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"Fear No More": Gender Politics and the "Hell" of New Media Technologies in Michael Almereyda's *Cymbeline* (2014)

Maurizio Calbi

1 In a series of seminal essays, Peter Donaldson has persuasively argued that many contemporary Shakespearean films display "sustained thematic attention to media [...] practices,"[1] and that the exploration of "the ferment in communication technologies" in these films is often just as significant as "new interpretations of the plays," or even more so.[2] Although Donaldson's main focus is on the so-called Shakespeare-on-film boom of the 1990s, this media-inflected "Shakespeareccentricity"[3]—a phenomenon that is close to what Douglas Lanier has identified as "post-textual Shakespeare"[4]—has arguably not come to an end with the turn of the millennium, as testified, for instance, by recent Shakespearean films as different from one another as Alan Brown's *Private Romeo* (2011), Ralph Fiennes's *Coriolanus* (2011), Joss Whedon's *Much Ado About Nothing* (2013), and Matías Piñeiro's *Viola* (2012). In this paper, I want to focus on Michael Almereyda's *Cymbeline* (2014) as an example of the continuing trend toward media self-reflexivity in twenty-first-century Shakespearean adaptation. This is a film in which the Shakespearean text is forced to cohabit with an intense exploration of a wide range of media technologies. I want to show that the media consciousness of the film is inextricably linked with its politics of gender and, more specifically, that the processes of remediation that it repeatedly activates (i.e., the re-framing of one medium through another)[5] fundamentally contribute to the fashioning, rearticulation, and questioning of notions of masculinity and male bonding.

2 Michael Almereyda's *Cymbeline* is a modernized re-telling of Shakespeare's play in which the Briton motorcycle gang, led by drug kingpin Cymbeline (Ed Harris), comes into conflict with the Rome police force, led by Caius Lucius (Vondie Curtis-Hall), as a result of Cymbeline's refusal to continue to bear the Roman "yoke" (3.1.52),[6] and pay the "wonted

tribute" (5.5.563) to the (corrupt) representatives of law enforcement. Much like in Shakespeare's play, Cymbeline's "wicked queen" (Milla Jovovich) (5.5.564) and her son Cloten (Anton Yelchin) are instrumental in the transformation of the uneasy peace between the factions into "war and confusion" (3.1.66). The "time" of Almereyda's *Cymbeline* is thus a "troublesome" time (4.3.21).[7] Violence permeates the film. Moreover, and perhaps much more than in Shakespeare's *Cymbeline*, where, at least in terms of the ideological project of the play, violence is teleologically oriented toward the re-creation of a gendered and "imperial" male body,[8] in Almereyda's *Cymbeline* there is no clear-cut distinction between the violence of the Britons and the violence of the Romans. The film underlines the boundless cycle of violence especially in the scene in which the Queen sings Bob Dylan's enigmatic "Dark Eyes" to an enthralled audience made of Briton bikers: as she sings, we witness a sequence in slow motion in which the brutal shooting of two Romans by the Britons (see figure 1 below) is juxtaposed to the cruel clubbing to death of a Briton by the Romans in the Rome police station, which takes place as Caius Lucius placidly sits at his desk, counting money (presumably part of the Britons' "tribute"), and pleasurably rolling up a cigarette (see figure 2 below).

Figure 1: Michael Almereyda, *Cymbeline*, 2014, screen grab (DVD).

BRITONS' VIOLENCE.

GRINDSTONE / LIONSgATE (DVD 2014). ALL FURTHER ILLUSTRATIONS TAKEN FROM THIS REFERENCE.

Figure 2. Roman violence.

3 The endemic violence pervading the film is arguably constitutive of a male body that is almost constantly, and even before any actual conflict, a "body-at-war," an entity that repeatedly fashions itself as hyperbolically masculine. This body presents itself as authoritative and in control, with all its paraphernalia (from guns to clubs to knives to leather jackets), and yet it is also that which intermittently appears as *striving* to maintain this idealized version of itself—all the main male characters, from Posthumus to Pisanio, from Iachimo to Cymbeline himself,[9] are occasionally but significantly shown as (reluctant) bearers of a body-in-pain, as if the film wanted to suggest that hypermasculinity may be in itself a self-defeating construct.[10] One may want to add that this "body-at-war"—and at war with itself—mostly operates in derelict, anonymous, depopulated places, which are far away, both geographically and symbolically, from the glamorous, metropolitan locations that Almereyda's previous Shakespearean film, *Hamlet 2000*, chose to explore. In this sense, the life of the *polis* in the film approximates what Giorgio Agamben calls life under the state of exception.[11]

4 It is also worth pointing out, as many critics have done in connection with Shakespeare's *Cymbeline*,[12] that the "real" violence taking place within the film is co-extensive with the (gendered) violence of rhetoric, and that this is in turn strictly bound up with detrimental notions of masculine honor. Major instances of this form of violence, which the film duly revisits, are of course the rhetorical "madness" of the wager scene; Iachimo's rhetorical bravado in coining a "false report" (1.7.173) as regards Posthumus; Iachimo's rich accumulation of details—his "inventory" (2.2.30)—as he sneakily penetrates and "un-covers" a woman's secret and private place;[13] Posthumus's fantasy of dismemberment following Iachimo's gradual revelation of Imogen's (supposed) infidelity: "O, that I had her here, to tear her limb-meal" (2.4.147).

5 One of the most interesting aspects of Almereyda's film is that it often makes the (gendered) violence of rhetoric resonate with the "violence"—and rhetoric—of new media technologies. Many of the (overwhelmingly negative) reviews of the film have remarked upon the frequent presence of these technologies (from cellphones to iPads to laptops), and mostly read it as part of Almereyda's inconsistent and superficial updating of Shakespearean material. Suffice it to mention here the *Los Angeles Times* review,

significantly entitled "'Cymbeline' in the Instagram age," which calls the film "a mash-up of social media shortcomings and Shakespearean tragedy that becomes [...] a tale of cinematic ambition gone awry;"[14] or the sarcastic comments that appear in another review: "Laboring under the misconception that the problem with the play as written was the singular lack of Apple products [...], Almereyda makes only the most cosmetic of changes."[15]

6 Yet, I want to argue that the film does not merely—or randomly—emphasize the proliferation of technological devices in the contemporary world in an attempt to divert attention from, or redress, the shortcomings of a Shakespearean text that has often been seen, at least since Samuel Johnson, as containing much incongruity; in a self-conscious way, it folds a variety of media forms within the cinematic medium so that they interact and compete with each other, and this mostly in order to draw attention to, and explore, the politics of gender that maybe part of the (Shakespearean) past but obdurately come back to haunt the present.[16] In order to begin to illustrate this, I want to return to the three-minute sequence in which the Queen sings Bob Dylan's "Dark Eyes," and in particular to the moment when she sings the lines: "I live in another world / Where life and death are memorized."[17] As we hear these words, we are offered a close-up of Imogen (Dakota Johnson) against the background of an Old Master painting with hounds hunting a stag (see figure 3 below); subsequently, as the camera moves away from her face, we realize that she is sitting on piece of furniture next to a small, old-fashioned TV, waiting for her attendants to complete the transportation of Iachimo's "trunk" (Ethan Hawke) into the room next to her bedroom (see figure 4 below).

Figure 3: Imogen framed by an Old Master's painting.

Figure 4: Imogen and an old TV set.

7 As Douglas Lanier points out, the cinematic techniques used in the initial part of the film, including this section, repeatedly insist on Imogen's naiveté, alienation, and confinement, her "divorce from the ugly realities of her situation;"[18] she does, indeed, "live in another world," to refer to Bob Dylan's lyrics, and this world, I want to suggest, is also the "anachronistic" world of "archaic" media, which explains the emphasis on an Old Master's painting as well as on the old-fashioned TV, itself a piece of furniture much more than a technological device. Imogen owns a cellular phone, but she is always in the position of a (passive) receiver: in one scene she lies on her bed with Posthumus's "mean'st garment" (2.3.132) covering her (i.e., the red T-shirt she has just received by post), and she is mildly annoyed when she has to answer the phone call announcing the arrival of "a noble gentleman of Rome" (1.6.10); at least twice she reads messages on somebody else's phone (including Posthumus's "letter" to her about Milford Haven, 3.2.40-47);[19] she prefers *not* to use the laptop herself, and asks one of her female attendants to "read, and tell me how far it is" to Milford Haven (50-51). (Later on, Cloten will check this laptop, and find out about Imogen's whereabouts by perusing the browser's history: "This is the history of my knowledge touching her flight".)[20] Only on one occasion she is shown as an active user of new media technologies, when she is about to message her father Cymbeline regarding Iachimo's "assault" (1.7.150), but of course she never completes her task.[21]

8 Thus, an integral part of the alien "world" of archaic media in which Imogen lives is an Old Master's painting of hounds attacking a stag, a painting that cannot fail to evoke the specter of the Ovidian narrative of Diana and Actaeon. Framing her face and then her whole body, the painting implicitly but forcefully inserts her in this narrative, positioning her as a "chaste Dian" (2.4.82) who is about to be (symbolically) "wounded" (2.2.14) by the gaze of a not-so-blameless impersonation of Actaeon (i.e., Iachimo), a figure who also stands in for other emblems of male violators alluded to in both Shakespeare's text and the film, from Tarquin to Tereus (2.2.12; 45). Yet the painting simultaneously and proleptically points to the (symbolic) dismemberment of the male violator and, in

particular, to the physical and psychological pain that will be inflicted upon him. For reasons that have less to do with plot development than with the film's indictment of what Martin Orkin calls "a masculine potential for rhetorical [...] treachery" and duplicitousness,[22] Iachimo re-appears in the film's finale with his arm on a sling, which is arguably the corporeal sign of the "heaviness and guilt" that "takes off [his] manhood" (5.1.1-2). He thus ends up exhibiting the same bodily handicap that emblematizes the "wretchedness" of Posthumus (5.1.11) for most of the film, and this suggests some kind of uncanny proximity between these male characters (I will return to this).

9 In contrast to the "world" of Imogen, the world of Iachimo is undoubtedly the world of new media technologies. When he first appears at the beginning of the wager scene, he is a self-complacent young man who is having a haircut. As Philario and the exiled Posthumus enter the room, he quickly looks at himself in a small mirror to check if the extemporaneous barber / Frenchman has done a proper job, and the mirror oddly turns out to double as his iPad. Thus, from the very beginning, the shallowness of the Italianate Iachimo of the "original" is rewritten as an artificial identity that is inextricably dependent upon prosthetic media devices. For instance, in the much-pared-down dialogue with Imogen (1.7), his fabrication of "evidence" through the use of pictures on his iPad becomes an integral part of his aggressive, virtuoso rhetorical skills aimed at persuading Imogen of Posthumus's infidelity. Indeed, the film suggests that this fabrication is the culmination of his twisted rhetoric, some kind of contemporary media equivalent of rhetorical figures of "vivid description" such as *enargeia* or *evidentia*.[23] In terms of visualization, the "form" of Iachimo's "false report" (1.7.173) is just as important as the "content," and perhaps even more so. The sequence, that is, foregrounds the pictures of "tomboys [...] diseas'd ventures [...] such boil'd stuff" (1.7.122; 123) *along with* the technological device that "contains" and "frames" them, so that we are forced to consider the "medium" of the "message"—the medium *as* the message—and, more specifically, the "evil" properties of a small screen that contaminates and supplants the cinematic screen (see figure 5 below).

Figure 5: Fabricating evidence.

10 What the film inscribes here is not only the consolidated, philosophical tradition that sees external, prosthetic media as detrimental,[24] but also, and more importantly, the

conflict between "evil" medium and "beneficial" medium, between contemporary new media and the "classical" medium of alternative, independent cinema such as Almereyda's own film. Put differently, the sequence draws attention to the new medium as itself an example of "poison." Like the pictures of "tomboys," this new medium is a kind of "boil'd stuff" that "might poison poison" (125-126). It is "poisonous" to the extreme not just because it is an up-to-date technological support through which one can manufacture "evidence," but also because one can easily undo—with the same ease with which one clicks or digits to reverse the effect of a computer command—the "evidence" one fabricates. This is what Iachimo does when he reveals to Imogen that the charges against Posthumus are untrue, and shows her the "real" predicament of her exiled husband: on the same iPad, he shows Iachimo sitting on a couch, all by himself, writing things down on what a later sequence will clearly identify as a "traditional" medium—a red notebook (see figure 6 below).

Figure 6: Undoing evidence.

11 As Lanier points out, "What the film seems to process [...], especially through Iachimo's actions, is an anxiety about the general effect of social media, its capacity to *poison* the social fabric, to breed and propagate mistrust" (my emphasis).[25] One may want to specify that this anxiety is compounded by the fact that new media, at least as far as Almereyda's film understands them, open up a bi-directional, potentially reversible process of visual inscription that relativizes any form of "truth," a process whereby each and every form of visual rendition of the "truth," including Iachimo's true "report" about Posthumus on his iPad, remains haunted by opacity, by its own dark, uncanny shadow.[26]

12 Given the opacity that structurally inhabits Iachimo's second visual "report," one may want to explore how the qualities that Iachimo attributes to Posthumus articulate themselves in terms of media technologies. Undermining his previous account, Iachimo states that Posthumus is "such a holy witch / That he enchants societies into him: Half all men's hearts are his;" he adds that as "he sits 'mongst men like a descended god," "he hath a kind of honour sets him off" (1.7.165-168; 170). How does being *a man amongst men* relate to media technologies? First of all, it is worth pointing out that Posthumus, unlike media-savvy, hipster Iachimo, is almost entirely associated with the world of old media, and from the very beginning. If the film, as Almereyda repeatedly stresses in interviews,

is "a blighted love story," much more than a story about "the forming of the British Empire,"[27] this "love story" profoundly relies upon the "other world" of old media. Perhaps one of the most striking examples of this is how Posthumus firstly establishes contact with Imogen after his exile: he makes a woodcut and sends it to her through Iachimo, a woodcut that bears the inscription "Fear No More," and depicts a wide-eyed girl entwined with a skeleton (see figure 7 below).

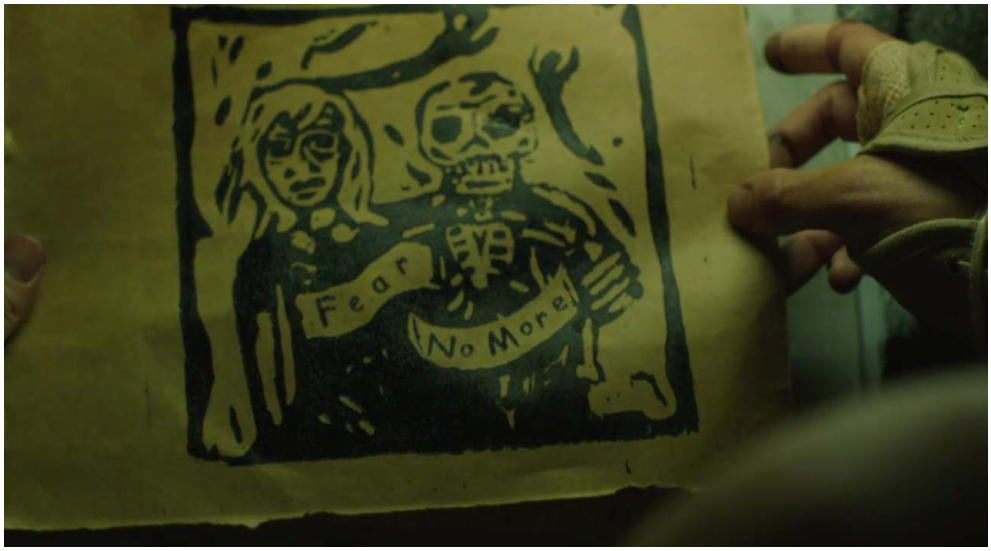

Figure 7: "Fear No More" woodcut.

13 Yet the contact between the two lovers through the medium of the woodcut is ambiguous to say the least.[28] It redefines them not simply as film characters within a Shakespearean adaptation but also as characters who are *aware*—at least partially and potentially—of the Shakespearean text around which the adaptation that they inhabit gravitates. Put differently, it re-situates them as film characters that are always-already haunted by "spectral" Shakespearean traces, and this fundamentally contributes to their sense of alienation.[29] One must add that the politics of gender inscribed in this self-reflexive layer are a little disconcerting. Posthumus's woodcut, that is, is a poisonous gift: on the one hand, it is a reassuring love token that should reseal the bond between the two lovers; on the other, it functions as a sinister invitation to Imogen to insert herself in the consolidated aesthetic tradition of representation of "Death and the Maiden"; to identify, that is, with the "maiden" wide-eyed girl inextricably entwined with a skeleton, and thus to live in the expectation of death, marked by death in advance.[30] In textual terms, as the original dirge recites after the apparent death of Imogen, and the film reiterates later on, this is an invitation to go, or remain at, "home," since her "worldly task" has already been "done" (4.2.260-261).

14 Posthumus's oblique incitement to his "maiden" lady to relocate herself "beyond" life is also a subterranean but forceful request to be *dead* to desire. Feminist critics have often emphasized the "monumentalization" of female characters in Shakespeare's drama, "the metaphoric displacement of women into static objects" as a form of containment of the erotic.[31] The wager scene is an example of this, as the men compete with each other over and against the body of a woman who is compulsively construed as a series of reified objects—rings, stones, and diamonds—that inscribe and uphold a man's honour and worth, albeit in a necessarily precarious way. For my purposes here, what is most

interesting about this scene is that, at least as far as Posthumus's politics of gender are concerned, there is no solution of continuity between his use of old and new media technologies. This is one of the rare occasions in which Posthumus is shown to be conversant with new media technologies and yet the emphasis is still on the absence and / or containment of female desire.[32] As he expostulates that he "esteem[s]" his lady "more than the world enjoys," and that she is none other than "a gift of the gods" (1.5.75-76; 82), he takes his cellphone out of his pocket and shows a photo of Imogen as an innocent, pre-pubescent child (see below, figure 8).

Figure 8: Imogen as pre-pubescent girl.

15 Posthumus thus "encorpses" Imogen (to use Valerie Traub's Shakespearean expression) through his iPhone.[33] He is, indeed, a "holy witch" who turns his wife into a "spectral," frozen image that is denied any kind of movement. He also "enchants [male] societies into him" (1.7. 165-166) by circulating this de-sexualized picture among all the men involved in the scene. Needless to say, the male rivalry informing the wager scene does not erase the bond between a man and what remains a man's most significant other—another man. For instance, Iachimo asserts that he "make[s] [his] wager rather against [Posthumus's] confidence than [Imogen's] reputation" (1.5. 107-108). Moreover, his cynical remarks about Posthumus's wife as a "lady" who "is *not* [...] living" (my emphasis), or an "unparagon'd mistress" who "is dead," can be said to be disquietingly proximate to Posthumus's praise of his wife as somebody—or some*thing*—who belongs to "another world," an entity that irremovably remains elsewhere, "*more* than the world enjoys" (1.5.76) (my emphasis). Thus, praise and cynicism about this praise uncannily coalesce.

16 Iachimo's attempt to "make [his] voyage" upon Imogen (1.6.155) is also an attempt to replace Posthumus's photo of a virginal, pre-pubescent girl with photos of his own. Many critics have underlined the extent to which early modern drama, anatomical treatises, and other cultural artifacts are shaped by an ocular drive, a desire to see, penetrate, and even dismember a body that is irremediably construed as female.[34] In the bedroom scene of Almereyda's film this desire manifests itself through the use of new media technologies. After emerging from his trunk and rubbing his sweaty face on a T-shirt that is hanging in the bedroom—a "garment" (2.3.132) that materially and symbolically belongs to the "rival" Posthumus—, Iachimo compulsively starts taking pictures of a

sleeping Imogen with his iPhone. They remain images of a virginal Imogen, an Imogen as "fresh lily," "whiter than the sheets" (2.2.15-16), but one who *invites* violation—Imogen's unconsciously languid pose on her bed symbolically makes her complicit with Iachimo's violation of her "private space" and body. Iachimo's desire to see quickly transmutes into a more "material" desire to touch Imogen's body ("That I might touch! But kiss, one kiss!", 16-17). Of course, given the dramatic situation, this "touch" can never come to fruition. But what is interesting here is that the film insists on how this desire is sublimated through media technologies: the desire to touch Imogen becomes Iachimo's self-referential, almost masturbatory act of touching his iPhone screen[35] before taking yet another photo and then a "selfie" lying with his head on the bed *tête-à-tête* with Imogen (see figure 9 below).

Figure 9: Iachimo's selfie.

17 More generally, as the scene progresses, we are made to understand that the photographic image generated through new media technologies *is* the thing itself; that the image *supplements* (in a Derridean sense) whatever rhetorical and narrative skills Iachimo displays throughout the movie. For instance, as he takes a photograph of Imogen's "left breast" with its "mole cinque-spotted" (37-38), we realize that it is the *image itself* that functions as "a voucher, / Stronger than ever law could make" (39-40); that what is "riveted, / Screw'd to [Iachimo's] memory" (43-44) is nothing but what is stored in his cellphone's memory. One may go as far as to argue that in the film this form of storage replaces the essential technicity of writing as a form of exteriorization and memory: "Why should I write this down, that's riveted, / Screw'd to my memory?" (43-44).[36] In short, the unnecessary supplement of writing that the "original" underlines becomes in the film the *necessary* supplement of the (stored) photographic image.

18 One must add that this form of visualization often functions within a male homosocial economy. In the bedroom scene Iachimo seems to waver a little, overwhelmed as he is by heterosexual, male predatory desire (even if sublimated by means of technology), but then he decidedly swerves to his proper "design" ("But my design", 23), which is not just that of collecting images but also of producing images that are *significant* for the male rival as well as for the other men who have witnessed the wager. And yet, this male homosocial economy, as articulated within the film, does not necessarily exclude some

kind of opacity, or even the disappearance of the image. In other words, what is striking about the scene in which Iachimo is supposed to "make't apparent / That [he has] tasted [Imogen] in her bed" (2.4.56-57) is that we never see the photographs he has taken. What we see is that Iachimo puts his pieces of evidence, which crucially include his iPad, on Posthumus's most cherished means of transport (i.e., his skateboard). As the skateboard-cum-iPad moves back and forth between the two rivals, the film seems to suggest—and the cynical Iachimo with it—that the new medium is an updated form of bonding between men, and that male connectivity *per se* matters more than any visual content appearing on a screen.[37] According to this extreme form of male homosocial bonding, the woman was never "worth our debate" (1.6.157), which is the line Posthumus will take later on when he lashes out: "Is there no way for men to be, but women / Must be half-workers?" (2.5.153-154).

19 In both the play and the film, Posthumus's redemption is mostly dependent upon the rejection of these deleterious forms of male bonding ("No bond, but to do just ones", 5.1.7) as well as upon the assertion of the value of a certain *knowing* blindness: "There are none want eyes to direct them the way I am going, but such a wink, and will not use them" (5.4.187-189).[38] In Almereyda's film this is synonymous with a questioning of techniques of visualization through new media technologies. In this respect, the ghostly appearance of an old biker who is none other but Posthumus's father Sicilius is fundamental: he reads "Of God We Ask One Favor" by Emily Dickinson as his son lies on a metal table in a morgue-like place in a state of drowsiness. The theme of forgiveness emerging from Dickinson's complex poem is of course important at this specific juncture of the film. But what is equally significant is the old, crumpled composition notebook that Posthumus's father lays on his son's chest after reading from it (see figure 10 below): Posthumus's symbolic rebirth, the scene suggests, has also to do with some kind of re-acquaintance with an old medium he has culpably forsaken because of Iachimo's seductive screen technologies.

Figure 10: Posthumus and composition notebook.

20 Yet, by the end of the film one realizes that if the critique of new media technologies has been maintained—to borrow an expression from the character who is most consistently associated with them, they are somehow equivalent to "hell" (2.2.50)—, there is no

simultaneous, clear reassertion of the value of old media. Moreover, and relatedly, Posthumus will never become his father's son (or become again his substitute father's son). The last scene of the film is emblematic in this respect. As Cymbeline emphatically states that "pardon's the word to all" (5.5.423), and as one of the Briton bikers sets fire to the scapegoated, dead body of the Queen, the two clearly distressed and horrified lovers sneak out, and then ride off on a motorbike, surrounded by dead bodies. Their (physical) departure is also, and fundamentally, a radical departure from Shakespeare's *Cymbeline* and its patriarchally inflected genealogies. Significantly, in terms of the politics of the gender of the film's finale, it is a shorthaired, androgynous-looking Imogen who is the pilot, a character who is very different from "the piece of tender air" (447) of the oracle in the "original." In a way that parallels Posthumus's implicit refusal of male genealogy, she will never be her father's daughter. The film ends with a self-reflexive gesture: we are offered a close-up of the "Fear No More" woodcut, finally lying on the pavement among pieces of broken glass (see below figure 11), after circulating throughout the film as a signifier bearing multiple, even contradictory meanings, and affecting characters (from Iachimo to Imogen to Cloten)[39] in different ways.

Figure 11: Woodcut lying on the floor.

21 It is this woodcut that the lovers also leave behind as they move toward an unknown destination, a Shakespearean inscription—in fact, a Shakespearean "home"—that finally appears to be uninhabitable as a symbol of redemption and re-birth. As Douglas Lanier argues, "in Almereyda's hands, Shakespeare emerges, at least deep structurally, as an indie artist, one to which he and the indie film genre can claim to be distant heirs."[40] Yet, the film's finale introduces a cautionary note. It suggests that "Shakespeare" is a complex textual ensemble that can be inherited and become an ally against mainstream cinema, and perhaps against new media technologies, only if it is forced to go through a process of multiple transformations and migrations, not least as regards its deleterious politics of gender.

NOTES

1. Peter S. Donaldson, "Bottom and the Gramophone", *Shakespeare Survey* 61, 2008, spec. issue *Shakespeare, Sound and Screen*, ed. Peter Holland, 23-35, p. 23.

2. *Idem*, "'In Fair Verona': Media, Spectacle, and Performance in *William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet*", *Shakespeare After Mass Media*, ed. Richard Burt, New York, Palgrave, 2002, 59-82, p. 61.

3. Richard Burt, "Introduction: Shakespeare, More or Less? From Shakespeareccentricity to Shakespearecentricity and Back", *Shakespeares after Shakespeare. An Encyclopedia of the Bard in Mass Media and Popular Culture*, vol. 1, ed. Richard Burt, Westport and London, Greenwood Press, 2007, 1-9, p. 3.

4. Douglas Lanier, "Recent Shakespeare Adaptation and the Mutations of Cultural Capital", *After Shakespeare on Film*, spec. issue of *Shakespeare Studies* 38, 2010, ed. Greg Semenza, 104-113, p. 106.

5. For this concept, see Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin, *Remediation: Understanding New Media* , Cambridge, MA and London, MIT Press, 1999. In this paper my emphasis is more specifically on remediation as the uncanny coexistence of media.

6. William Shakespeare, *Cymbeline,* ed. J. M. Nosworthy, coll. The Arden Shakespeare, London, Methuen, 1955. References to the play are from this edition, and are included parenthetically in the main body of the text.

7. Many reviewers associate the film with the TV show *Sons of Anarchy*, not least because of the common reference to biker culture. The distributor briefly retitled the film *Anarchy*, probably in order to attract fans of the show. In interviews Michael Almereyda repeatedly denies that he knew about what he disparagingly calls "this little show." See, for instance, Steven Mears, "Interview: Michael Almereyda," *Film Comment*, 13 March 2015 (accessible online at: https://www.filmcomment.com/blog/interview-michael-almereyda, last accessed 3 June 2017).

8. Much has been written on this aspect of the play. See, for instance, Jody Mikalachki, *The Legacy of Boadicea: Gender and Nation in Early Modern England*, London, Routledge, 1998; and Willy Malley, "Postcolonial Shakespeare: British Identity Formation and *Cymbeline*", *Shakespeare's Late Plays: New Readings*, eds Jennifer Richards and James Knowles, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 145-157. This homogenous, ethnically-marked body that re-submits to "the Roman empire" (5.5.462) in view of its own "imperial" destiny is a body that claims for itself an uncontaminated maternal role: "CYMBELINE. O, What am I? / A mother to the birth of three? Ne'er mother / Rejoic'd n deliverance more" (5.5.369-371). See Janet Adelman, *Suffocating Mothers: Fantasies of Maternal Origin in Shakespeare's Plays, Hamlet to The Tempest*, New York and London: Routledge, 1992, where she speaks of the end of *Cymbeline* as the "magical restoration of paternal authority and the fantasy-accomplishment of a parthenogenetic family" (p. 220).

9. For instance, Posthumus, a penniless skateboarder in the film, is shown from the very beginning with a broken arm; Cymbeline often seems to be in pain, and is clearly on medications.

10. On hypermasculinity as a construction that defies embodiment and identification, see Judith Butler, "Sexual Inversions," *Discourses of Sexuality: From Aristotle to Aids*, ed. Domna C. Stanton, Ann Arbor, The University of Michigan Press, 1992, 344-361.

11. Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer. Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1998 [1995], p. 37. This a "state" in which there is no safety, since everyone potentially becomes *homo sacer* (i.e., an entity "that may be killed but not sacrificed") for everyone else (p. 83).

12. See, for instance, Martin Orkin, *Local Shakespeares. Proximations and Power*, London, Routledge, 2005, p. 85-111.

13. On the "dis-covery" of a woman's secret place in early modern culture, see esp. Patricia Parker, "*Othello* and *Hamlet*: Dilation, Spying, and the 'Secret Place' of Woman," *Representations* 44, 1993, 60-95.

14. Betsy Sharkey, "'Cymbeline' in the Instagram Age. Bring Shakespeare's Drama of Deception into Today's Social Media World: A Good Idea Gone Awry," *Los Angeles Times*, 12 March 2015 (accessible online at: http://www.latimes.com/entertainment/movies/la-et-mn-cymbeline-review-20150313-column.html, last accessed 3 June 2017).

15. Jessica Kiang, "Venice Review: 'Cymbeline'", *The Playlist*, 2 September 2014 (accessible online at: http://www.indiewire.com/2014/09/venice-review-cymbeline-starring-ethan-hawke-dakota-johnson-ed-harris-milla-jovovich-penn-badgley-anton-yelchin-272964, last accessed 3 June 2017).

16. The interaction of media forms I am emphasizing here relates to Almereyda's description of his project: "to approach [the play] scene by scene as a collision between contemporary reality and the world that Shakespeare was defining, and to see how those two things talk to each other and intersect". See Steven Mears, "Interview: Michael Almereyda," *Film Comment*, 13 March 2015 (accessible online at: https://www.filmcomment.com/blog/interview-michael-almereyda, last accessed 3 June 2017).

17. For the full lyrics, see https://bobdylan.com/songs/dark-eyes, last accessed 3 June 2017.

18. Douglas Lanier, "Michael Almereyda's *Cymbeline*: The End of Teen Shakespeare", *Shakespeare on Screen:* The Tempest *and Late Romances*, eds Sarah Hatchuel and Nathalie Vienne-Guerrin, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2017, 232-250, p. 240. I want to thank Douglas Lanier for kindly supplying a draft copy of this essay.

19. Additionally, Pisanio makes her privy to Posthumus's murderous plans by handing over his phone to her (3.4.212).

20. This is of course a tongue-in-cheek transformation of Pisanio's lines: "This paper is the history of my knowledge / Touching her flight" (3.5.100-101).

21. Like Imogen's room, Belarius's working-class cabin also exhibits old media devices, including an outdated TV set and a turntable. According to Lanier, this cabin is an emblem of a "pre-digital," dissident American culture that Imogen will come to embrace. Her (renewed) association with this "pre-digital" world and what it stands for is essential to her rebirth as "a disaffected alt-cult youth" ("Michael Almereyda's *Cymbeline*", *op. cit*., p. 241).

22. Orkin, *op. cit*., p. 89.

23. George Puttenham, *The Arte of English Poesie*, ed. E. Arber, London, Alex Murray, 1869 [1589], p. 155.

24. For a lucid summary of this tradition, see Mark B. N. Hansen, "New Media", *Critical Terms for Media Studies*, eds W.J.T Mitchell and Mark B.N. Hansen, Chicago and London, Chicago University Press, 2010, 172-185.

25. Lanier, "Michael Almereyda's *Cymbeline*", *op. cit*. p. 242. As Lanier also convincingly argues, Almereyda's *Cymbeline*, when compared to his *Hamlet*, is "rather more pessimistic about screen technology as a vehicle for alternative culture" (p. 243).

26. According to the film, that is, in the world of new media there is no trust that one can clearly and unequivocally separate from mistrust.

27. Emily Rome, "Interview: 'Cymbeline' Director Michael Almereyda on Reuniting with Shakespeare and Ethan Hawke", *Hitfix*, 13 March 2015 (accessible online at: http://uproxx.com/hitfix/interview-cymbeline-director-michael-almereyda-on-reuniting-with-shakespeare-and-ethan-hawke, last accessed 3 June 2017).

28. This is also "con-tact": Imogen yearningly touches it at the beginning of her dialogue with Iachimo, and this is probably contrasted with Iachimo's subsequent, "malignant" touch of his iPad screen to show the photoshopped, incriminating evidence against Posthumus.

29. On Shakespearean spectrality see Maurizio Calbi, *Spectral Shakespeares. Media Adaptations in the Twenty-First Century*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2013. Thomas Cartelli and Katherine Rowe

draw a useful distinction between kitsch and camp Shakespearean adaptations. Camp adaptations do not deny that the Shakespearean text is always-already part of the cultural environment within which they take place. In this sense, Almereyda's *Cymbeline* falls within the realm of camp. See Thomas Cartelli and Katherine Rowe, *New Wave Shakespeare on Screen*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 2007, p. 14-21.

30. There are undoubtedly similarities between the skeleton in the woodcut and the figure of the Grim Reaper carved into the clubhouse table in *Sons of Anarchy*. Given Almereyda's position vis-à-vis the show (see note 7 above), it is difficult to tell whether this is a conscious borrowing or not. When read in the light of the (voluntary or involuntary) transmigration of visual motifs from the TV show to the film, Iachimo's invitation to Imogen appears to be even more sinister. (For the series, "to meet Mr Mayhem" / the Reaper is to meet death). I want to thank one of the anonymous reviewers of this article for alerting me to this similarity.

31. Valerie Traub, *Desire and Anxiety: Circulations of Sexuality in Shakespearean Drama*, London and New York, Routledge, 1992, p. 28.

32. The other instance is when Posthumus orders Pisanio to kill Imogen through a phone message. In this message, Imogen is defined a "strumpet" (3.4.22). His two uses of new media technologies reflect his dichotomization of women as *either* (pre-pubescent) virgins *or* whores.

33. Traub, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

34. See Parker, *op. cit.*, esp. p. 66.

35. Iachimo touches his phone just as he utters the word "touch."

36. For a lucid account of the technicity of writing and its relation to memory, see especially Bernard Stiegler, "Memory", in Mitchell and Hansen, *op. cit.*, 64-87.

37. On connectivity *per se* as a fundamental aspect of new media, see Hansen, *op. cit.*, p. 180-181.

38. The gaoler replies: "What an infinite mock is this, that a man should have the best use of eyes to see the way of blindness" (5.4.190-193).

39. Cloten picks it up at the quarry near Belarius's home. In his case, it clearly announces an unredeemable death.

40. Lanier, "Michael Almereyda's *Cymbeline*", *op. cit.*, p. 248.

ABSTRACTS

The paper focuses on Michael Almereyda's *Cymbeline* (2014), a modernized re-telling of Shakespeare's play in which the Briton motorcycle gang, led by drug kingpin Cymbeline, comes into conflict with the Rome police force, led by Caius Lucius. In the film, which has been defined as "Shakespeare in the Instagram age," sustained attention to media practices and technologies competes with the incorporation of textual material. In particular, the film displays a conflict between old media, including Shakespearean textual inscriptions (e.g. the "Fear No More" woodcut that Posthumus makes and sends to Imogen as a gift), and new media technologies, pervasively associated with perverse visualization and the "spreadability" of rumour and untruth. The paper shows that the media consciousness of the film is inextricably linked with its politics of gender and, more specifically, that the processes of remediation that it repeatedly activates fundamentally contribute to the fashioning, rearticulation, and questioning of notions of masculinity and male bonding.

Cet article analyse le film *Cymbeline* de Michael Almereyda (2014), réécriture moderne de la pièce de Shakespeare dans laquelle un gang de motards bretons insulaires, mené par le baron de la drogue Cymbeline, entre en conflit avec la police de Rome, dirigée par Caius Lucius. Dans le film, que l’on a pu qualifier de « Shakespeare à l’ère d’Instagram », l’attention soutenue portée à l’utilisation des médias et aux technologies entre en concurrence avec l’incorporation de matériau textuel. Le film repose en particulier sur le conflit entre les anciens médias, notamment des inscriptions renvoyant à des textes de Shakespeare (comme par exemple la gravure « Fear no more » fabriquée par Posthumus et qu’il envoie en cadeau à Imogène), et les nouveaux médias, associés systématiquement à une visualisation perverse et à la capacité de la rumeur mensongère à se répandre. Cet article montre que la conscience médiatique du film est indissociable de sa politique du genre et, plus précisément, que les processus de remédiation qu’il déclenche de façon répétée apportent une contribution fondamentale à l’élaboration, la reformulation et la mise en question des notions de masculinité et de compagnonnage masculin.

INDEX

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