is now the general. I may say so in this respect, for that he hath devoted and given himself to the contemplation, mark, and denotement of her parts and graces."³¹ Iago states that Othello is no longer general, a position that makes decisions for the advancement of a future, but instead has yielded that power to another and has revoked his own allowance of a place within the present and future. Iago continues his degradation of Othello during his Act 2, scene one soliloquy by speaking with the audience about his reasons and plans to ruin Othello.

"The Moor, howbeit that I endure him not,
Is of a constant, loving, noble nature,
And I dare think he'll prove to Desdemona
A most dear husband."³²

Iago tells the audience that he cannot endure Othello. The choice of the verb endure reflects thoughts of extended suffering. To endure something means that the thing in question, whether it is a person, emotion, or trauma, sticks for an extended period of time. Iago thus informs the audience of his ability to exist in a future state or elongated state of emotion. The word endure also implies negative thoughts around the thing that must be endured, to endure something is a struggle. Iago must suffer through the stuck nature of Othello's person. He continues his thought by saying that even though he cannot suffer through Othello, the man himself is "of a constant...nature.". Iago informs the audience that Othello stays the same while his own opinions and actions imply an existence in the future.

³¹Shakespeare, *Othello* 2.3. 309-313

³² Shakespeare, *Othello* 2.1. 286-289

In another attempt to create distance between the male military compatriots, Iago parallels Othello's constancy and faithfulness as Desdemona's husband with his own penchant for a wandering eye as Emilia's husband. "Now, I do love her too;/ Not out of absolute lust, though peradventure/ I stand accountant for as great a sin,"³³ Interestingly, though he flagrantly admits to his accountancy of infidelity, it is the topic of adultery that Iago presents as a reason for wanting to topple Othello.

"For that I do suspect the lusty Moor
Hath leap'd into my seat; the thought whereof
Doth, like a poisonous mineral, gnaw my inwards;
And nothing can or shall content my soul
Till I am even'd with him, wife for wife,
Or failing so, yet that I put the Moor
At least into a jealousy so strong
That judgment cannot cure."³⁴

He accuses Othello of 'leaping into his seat' aka sleeping with his wife and thus taking up Iago's position of domestic rule through sexual and gender prowess. The thought of Othello taking dominance over him in his personal life, not just his professional life, gives him "gnawing minerals" inside. This thought affects him bodily as well as mentally and translates as a physical attack on Iago by Othello. Iago tells the audience that nothing will bring peace to him until he has evened the score by seducing Desdemona, or in case that fails, by ruining Othello mentally as well. Iago quickly jumps from simply evening the score to completely destroying Othello.

³³ Shakespeare, *Othello* 2.1. 289-291

³⁴ Shakespeare, *Othello* 2.1 293-300

Iago's thoughts of an equal footing between both men does not fully regain his internal class standing; to be dominated by a 'lusty Moor' who is racially below his stature as a white Venetian lowers him so far that destruction of the offending party is the only way to regain social footing. His plan to destroy Othello mentally will rob Othello of domestic and societal futurity by ruining his marriage with Desdemona and the small societal gain he has achieved as a married man. If Iago were to seduce Desdemona, it would undermine Othello's pride but still leave him able to procure a domestic future with his wife. By destroying his relationship with Desdemona, Othello will be wife-less; without a wife Othello cannot have legitimate children, and without children Othello has no lineage or futurity.

Witchcraft as an insult to character and a tactic to condescend is employed against Othello again (previously by Brabantio in Act 1) by Iago. Both attempts use charges of witchcraft to blight Othello's social worth and capabilities.. In Act 2, scene three Rodrigo enters voicing his doubts about Iago's plan to fracture Othello's romantic ties to Desdemona. He complains that the plan has caused him harm and humiliation "and so, with no money at all, and a little more wit, return again to Venice."³⁵ Iago parlays Roderigo's use of the word wit and replies "Thou know'st we work by wit and not by witchcraft,/ And wit depends on dilatory time."³⁶ His choice invoking witchcraft alludes to Brabantio's denunciation of Othello in the first act, creating a trope connecting the character and the practice. Iago, however, adds another condition to the trope; Iago counters witchcraft with wit and associates wit with time, thus contrasting witchcraft and time. Othello has been fastened to witchcraft and thus is unequal to

³⁵ Shakespeare, *Othello* 2.3. 362-364

³⁶ Shakespeare, *Othello* 2.3. 367-368

time. This creates a relative equation; Othello = witchcraft, witchcraft ≠ time, and so Othello ≠ time. Othello is a man unequal to time, a fixed point denied a future.

For a man that speaks so much during the majority of the play, Iago stays relatively silent at the end of the dramatic narrative. He attempts multiple times to silence his wife as she confesses Iago's ill deeds, and when words do not work against her speech he stabs her and runs offstage. He is quickly overtaken and brought back to the stage, Othello non-fatally stabs him, and then asks Iago why.

Othello: Will you, I pray, demand that demi-devil

Why he hath thus ensnared my soul and body?

Iago: Demand me nothing. What you know, you know.

From this time forth I never will speak word.”³⁷

Iago's refusal for enlightenment is his last slight against Othello. Iago denies Othello the possibility of wisdom and understanding. He also creates a future for himself by implying his continued existence within the Venetian play-world by declaring “from this time forth I will never speak a word.” The world Iago orchestrates in Venice is the exact opposite of the afterlife in *Desdemona*. Desdemona notes that the dramatic timeless world “is only the possibility of wisdom” and is “between all time, which has no beginning and no end.” The parameters that encapsulate the afterlife in *Desdemona* create a world that Iago has no place in. Iago is a character who creates and exists within opportunities and situations based on time, futurity, and the controlled allotment of wisdom. His reluctance and refusal to speak and communicate

³⁷ Shakespeare, *Othello* 5.2. 298-301

ostracize him from a world concerned with storytelling, communication, and fruitful conversation. His character traits of silence and greed deny him a place as a character within the dramatic world of *Desdemona*, so his narrative journey ends in Shakespeare's text.

Iago's attempts to control time as he attempts to control Othello mirror the fruitless temporal-control attempts of the characters in *Macbeth* and *Dunsinane*. But it is Iago's attempt to become Time, *tempus edax rerum*,³⁸ that implies a personified Time. This personification of Time is seen in one of Shakespeare's later works, *The Winter's Tale*, as a character that speaks directly to the audience and controls the lives of the dramatic characters on stage.

³⁸ Latin phrase meaning "Time, the devourer of all things" from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, 15, 234-236.

THE INTERLUDE: *The Winter's Tale* and *16 Winters or The Bear's Tale*

Likewise to the plays of the previous section, Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale* and a contemporary dramatic appropriation of the play, *16 Winters or The Bears Tale* both use the dramatic concept of time as foundational dramatic force. The difference of these two plays in contrast to the main sections of this work is that the dramatic concept of time is personified and created into a character. Time has transformed into an animate being in order to connect with the audience instead of an abstract weapon used to disenfranchise factions of humanity. I use this different application of time to create an interlude in my work; A brief section within the genus of my work but varying in the species of the application of time.

Shakespeare's play *The Winter's Tale* (*TWT*) is cut in half, a play separated into two parts. At the end of the first half of the narrative Prince Mamillius has died, Perdita has been abandoned on a Bohemian hillside and adopted by a shepherd, Antigonus has been ripped apart by a bear, Hermione is dead (or so we believe) and Leontes has seen the light and realized he is responsible for the destruction and downfall of his family and court. Narratively, the first half stands alone as a slightly decent tragedy, if the playgoer focuses solely on the wronged characters such as Hermione, Antigonus, and Camillo. Aristotle's *Poetics* notes that tragedy presents the story of characters better than reality whereas comedy unfurls the stories of

characters worse than reality.³⁹ In this sense, Shakespeare's play has been laid out as a comedy and the extremely morally reprehensible acts of Leontes must be unfurled and made right. In order to connect the first half of the narrative to its subsequent partner, the play must have a bridge joining both sides together in a narrative arc. In order to do so, Shakespeare employs the character of Time. Time steps out onstage as a chorus-like figure to address the chronology jump between the two parts of the narrative.

Time personified was not a novel approach in Early Modern drama; Shakespeare's contemporaries such as Dekker and his pageant *Troia-Nova Triumphans* (1612) and Middleton's *The Triumphs of Truth* (1613) employed this dramatic device in masques and pageants.⁴⁰ Time was a popular subject matter in paintings as well, portrayed as a destroyer or adversary of the mortal life. A popular phrase at the time, turned into mottos and pictures, was Ovid's "Tempus edax rerum" or "Time, the Devourer of Things."⁴¹ The King in *Love's Labour's Lost* alludes to this idea of time in the first act when he speaks of "cormorant devouring time."⁴²

Time in *TWT* is different. In Early Modern Europe three common items were attributed to time: the hourglass, the scythe, and a pair of wings.⁴³ *TWT*'s depiction of Time has two of these items, the hourglass and the pair of wings, but the scythe is missing. The exclusion of the scythe, used as a weapon of time to cut things short, informs the audience that Time, in this play, is not an enemy. Time begins his monologue by identifying himself and asserting his dominance over the play and audience alike.

I, that please some, try all; both joy and terror

³⁹ Aristotle, *Poetics*

⁴⁰ Kiefer, "Iconography"

⁴¹ Kiefer. "Iconography"

⁴² Shakespeare, *Love's Labour's Lost*, 1.1 4

⁴³ Kiefer. "Iconography"

Of good and bad, that makes and unfolds error,
Now take upon me, in the name of Time,
To use my wings...⁴⁴

Immediately, Time informs the audience that Leontes will not escape justice for his actions: Time is the judge of all things and will try the good and the bad for their actions. Time also consoles the audience by reminding them that time “makes and unfolds error” and will right the wrongs of the first half of the play. After promises of justice and catharsis, Time employs his wings and explains the *how* to all his promises.

To use my wings. Impute it not a crime
To me or my swift passage that I slide
O'er sixteen years, and leave the growth untried
Of that wide gap, since it is in my power
To o'erthrow law, and in one self-born hour
To plant and o'erwhelm custom...⁴⁵

By excluding the scythe, Time has shown the audience that it is not an enemy but, through speech, reminds of its overwhelming power. The speech continues the story by revealing the time jump of sixteen years and disclaiming the admittance of explanation of those years past. In addition to narrative timeline explanations, by telling the audience that Time can overthrow the laws of nature and re-write culture, customs, and tradition the speech readies the viewers for the eventual nonsensical happenings of the second half. A few couplets later, Time turns his hourglass upside down; “Your patience this allowing,/ I turn my glass, and give my

⁴⁴ Shakespeare, *The Winter's Tale* 4.1.1-4

⁴⁵ Shakespeare, *The Winter's Tale* 4.1. 4-9

scene such growing...”⁴⁶ John Pitcher notes that the turning of the hourglass was a gesture that prepared the audience for the unusual: the turning of the hourglass signified the turning upside down of the social order, peasants become nobles, a prince is a shepherd, and what is dead returns to life.⁴⁷ The singular gesture of the hourglass manifests the second act as ‘topsy-turvy.’

Time continues on with his speech and informs the audience of Bohemia, Florizel and the new female protagonist, Perdita. He ends his choral interlude by imploring the audience once again to play along with the narrative shift in time and well-wishing their time in the future. His speech, framed as sixteen rhyming couplets signifying the sixteen years past, is reminiscent of high-poetic moments from previous immortal and celestial beings, such as Robin Goodfellow. Overall, Time is a poetic and jovial character who explains and entreats, a far cry from the devouring and destroying time of classical proverbs and folklore.

American Shakespeare Center (ASC) created a new play competition called Shakespeare's New Contemporaries (SNC) that awards new plays that are companion pieces to one of the 38 canon plays; for this competition, playwright Mary Elizabeth Hamilton wrote her SNC-winning play *16 Winters or The Bear's Tale*. Only ever produced by ASC in the spring of 2019 and currently unpublished, the play takes place during the sixteen missing years between the first and second half of Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*. The two-hour play examines the relationship of Paulina and Hermione as they live and hide in the woods of Bohemia, the regret of Leontes, and the budding romantic relationship of Florizel and Perdita. All the canon character's names have been shortened into nicknames, Hermione is Her, Paulina is Pauly, etc.

⁴⁶ Shakespeare, *The Winter's Tale* 4.1. 15-16

⁴⁷ Pitcher, introduction to *The Winter's Tale*, 2010

Hamilton's character The Bear/Time is a parallel to *TWT's* Time and, is an animated device to explain time jumps and years passing, The Bear/Time slips in and out of Bear, a character who interacts with the human characters, and Time who speaks directly to the audience as a narrator. The play begins with the dual character walking out onstage, announcing the forthcoming action and then exiting:

THE BEAR/TIME

The First Winter: In which Her and Pauly come to the hut.⁴⁸

After two scenes, one featuring Hermione (Her) and Paulina (Pauly), the other Leontes and Mamilius, The Bear/Time returns to the stage for an interlude. Interludes in the play are used multiple times and are solely responsible to The Bear/Time. No other character is allowed this removal from the narrative space. This dramatic temporal manipulation is parallel to Shakespeare's chorus-like Time. Both characters exist outside of the narrative structure of the play and they both can directly address the audience in a non-diegetic way. Additionally, both characters are not human; *TWT's* Time is celestial and Hamilton's The Bear/Time is half animal, half celestial and both characters distance themselves from the humans in their plays. The Bear/Time's first interlude introduces the audience to this dramatic concept of time narration and temporal manipulation. First, the character addresses the audience as The Bear:

Interlude

THE BEAR/TIME stands alone in the winter. He digs a hole in the snow.

When it is deep enough, he nuzzles inside it. Waits. Thinks. It's not big enough, so

he climbs out and resumes digging.

⁴⁸ Hamilton, *16 Winters or The Bear's Tale* p.1

THE BEAR/TIME

Here is what I know.

One: Food is hard to come by in winter...

...Two: Men are not to be trusted. They are guided by the same forces as other creatures...but they are guided by other forces too...and those forces make their movements unpredictable and they make them unreliable and therefore

Dangerous...

... they crisscross, and backtrack, and circle around and around, in an endless and impossible attempt to GET BACK TIME...

Four: Spring almost always follows winter. Almost.⁴⁹

The Bear's speech to the audience is used to explain the contrasts within the world of the play, that of the natural world and the corrupt human world. The Bear starts their dramatic action with a physical connection to the earth, digging a hole to eventually become encompassed by the natural world. This contrasts an earlier scene between Her and Pauly and their attempts to build a shelter on top of the earth to disconnect themselves from the natural elements. The contrasts between the human characters and the natural world continues in The Bear's lament by the warning of the dangers of humans. "They are guided by the same forces as other creatures...but they are guided by other forces too."⁵⁰ The rhetorical choice to use the word "but" instead of "and" explains that humans exist in spite of the natural order of the world. According to The Bear, they are unreliable, unpredictable, and dangerous because of their impossible attempts to

⁴⁹ Hamilton, *16 Winters* p.19-20

⁵⁰ Hamilton, *16 Winters* p.19

control time. The Bear then follows this knowledge by stating that “Spring almost always follows winter. Almost.” This statement, so quickly following the previous notes on temporal human attempts, implies that said futile attempts may have the possibility to extend a season or injure the natural way of progression and moving forward. The Bear informs the audience that hubric human control may have the ability to endanger natural law. After this warning, The Bear transforms into Time.

THE BEAR looks out at the audience. Does he take off his bear coat or hood? Debatable. He does whatever he needs to in order to be more TIME than BEAR. During this, PAULY and HER ‘exit’ the hut - which may just mean picking up the rifle and putting on their coats. They circle the stage a few times, as though hunting.

THE BEAR/TIME

The Second Winter: Her and Pauly learn to survive.”⁵¹

The transformation of The Bear into Time is a direct nod to the casting culture of Shakespeare’s Early Modern stage practices. The doubling of character parts was common practice in early modern stage productions. Many plays had up to 30 speaking roles and even more silent parts. These large character counts were played by companies and casts of around 12 fulltime actors and various other boy performers and hired help.⁵² The possibility that Shakespeare’s Time would have been an actor playing multiple roles is extremely likely and historically supported, some early modern plays were even printed with accompanying doubling charts.⁵³ Hamilton’s choice to have Time and The Bear as an obviously doubled character also

⁵¹ Hamilton, *16 Winters* p.19-20

⁵² Gurr, *Shakespearean Stage*

⁵³ Astington, *Actors and Acting*

creates a connection between the natural and the celestial. The natural and the celestial are both innate laws that cannot be overturned by humans and only controlled by its own kind eg. Time controlling time.

Both plays exemplify the conclusions made in this project: *The Winter's Tale* and *16 Winters or The Bear's Tale* use time as a foundational essence of creating dramatic tension and complication. The difference lies in the application of the concrete instead of the abstract . The concrete bodily presentation of Time holds control over the narrative structure of the play. This narrative power creates a larger distance between humans and the supernatural. The Bear tells the audience that humans try and fail repeatedly to control time in an attempt to turn it back when the natural order dictates it move forward. Contrastingly, the actors' transformation into Time and the presence of Time in *TWT* shows the audience that a human's supernatural or otherworldly counterparts are able to manipulate linear time. These temporal attempts and privileges contrasting between the supernatural/immortal and the futility of the human/mortal, as discussed here, is the driving force of dramatic tension within the remaining two plays discussed in my final section.

ACT TWO: *Macbeth* and *Dunsinane*

Macbeth ends like most of Shakespeare's tragedies, with the promise of hope to come and a whole lot of death. MacDuff beheads Macbeth and Malcolm takes the crown, proclaiming that he will create a new Scotland based on the tenets and friendship of England. David Grieg's play *Dunsinane* continues the story of Scotland through the dual lens of the occupying English forces and native Scottish peoples. Shakespeare's play unfolds the internal Scottish struggle for power while Grieg's play explores the struggle in Scotland between the internal and external forces, the Scottish clans and the British occupying forces. Shakespeare wrote within the context of King James I's court and the community it created and fostered in England; a Scottish king crowned as the English monarch whose coronation brought with him the conjunction of the two countries. Grieg wrote for a contemporary audience that was watching the nation-building attempts of Western countries in Iraq and Afghanistan, constantly embroiled in bloodshed and violence between occupying forces and native militias. Post-colonialism is a major undercurrent in the narrative of *Dunsinane*, a reversal of the imperialistic undercurrents of *Macbeth*. *Macbeth* focuses on the fear of the primal, violent Scottish (Macbeth) and the saviour from the English forces while *Dunsinane* showcases the fear of the English overtaking the Scottish. This reversal in thought comes from the philosophical move away from the "imperialist saviour" and manifest destiny to the visibility of conquered nations, cultures, and people that is central in post-colonial

thought. Ania Loomba writes about the differences in colonialism and postcolonialism stating “the process of forming a community in the new land necessarily meant un-forming or re-forming the communities that existed there already...so colonialism can be defined as the conquest and control of other people’s land and goods.”⁵⁴ She also writes that a point of tension in defining post-colonialism and colonialism is a matter of time; the ‘post’ of post-colonialism implies the chronological aftering of colonization.⁵⁵ It raises the ideological question of whether the future of a nation after colonization has been completely rewritten by the colonizers or if the past of the indigenous peoples continues to exist and hold cultural significance in spite of this. It is this question of rewriting the future and futurity that is the driving force behind both the contemporary and early modern play. In this section, I discuss the significance of futurity and human attempts to control and ‘rewrite’ the future of Scotland and their own destiny. The main characters in both plays toil and fight for a chance to implant themselves in a position of power in the future, and to be responsible for the future destiny of Scotland. The temporal concept of the future is the axis by which all the characters in each play revolve around. Macbeth’s dramatic journey begins with the seductive prediction of his future, Lady Macbeth/Gruach concentrates her efforts around the progeny of Scotland and her children, and Siward hopefully toils in uniting Scotland towards a “peaceful” future. All of the characters plan their actions around how they will impact, build, or ensure the future of Scotland. However, all of the human characters’ attempts in both plays are repeatedly evaded by the foundational, timeless, and boundless entities that they constantly seek to contain. ‘Tomorrow’ is cheated by the interminable.

⁵⁴ Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism* p.20

⁵⁵ Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*

THE WITCHES/SCOTLAND

Both plays employ dramatic concepts and usages to personify and perform timelessness. *Dunsinane* performs timelessness through the speech around and about Scotland and defines the environment as an entity that exists at the epicenter of the dramatic narrative. *Macbeth* personifies the concept of timelessness and Scotland through the application of the celestial witches as narrators and soothsayers.

First Witch: When shall we three meet again?

In thunder, lightning, or in rain?

Second Witch: When the hurly-burly's done,

When the battle's lost and won.

Third Witch: That will be ere the set of sun⁵⁶

Shakespeare opens his Scottish play by introducing his audience to a band of witches that live within the realm of impossibility, where fair is foul and foul is fair⁵⁷ and a battle is lost and won. The First Witch asks her sisters when they will gather again, though she does not ask for a temporal marking but a weather condition to be the scheduling decision. This connects the witches to a natural world in contrast to the human world. Her sister responds that an action will be the marking of their next meeting, the paradoxical ending of turmoil. The Third Witch explains that the end of the turmoil will be before the sun sets, though she does not say whether it is the sun of the current day or one in the future. The witches live and work around the actions of the physical world, the battles, the sun setting, the weather conditions. They do not schedule their

⁵⁶ Shakespeare, *Macbeth* 1.1.1-4

⁵⁷ "Fair is foul, and foul is fair:
Hover through the fog and filthy air."
Shakespeare, *Macbeth* 1.1. 12-13

movement around the concept of time such as “tomorrow” or “in three days,” as discussed previously in *Othello*. The opening of the play establishes the witches as immeasurable and existing outside of ruling binaries and organization. They stand in a place where one thing is both fair and foul to all, that is lost and won at the same time. They are affected and ruled by the actions of the world instead of the passing of time. Timeless, objective, removed, existing in their own realm of forever, the witches in Shakespeare’s play are never subject to the same rules the other characters abide by, and are not held prisoner by the humanity-ruling concept of time. The witches are there before Macbeth and the witches exist after his time. As “posters of the sea and land”⁵⁸ the witches have existed for an interminably long time as Hecate alludes to when scorning the witches for their dabbling with Macbeth.

And which is worse, all you have done
Hath been but for a wayward son,
Spiteful and wrathful, who, as others do,
Loves for his own ends, not for you⁵⁹

Her speech “as others do” implies that the witches have seen this type of man before, placing their existence in the past. She also speaks of how Macbeth will eventually learn his dreadful fate, connecting her and her sisters' powers to the future. “Thither he will come to know his destiny....He shall spurn fate, scorn death, and bear/ His hopes ‘bove wisdom, grace, and fear./And you all know security/ Is mortals’ chiefest enemy.”⁶⁰ Through her speech, Hecate informs the audience of the witches ability to move between and manipulate past, present, and

⁵⁸ Shakespeare, *Macbeth* 1.3 36

⁵⁹ Shakespeare, *Macbeth* 3.5. 10-14.

*It is contested whether William Shakespeare wrote the section of *Macbeth* that features Hecate. Some scholars debate on whether it was actually written by Thomas Middleton.

⁶⁰ Shakespeare, *Macbeth* 3.5 16-33

future. Her speech also binds the notion of security with that of mortality. Many editions, and even the Oxford English Dictionary, translate the use of security in this passage as synonymous with hubris.⁶¹ However, the word “security,” while common during the 1600s as a synonym for overconfidence, was also commonly used to define a state of safety or the assurance of safety.⁶² When the word is doubly read as safety, or a sense of fixed protection, Hecate’s words depict mortal’s chiefest enemy is their constant determination to control the uncertainty of the future. The concept of double speech is familiar to the witches, as seen in their proclamation of “fair is foul and foul is fair,” and supports the reading that ‘security’ also holds the double meaning of being unsafe or uneasy. Hecate’s uneasy appearance in the middle of the play acts as a midpoint reminder to the audience that the humans of the narrative will continue in their obsessive attempts to control the future and the inhuman entities of the dramatic world will continue to live outside of the notion of temporality.

Dunsinane does not have the inhuman celestial narrators that Shakespeare wrote to contrast his fate-obsessed characters. *Dunsinane*’s characters, however, are just as obsessed with the attempt to manipulate the future as Shakespeare’s. To illuminate the sisyphian task of his characters, Grieg employs a combative, abstract, living, nonhuman entity just as his narrative prequel did but, in contrast, does not have it speak. Grieg’s timeless entity is found in the play’s country, Scotland. Grieg’s Scotland is a country that stands neither against or with any faction and will remain to be itself till the end of time, the end of man. Siward speaks of Scotland to the clan council as a character free from the temporal attempts of man.

⁶¹ Shakespeare, *Macbeth* line notes

⁶² 1617 F. Moryson Itinerary ii. 13: “*This Earle providing for his securitie, about this time imprisoned the above mentioned sonnes of Shane O’Neale.*”

Scotland has been at war for many years. On either side there are parties with wounds and each party wants their wounds avenged and each act of vengeance is punished with vengeance and so if you do nothing now the war will continue until there is nobody left alive in Scotland and all that exists is the mountains and the empty land and the grudge that hangs above it.⁶³

In this speech, Scotland is described as consisting of two parallel entities; Scotland is the people who fight on the soil and call the country home but Scotland is the everlasting mountains and land that exist separately from the mortal bodies that inhabit upon it. In Siward's speech, the inhuman Scotland survives beyond and outside its temporally-restrained mortal counterpart.

Scotland, according to Gruach and Malcolm, is also characterized by the place and by the inhabitants. Gruach tells Siward that "Always trying to describe. Throw words at the tree and eventually you'll force me to see the tree just as you did. We long since gave up believing in descriptions. Our language is the forest."⁶⁴ She uses the pronoun "we" to describe her country as a collective entity in contrast to the English soldiers occupying the land and controlling the people. Gruach's words describe a Scotland that prefers to communicate by experiencing action and life instead of through definitions and absolutes. Simultaneously, the Scotland that Malcolm rules, is a Scotland that is "very very careful about the way we hear and understand words...its silly and of course it means that every discussion is fraught and people have to pussyfoot around when obviously one simply wants to cut through the nonsense and describe the facts of the world as they are..."⁶⁵ In contrast, the clansman Moray describes Scotland when he speaks to the parliament:

⁶³ Grieg, *Dunsinane* p.83

⁶⁴ Greig, *Dunsinane* p.76

⁶⁵ Greig, *Dunsinane* p. 28

“Look at us. Here at the beck of an English commander. Is this Scotland now? Try to see us as our children will see us when they look back on this day in time to come. They would be humiliated. It should shame us to kneel before an invader, but it seems we have no shame left.”⁶⁶

Moray declares that Scotland will always remember, the Scots will continue to have children, and those future children will condemn the actions of the past. The condemnation of the future Scotland, Moray claims, should be the basis of the actions in the present. Moray’s speech thus personifies Scotland as the future people living on the land, as a human substance. These contrasting descriptions illuminate the multiplicity and immeasurability of Scotland, ruled concurrently by differing limitless factions and the ephemeral human population that defines itself by its inhabitation on the land.

Scotland and Shakespeare’s witches are parallel as the same boundless and undefinable manipulators of time and timelessness. Both playwrights use these nonhuman/abstract entities as the foundations of their narratives. Just as Shakespeare opens his play with the witches, Greig opens his play with the Boy’s letter discussing Scotland.

Not so sure but all of us both knowing and not knowing

What lay ahead of us.

Scotland.

Scotland. Where we would install a king.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Grieg, *Dunsinane* p. 82

⁶⁷ Greig, *Dunsinane* p.9

Greig's opening words "knowing and not knowing" mirror those of Shakespeare's witches "fair and foul." Both plays pose the question of existence, purpose, and control in a world where impossibility, antithesis, and incomprehensibility reign. When such ambiguity is the foundation of life for the characters of Scotland, their reliance and insistence on the control of fate and destiny becomes paramount.

LADY MACBETH/GRUACH

Gruach and Lady Macbeth are characters both based on the same historical figure. Gruoch of Scotland was the wife of Mac Bethad mac Findláig (Macbeth) the northern king who gained the crown through the violent overthrow of his predecessor Donnchad ua Maíl Choluim (Duncan.) The historical Gruoch had a son from a previous marriage named Lulach who eventually took the Scottish throne for a brief period of time following the death of his stepfather.⁶⁸ Though Greig's Gruach and Lulach are closer to historical record both plays use the historical figure of Gruoch as an outline for their female leading role. The major difference between the two characters is death. Greig's play sees the continuation of the character's life after Macbeth. Shakespeare's Lady Macbeth dies, though it is not performed, and the news of it is reported to Macbeth that she took her own life. It is assumed that her suicide stems from madness experienced as a result of guilt from Duncan's murder. Lady Macbeth's fatal downfall is not that she was complicit in regicide but that she attempted to become time, to overthrow it, and to break time's hold on herself and her husband. Macbeth and Lady Macbeth both attempt to

⁶⁸ Lynch, *Scottish History*

alter their own fate and Scotland's ruling destiny. While Macbeth attempts to fight it with sword and clamour, Lady Macbeth attempts to undermine.

After reading her husband's letter and meeting him on his return to Inverness, she tells him that the prophecies of the witches have given her the feeling of moving through time, as if to be privy to fate.

Thy letters have transported me beyond
This ignorant present, and I feel now
The future in the instant.⁶⁹

A few lines later Macbeth tells his wife that Duncan arrives shortly and plans to continue on his journey "tomorrow." This is the first occurrence of the word "tomorrow" or "morrow" that the audience hears, a word that holds major significance and is spoken multiple times throughout the play. Lady Macbeth answers, and subtly foreshadows her and her husband's fate, by responding "O never, / Shall sun that morrow see!"⁷⁰ She quickly shows concern for their plan by the worry she can detect on her husband's face, and advises him on how to trick the communion of Scots arriving.

To beguile the time,
Look like the time. Bear welcome in your eye,
Your hand, your tongue. Look like th'innocent flower,
But be the serpent under 't.⁷¹

This is the only instance within both plays that a description for time is given; Time is welcoming and innocent on the surface but underneath it all is the sleeping serpent, ready to lash

⁶⁹ Shakespeare, *Macbeth* 1.5 408-10

⁷⁰ Shakespeare, *Macbeth* 1.5 415-16

⁷¹ Shakespeare, *Macbeth* 1.5 418-21

out and poison. Lady Macbeth directs her husband to deceive, to fool fate and to take control into his own hands by impersonating the very element that rules them all. Her ill council foreshadows the couple's hubric fall. By attempting to manipulate time and render themselves timeless, Lady Macbeth and her husband are ensnared and destroyed by their inability to exist outside temporality.

In Act One, scene seven Lady Macbeth references her past attempts of futurity by discussing her actions of caring, bearing, and raising a child. "I have given suck, and know/ How tender 'tis to love the babe that milks me."⁷² It is this announcement of motherhood that is a declaration of futurity, such as discussed previously in regards to progeny and *Othello*. The futurity of Lady Macbeth then becomes the futurity of indigenous Scotland and Gruach in *Dunsinane*.

In Grieg's *Dunsinane*, Lady Macbeth is reborn as Gruach, the Scottish Queen who, originally married to Duncan, married Macbeth after his usurpation of the Scottish crown. This is explained to the audience when Gruach tells Siward how her second husband came to power and explains the cacophony of succession in Scotland.

Gruach: He was a good king.

He ruled for fifteen years.

Before him there were kings and kings and kings but not one of them could rule more than a year or so at most before he would be killed by some chief or other.

⁷²Shakespeare, *Macbeth* 1.7 533-534

But my king lasted fifteen years.

My king was strong.

Siward: Your king murdered your first husband.

Gruach: Yes.

Siward: You don't seem to mind.

Gruach: I asked him to do it.⁷³

Here Gruach parallels herself to the abstract entity of Scotland; she is a woman who has lived through kings and kings and kings and has even dictated the ending and beginning of another rule, but she herself has stayed still. In contrast to Shakespeare's Lady Macbeth, Gruach is a woman who has not yet felt the peril of time against her. Throughout *Dunsinane* she speaks of the future and the past as something her spirit transcends. She speaks of Scotland's ways as if they are her own, embedding herself into the foundation of the land by using the pronouns 'we' and 'our:' "We long since gave up believing in descriptions. Our language is the forest."⁷⁴ Later in the play she speaks of how her past will instruct the future of Scotland, continuing her reign over the land and its peoples.

For as long as I reign I'll torment you and when I die I'll leave instructions in my will to every Scottish Queen that comes after me to tell her King to take up arms and torment England again and again and again until the end of time.⁷⁵

Gruach recognizes that there will be an end of time for her and her successive Scottish queens but that she will influence that reign as long as time will allow her. She also recognizes

⁷³ Greig, *Dunsinane* p.32-33

⁷⁴ Grieg, *Dunsinane* p.76

⁷⁵ Greig, *Dunsinane* p.136

that time exists and that they are all servants to its will but within the frame of time, still, anything is possible.

We are alive.

Everything is possible.

Everything.⁷⁶

MACBETH

Shakespeare's Macbeth lives solely within the canon play; by the end of the theatrical narrative he has been beaten and beheaded. His legacy and his attempts to rule are aligned, they are stuck within time, the entity that he so desperately fought to control and inhabit. Macbeth's fate is prophesied by the witches in the same scene that first introduces the title character to the audience, thus narratively connecting Macbeth and fate throughout the remainder of the play. Audiences cannot experience Macbeth without his attachment to time, to fate and destiny. They watch as he attempts to overcome and grapple the temporality that is at the core of his character.

After his coronation Macbeth commands murderers to take the lives of Banquo and his son Fleance in an attempt to fight against the futurity prophecy of Banquo's issue becoming kings.

Fleance, his son, that keeps him company,
Whose absence is no less material to me
Than is his father's, must embrace the fate
Of that dark hour.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ Greig, *Dunsinane* p.70

⁷⁷ Shakespeare, *Macbeth* 3.2 54-57

His obsessive fight to control goes further as the play continues when he attempts to command the passage of time with orders saying “--Come seeling night/ Scarf up the tender eye of pitiful day”,⁷⁸ and “I will be satisfied. Deny me this,/ And an eternal curse befall on you! Let me know!”⁷⁹ In his search for dominance over time his hubris drives him to attempt an eternal curse against the Weird Sisters who, as mentioned, live outside the realm of temporality. His empty threat of eternality rides close after he cuts off the futurity of his rival, MacDuff, by killing his wife and children. These moments in the play showcase his obsessive hubric attempts to control the time.

Macbeth is, textually, overwrought with the concept of tomorrow. He uses the word multiple times within the text to nod to a future time when all will have been dealt with and council heard.⁸⁰ Macbeth looks to tomorrow for the majority of his narrative life, always

⁷⁸ Shakespeare, *Macbeth* 3.3 52-53

⁷⁹ Shakespeare, *Macbeth* 4.1 119-120

⁸⁰ “We should have else desired your good advice
(Which still hath been both grave and prosperous)
In this day’s council, but we’ll take tomorrow.”
3.1 23-25

“We hear, our bloody cousins are bestow'd
In England and in Ireland, not confessing
Their cruel parricide, filling their hearers
With strange invention: but of that
tomorrow,”
3.1 1033-36

“There the grown serpent lies; the worm that's fled
Hath nature that in time will venom breed,
No teeth for the present. Get thee gone: tomorrow
We'll hear, ourselves, again.”
3.4 1303-06

“Tomorrow
We'll hear ourselves again.”
3.4 34-35

“I will to-morrow,
And betimes I will, to the weird sisters:

assuming it will come and he will have another day to reign. However, when he hears the scream offstage and is informed of Lady Macbeth's death his tone changes. "She should have died hereafter/. There would have been a time for such a word."⁸¹ Now he references tomorrow through the past because the death of his wife has made him realize that his future is gone. His speech continues with what has become some of the most famous lines in the western canon.

To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day
To the last syllable of recorded time,
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!
Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage
And then is heard no more: it is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing.⁸²

Macbeth finally recognizes his futile attempts to control time and speaks to the realization that tomorrow will always come whether a fight is made against it or not. Macbeth reaches the understanding that tomorrow will only end when time ends, in its last recorded syllable. He notes the human race's ephemerality as a synonym for the ephemeral nature of a

More shall they speak; for now I am bent to know,
By the worst means, the worst."
3.4 1434-37

⁸¹ Shakespeare, *Macbeth* 5.5 20-31

⁸² Shakespeare, *Macbeth* 5.5 22-31

play; something that is performed in front of an audience and will never again be able to be completely recreated. Once the action has happened it is a thing of the past. Shakespeare's character, at this moment, changes from a man obsessed with the future to a king who can only hope to find solace in the past. His kingdom is secure as long as the past doesn't move forward, as long as the forever sedentary forest of Birnam Wood does not rush to meet his present. His life is secured as long as the impossibility of a man not born of a woman stays impossible. His hopes are thwarted by the established impossibility of Scotland and the witches; Birnam Wood comes to Dunsinane and MacDuff so aptly exclaims he was "from his mother's womb/ Untimely ripped."⁸³

SIWARD

Dunsinane's Siward is a parallel to Shakespeare's Macbeth. While Macbeth is the protagonist of Shakespeare's play and nonexistent in Greig's, Siward holds little space in the early modern play and is the protagonist of *Dunsinane*. Both men are life-long soldiers and obsessed with their idea of a new Scotland; one attempts through regicide and usurpation while the other through 'peaceful' occupation and government puppetry. However the actions of their plans differ, both men strive to rewrite the Scottish future into what they believe is right. For Siward 'right' means a future shaped and manipulated into a fledgling of English society. Siward explains to his companion, the nameless Boy Soldier, how his English forces plan to create a new Scotland through English occupation.

We set light to the forest. Drove them out and into the hills. Eventually they'll
find their way back to their homes and their farms. We'll set a new king in

⁸³ Shakespeare, *Macbeth* 5.8 19-20

Dunsinane and then summer will come and then a harvest and by next spring it'll
be as if there never was a fight here.⁸⁴

Burning the forest destroys a major part of Scottish culture; Gruach tells Siward that the Scottish language isn't description and words but the forest. The Scottish people have made their homes and planned their domestic lineage through the forest, as referenced when Siward says the people will eventually make their way back to the forest and their homes and farms. Siward's attempt to rewrite the future of Scotland is to burn away the past. He explicitly declares this to Gruach:

I came here to install Malcolm as king so as to secure England's northern border. My job is to build a new kingdom - not to settle old grudges. So I have to clear away the past now...I want you to renounce your son's claim to the throne.⁸⁵

Siward attempts to 'clear away the past' employ the same tactics that Macbeth sought. Both rulers are determined to alienate or eliminate the progeny of the past as a way to secure the future. Macbeth kills the children of MacDuff and attempts to kill Fleance, while Siward looks to renounce Lulach's right to reign. When Gruach refuses to denounce her son, Siward turns to increasingly bolder action to control the Scottish future through the domestic space. Averse to killing, Siward attempts to erase clan claims by joining Malcolm and Gruach in marriage, only to be undermined by Gruach and her plans to decide her own future. Gruach escapes from the wedding and hides in the hills and forests across Scotland, sheltered by Scottish clansmen and villagers. Siward, exhausted and humiliated, embarks on a journey to find Lulach, Gruach's hidden son, kill him and erase any claims that family line holds to the throne.

⁸⁴ Greig, *Dunsinane* p.24

⁸⁵ Greig, *Dunsinane* p.33-34

BOY SOLDIER

Throughout the battle, occupation of Dunsinane, and subsequent journey across Scotland, Siward is joined by a nameless character titled “Boy Soldier.” This inclusion of a young male person creates a dynamic tension in how the play portrays the passage of time, progeny and the domestic future. The character “Boy Soldier,” nameless and constant is akin to the various boy apprentices of the early modern English society, namely in the theatre. Most professional adult companies employed and apprenticed boy actors to play female roles and learn the trade of theatre.⁸⁶ His role in the play mirrors this early modern idiosyncrasy; he follows Siward, learns battle tactics from him, and comes of age during the tenure of the play under his tutelage. In addition, he is distanced from his home, as played out through his letters to his mother. The play is split into seasons instead of acts and each season starts with the boy narrating a letter home, always referencing the future.

Spring

And all of us both knowing and not knowing what lay ahead of us.⁸⁷

Summer

So you can tell this, mother, to any boys you happen to meet, If they say they're being sent up north to join us - say to them this one thing - tell them - my son says, in Scotland always be careful where you put your feet.⁸⁸

⁸⁶Astington, *Actors and Acting in Shakespeare's Time*

⁸⁷ Greig, *Dunsinane* p.9

⁸⁸ Greig, *Dunsinane* p.40

Autumn

We win because if we don't win - we lose - and if we lose - then what?⁸⁹

Winter

And to Siward goes the doubt and to me come the fear and running round and round my head like a mad horse the question I can never ask. "Why are we here?" "Why are we here?"

"Why are we here?"⁹⁰

These letters home call reference to the past, present, and future in both *Dunsinane* and its archetypal text *Macbeth*. Spring's declaration of "knowing and not knowing" creates a parallel to the witches "fair is foul and foul is fair" at the beginning of *Macbeth*. Summer's warning to watch where you put your feet implies a warning of Scottish sabotage, such as the regicide against Duncan. Autumn's question holds a similar cadence to Macbeth and Lady Macbeth's dialogue of "If we should fail?" "We fail?" His last letter, in Winter, mirrors Macbeth's final speech; "Why are we here? Why are we here? Why are we here?" mirrors the rhythm and intention behind "Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow..." The Boy's letters are a literary tactic that reference the past, through mirroring the tone and rhythm of specific moments in *Macbeth*. Dually, however, they also continually pose questions against the impossibility of Scotland and the futility of mortal attempts to control the future. The unanswerable unknowing is questioned in his worries on the ship up to Scotland and not knowing what lays ahead. It is questioned by the unknowing of where to put your feet in Scotland, worried whether you will step in a bog or not. The possibility of defeat is questioned, and finally the unknowing of what his place is in Scotland. The Boy notes that his 'why?' can

⁸⁹ Greig, *Dunsinane* p.89

⁹⁰ Greig, *Dunsinane* p.129

never be answered by Siward. Because Siward's obsession to control the future and erase the past are futile, he is racked by doubt, driven crazy by unattainable goals. He cannot answer the question without demeaning his own purpose. At the end of the play Siward, defeated and aimless, walks offstage with only the Boy Soldier left, as the rest of the world gradually disappears.

The Boy Soldier walks.

*Everything has disappeared.
There is only the Boy and white.
And then there is only white.⁹¹*

A traditional contemporary theatrical performance ends with the blackout, the stage cutting to darkness to signify the end of the dramatic narrative and action. The blackout signifies the death of the characters. Without the stage the characters cease to exist. Greig's ending to *Dunsinane* does the opposite. Instead of fading or cutting to black the play ends in a whiteout. First, Siward and Gruach fade away and all that is left is the Boy, the symbol of futurity, the only character whose physical aging is noted in the play. The Boy standing alone on the stage symbolizes the paramount motif of futurity in the play. When the Boy disappears and the stage is completely white the audience is left with the opposite of a blackout. Instead of signifying the death of the characters and the end of the narrative, the whiteout symbolizes the continuity of them. The whiteout informs the audience that the story of struggle and control will always exist. The characters within the story, like the disappearing Siward, Gruach, and eventually Boy, will change but their archetypes will continue to hold a place in the future. The story, based in the

⁹¹ Greig, *Dunsinane* p.138

reality of early Scottish history, still exists today but the characters have been reborn in different adaptations and appropriations. The whiteout symbolizes an eternal possibility of stories.

EPILOGUE

This project ends in a whiteout. Though my project only focused on a small niche of theatrical narrative, it does not assume to end in the finite absolutism of a theatrical blackout. It ends with the hope of the future, the continuing of stories, and the future dissolving towards possibilities to come.

I hope my work will be used to create and inspire people to write and produce more appropriations. I hope my work will inspire theatrical company directors to produce seasons that create conversations, not just between audience members at talk backs, but conversations between the texts. I want to see more conversations between actors, between characters, and between time and history. Many of my friends work as producers and directors and they ask me what place Shakespeare holds on the contemporary stage - why produce it? They say that it has

been done before and their efforts should be more focused on promoting new work, writers of different backgrounds and ethnicities, not just dead white men. And to that I say, hell yeah! We should be doing that! However, I hope that this project provides a caveat: We should be producing new work in conversation with the canon texts they so heavily draw from.

Contemporary appropriations teach audiences how to explore the wrongs of the past and discuss the revision in the present. *Desdemona* takes a canon character and allows her to speak and learn from the past. *16 Winters* transforms Time into a celestial and natural being, warning the human race that unnatural temporal attempts can alter the natural world. *Dunsinane* shows audiences the duality of occupation and the violence of erasure. It is this work that not only entertains but teaches audiences how to ruminate on complex tensions that may have been overlooked from hundreds of years of canonical thinking. Instead of trying to control the past, present, and future, theatrical production should explore these tensions across the span of human creative narrative.

Time is foundational to all human stories. It's unyielding inevitably embeds tension and complexity into the daily lives of people from all backgrounds, stories, and walks of life. Time is an equalizer but it is also an educator. We learn from the past, present, and future and it informs everything we do, including theatre. Shakespeare was right when he noted that men and women are merely actors on a stage, time is the great director of all, and eventually mortality reaches mere oblivion. But, he found a loophole, through the written word and the exploration of the stage.

Yet, do thy worst, old Time; despite thy wrong,

My love shall in my verse ever live young.⁹²

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⁹² Shakespeare, *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, Sonnet 19 p.26

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