"For 'tis your thoughts that now must deck our kings": Affect in Shakespearean performance

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“For ’tis your thoughts that now must deck our kings”: Affect in Shakespearean Performance

by

Elizabeth Dieterich

Thesis
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in
English Literature

Thesis Committee:
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Ypsilanti, Michigan
Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my unconditionally supportive and loving parents, Henry and Roz, and to the memory of my grandfather, Ernest Johnston Dieterich.
Acknowledgments

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Abstract

Because Shakespeare’s plays have been performed consistently for four hundred years, Shakespearean performance is in an ideal position to demonstrate how performance transmits the meanings of texts. This thesis argues that performances of Shakespeare’s plays create meaning through the transmission of affect. Renaissance conventions of audience-actor engagement were based on character tropes and staging practices of medieval theater, to which audiences responded viscerally. To illustrate these responses, I draw upon 3 Henry VI and Richard III. I then examine Hamlet, Twelfth Night, and As You Like It for their treatment of representation, empathy, and the power of affect. These plays include latent affective cues; I demonstrate how, instead of attempting to become characters, many contemporary actors examine their lines for affective cues, as actors did in the Renaissance.Establishing performance as a site of varied meaning creates conversation across disciplines that will lead to fruitful adaptations and interpretations of Shakespearean works.
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Introduction

“Can this cock-pit hold
The vasty fields of France? Or may we cram
Within this wooden O the very casques
That did affright the air at Agincourt?
O pardon: since a crookèd figure may
Attest in little place a million,
And let us, ciphers to this great account,
On your imaginary forces work.

........................................

Think, when we talk of horses, that you see them,
Printing their proud hoof i’th’ receiving earth;
For ‘tis your thoughts that now must deck our kings.”
— Chorus, Henry V (Prologue 11-18, 26-28)

The Chorus begins William Shakespeare’s Henry V by asking the audience’s pardon. Lamenting the absence of a “muse of fire,” the Chorus wishes that the stage at the Globe Theater could be a “kingdom” and the actors “princes” (Prologue 1-3). The Chorus asks the present audience to excuse the “unworthy scaffold” of the Globe on the banks of Southwark, London, that they excuse the small cast of Henry V, the play’s lack of horses, the collapsed timeline of historical events, and that they excuse all other “imperfections” of the production. That Shakespeare begins one of his most compelling and successful plays with this speech tells us much about the relationship between the audience and the stage in Elizabethan England. The Prologue of Henry V responds to the conventions of Shakespeare’s time. The Chorus implores the audience to understand that an actor, “one man,” must be divided into “a thousand parts,” standing in for the ranks of English or French soldiers who fought the Battle of Agincourt on the “vasty fields of France” (24, 12). Instead of proceeding with the play as if the representation of kingdoms and princes was so convincing as to require no explanation, the Chorus reminds the audience that the play is an illusion, and then, even despite this reminder, the Chorus asks the audience of Henry V at Shakespeare’s Globe still to commit deeply to what happens onstage.
It might appear from our perspective that Shakespeare is simply asking his audience to do too much. That *Henry V*, and indeed all of Shakespeare’s historical dramas, were so successful implies that the audience of Shakespeare’s theater was perfectly capable and willing to suspend their demands for perfect verisimilitude. They understood that “one man” must be divided into “a thousand parts” in order to represent an army. The audience’s acceptance of diegetic theater seems to have gone beyond “suppos[ing]” that armies, kings, and courts inhabited the Globe Theater. The Chorus requests that the audience “let” the actors “work” on the audience’s “imaginary forces” (18-19 emph. mine). *Henry V* will be compelling if the audience allows the actors to *work* on them. The actors will not simply present a play that the audience must correctly interpret by understanding the correct actor-to-soldier ratio, but the actors will affect the audience. After being drawn into the imaginative reality of the play, the audience will then reciprocate this effect. As the actors work on the audiences’ “imaginary forces,” the “thoughts” of the audience “now deck” the kings of the Globe Theater (28).

Just as the play works on the audience to create meaningful drama, the audience works on the play, reciprocally. As Robert Weimann puts it, *Henry V* “thrive[s] on the use (and ‘abuse’) of the threshold between the imaginary, represented product … and the material process of bringing it about” (70). In Weimann’s words, *Henry V*, among all Shakespeare’s plays, is uniquely concerned with “the playing of the play, the showing of the show” (70). On the other hand, I will argue in this thesis that many more of Shakespeare’s plays are concerned with using and abusing, so to speak, the threshold of imagination and representation. While *Henry V* explicitly begins with a declaration of “work” on “imaginary forces,” this work on imaginations performed by actors on the Globe stage, and reciprocally performed by audiences, was not merely intellectual and imaginative. While Shakespeare’s plays present thought-provoking
cultural commentary, the critical work that Renaissance plays like *Henry V* do on their audiences is visceral as well as intellectual. For example, *Henry V* presents Shakespeare’s comment on the relationship between a monarch and his people. The play does so not intellectually, as an essay would, but reaches its audience on a visceral level. *Henry V* invites audiences to respond to engaging performances of the relationships between the actor playing Henry V and his soldiers before the Battle of Agincourt. The effect of the play is not merely to have the audience reflect on what it might have been like to hear King Henry V’s rousing St. Crispin’s Day Speech, but rather the play allows the audience to hear it themselves, and to respond in the same way King Henry’s own soldiers might have responded: loudly, patriotically, together.

Early modern audiences responded to plays “not only with their minds and souls but also with their hearts, hands, viscera, hair, and skin” (Craik and Pollard 3). “Kings” were not “deck[ed]” on the Globe stage merely by the audience intellectually accepting that actors represented monarchs. Kings on the Globe stage were “deck[ed]” with excitement, joy, fear, distress, disgust, horror, or shame. The actor playing King Henry V was met by the Globe audience not merely with acceptance that the actor before them stood in place of the actual historical English monarch Henry V, but with excitement and rowdy patriotism. The actor playing King Richard III, on the other hand, was met not just with acceptance that an actor, who, perhaps, hunched his back or cradled his arm, stood in as a living representation of the Tudor myth about Richard III, but with disgust and horror. Because, as I will discuss below, the early modern period conceived of persons as being more permeable than we do today, excitement, disgust, horror, fear, or joy spread quickly through the theater, through the audiences of all social strata who were crammed together in the audience, and back to the stage.
Visceral work, which actors performed on audiences, and which reverberated through audiences, transmitted affect that generated and reinforced the meanings of dramas. In recent centuries, however, the academic cachet of the written word has eclipsed the cultural cachet of performance. The meaning of *Henry V* is now primarily accessed through reading the play. Scholars of the humanities rely mostly on extant textual artifacts and cultural contexts surrounding the writing and publication of texts, rather than on circumstances of performance, to discern the meanings of dramatic texts. Twentieth- and twenty-first-century scholars of performance studies and related fields attempt to disrupt the idea that performance is an unreliable medium for meaning. W. B. Worthen celebrates inquiry into Shakespearean performance, saying that ignoring performance misrepresents theater as “licentious, promiscuous, innovative, imaginative, or merely haphazard in its representations of texts” (“Shakespearean Performativity” 3). Through dismissing performance, scholars miss the opportunity to realize how performance can demonstrate meanings in text that reading cannot. While Western paradigms of literary scholarship and dramatic criticism are “contentious,” Worthen asserts that performance is “powerful way” to ask “questions of authority” in terms of where meaning for Shakespeare’s plays is generated: in text or in performance (*Shakespeare and the Authority of Performance* 2-3). By “authority,” Worthen means “not so much professional authority, but the stabilizing, hegemonic functioning of the Author in modern cultural production,” and wonders how “the Author, whose texts are consumed, transgressed, rewritten by performance, figure[s] in the ways we account for the work of the stage” (2). Whereas, across his extensive scholarship, Worthen does investigate contemporary performances, it seems that performances and interpretations by theater practitioners are always secondary to texts. While actors’ readings can “help [scholars] locate the interface between the interpretive priorities of
scholarship and those of the stage,” literary and historicizing approaches to Shakespeare are always already authoritative; the “soup of nuance” that theater practitioners create out of history is “interested in what ‘Shakespeare’ is rather than what ‘Shakespeare’ can be made to do” (“Invisible Bullets, Violet Beards” 211, 220 emph. original).

Many literary scholars of Shakespeare do attend to performance conventions in the Renaissance. Robert Weimann’s *Author’s Pen, Actor’s Voice: Playing and Writing in Shakespeare’s Theater* traces composition practices in the Renaissance and examines how these might have influenced staging practices, attending especially to the content of prologues to Renaissance plays. A subsequent text by Weimann, co-authored with Douglas Bruster, *Shakespeare and the Power of Performance: Stage and Page in Elizabethan Theater*, approaches Shakespeare “through the confederation and dissension of the two media” involved in the performance of plays: “dramatic language and performing bodies” (Weimann and Bruster 1). While this book considers how performance is a medium through which meaning is made, Weimann’s work is not concerned how audiences would have responded to performances, or why, nor does it explore means through which actors can arrive at clues informing their performances. I will make much use of Weimann and Bruster’s text throughout the first chapter of this thesis for its cogent and helpful descriptions of playhouse contexts and conventions in the Renaissance, and I will build upon their work by exploring more deeply the relationships between audiences and actors, and between actors and their own roles. Andrew Gurr’s scholarship, including *Playgoing in Shakespeare’s London* (2004, 3rd ed.) and *The Shakespearean Stage 1574-1642* (2009), details experiences and conventions of playgoing in the Renaissance. Gurr’s scholarship thoroughly details what we can know about the experience of playgoing at Shakespeare’s Globe, and it is my goal to build upon his examinations of audience
behavior and audiences’ experiences of playgoing. We can glean some idea of what it was like to see a play in the Renaissance based on how actors today continue to use text to make choices that affect audiences in a way similar to what Renaissance actors would have.

Some scholarship attends to popular culture’s relationship with Shakespeare, and thus necessarily is concerned with the stage. Robert Weimann’s 1987 volume *Shakespeare and the Popular Tradition in the Theater: Studies in the Social Dimension of Dramatic Form and Function* examines Shakespeare’s relationship to the popular culture of Elizabethan England. Much of Michael D. Bristol’s scholarly work examines our own popular relationship with Shakespeare, as he does in his 1996 *Big-time Shakespeare*, the subtitle of which asks, “Is Shakespeare great? Or is it all just hype?” These texts do attend to contemporary performance, but do not address acting techniques or the psychological and biological responses of audiences.

Some scholars, on the other hand, dismiss contemporary performance altogether. Peter Thompson’s essay “Rogues and Rhetoricians” reads performance practices in the Renaissance closely, but disregards contemporary performance, because, by his estimation, for actors today, “character as subjectivity remains paramount,” and actors today “will readily argue over what sort of person Ophelia is on the unspoken assumption that what she does (or fails to do) is Shakespeare’s cryptic clue to her essential being.” Thompson criticizes contemporary rehearsals for “operat[ing] excitingly within the dynamic of becoming” (322). This thesis will argue that instead of attempting to become characters, many contemporary actors, like their Renaissance counterparts did, examine the text of plays for clues about how to activate effective performance. There seems to be a pervading sense in writing by scholars like Thompson or Worthen, whose work is otherwise incredibly useful for endeavors like this thesis, that access to the meanings of Shakespeare’s plays is only available today through text because actors and theater practitioners
are more interested in *being* than in *doing*; they are more interested in what the plays *are* than in what they “can be made to do,” as Worthen puts it (“Invisible Bullets, Violet Beards” 220). This myth, which privileges literary scholarship over performance, sets up a restrictive binary between meanings uncovered by textual analysis and theatrical production. Because Shakespeare’s plays have been performed consistently for four hundred years, performances of Shakespeare are in an ideal position to demonstrate how performance works to transmit the meanings of texts.

The Renaissance privileged the performance over reading. As Worthen notes, the “marketable skills” of actors generated the “salable commodity” of performance, rather than reifying the authority of the dramatic text, as marketable acting skills often do today (“Shakespearean Performativity” 128). The most effective performances were those that sold the commodity of performance through manipulating the permeable atmosphere of playhouse crowds. Worthen’s assessment of the priorities of the Renaissance stage highlights the paramount importance of “selling” lines through stage “business,” but leaves out the nuances of the dynamic relationship between the sellers (the actors), and the buyers (the audiences). This thesis will explore how actors in the Renaissance and today make performance choices based on cues in the text of a play that manipulate the relationship between audiences and actors.

The relationship between the texts of Shakespeare’s plays and performance convention is a complicated one. The rise of print culture during the Renaissance was significant for the publication of dramatic texts and in creating a wider reading public, and humanist reading practices informed Renaissance self-fashioning, but the availability of printed plays did not replace the popular cultural relationship with the stage. While the texts of these plays, and incredibly sketchy references to performances in historical records, are all that remain of their
original performances today, complete texts of plays were probably not used in rehearsals. Scholars know that, in the Renaissance, repertory companies operated with short rehearsal periods and that an actor would receive only a cue script with his lines and the preceding lines for his cues. An actor would receive all of his lines on one scroll. Plays underwent revision and amendment during the rehearsal process. Playwrights, like Shakespeare, were usually involved in the staging of their own works, amending their plays as the short rehearsal periods were underway (Thompson 322). Considering these conditions, I argue that the deliberately crafted structure of a Renaissance play must have necessarily instructed performers regarding meaning and provided clues toward choices the actors could make onstage. Even with involvement by playwrights, the short period of time an actor had to devise a performance, learn lines, and rehearse was incredibly short—a matter of days, not weeks, or even months, as it is today. The creation of the final product of the play was a reciprocal artistic process between playwright and actor. Renaissance playwrights, aware of these conditions and perhaps also operating under them alongside other actors, must have carefully constructed their dramatic texts in order to maximize an efficient and productive rehearsal process.

Despite the fact that scholars are aware of these rehearsal, composition, and staging practices, there is little knowledge about the actors’ theories or established techniques. Today, however, there are numerous contemporary approaches to Shakespearean performance. The “First Folio” technique, for example, uses exact spellings and punctuations extant in the posthumously printed 1623 First Folio of Shakespeare’s dramatic works and poems to decipher meaning and emphasis in the lines. Other methods of approaching Shakespearean performance rely instead only on structural cues like scansion, lineation, and parts of speech to discover how to emphasize and articulate the lines. The widespread use of these structural approaches to
performance, which rely on textual cues and the grammatical structures of the lines, implies that a piece of Renaissance dramatic text might be treated like a musical score. The meanings of dramatic texts lie inert in print and are activated when performed. Performances highlighting different meanings might simultaneously remain true to the authorial intent and cultural significance to the piece, much as diverse interpretations of the same piece of music might differ slightly, but still execute the same score. Performed interpretations that keep in mind the structure of the dramatic text from a speech, to a scene, to an entire play create meaningfully crafted dramatic artifacts, whether the production highlights one theme or another. Renaissance playwrights would have, for rehearsal and performance conditions, deliberately crafted the structure of their dramatic texts so that there are many poly-vocal strains. Different performances highlighting or missing one strain or another could still do the work of the play.

While playwrights in the Renaissance may have been available for comment on the meanings of their texts, the only way to discern meaning today is to look into the plays themselves and examine the relevant cultural context. One goal of this thesis will be to demonstrate how well trained actors are capable of making performance choices that have resonance with Renaissance practices. Today, hardly any rehearsal process for a Shakespearean production begins completely unaided. Professional productions use texts of plays with glossed vocabulary and keep reference volumes like the Oxford English Dictionary ready at hand. Some production companies employ professional dramaturges or other historians to research for the directors, designers, and actors. Throughout the twentieth century and into the twenty-first, the Royal Shakespeare Company, based in Stratford-upon-Avon in the United Kingdom, has produced lauded and memorable adaptations of Shakespeare. Their master class series Playing Shakespeare, which originally aired on television in 1982, led by former director and co-founder
of the Royal Shakespeare Company John Barton, will help me explore how contemporary performances of Shakespeare do the work of the drama. The nine workshops that made up *Playing Shakespeare* are collected in a volume, *Playing Shakespeare: An Actor’s Guide*. Such lauded actors as Judi Dench, Ben Kingsley, Ian McKellen, Patrick Stewart, Peggy Ashcroft, and others participate in scenes from Shakespeare’s plays while Barton directs. Barton begins his first workshop by explaining that his goal is, through exploring scenes, to “concentrate on finding out how Shakespeare’s text works.” In the same breath, Barton states his belief that “in Elizabethan theater the actors knew how to use and interpret the hidden direction Shakespeare himself provided in his verse and in his prose” (4 emph. original). These “hidden direction[s]” are clues in the structure of the play, and cultural context surrounding the play, that may aide actors and directors in interpreting how an actor ought to deliver a line. The exercises Barton undertakes with the actors over the course of these workshops demonstrate attention to emphasis, grammar, word choice, and cultural contexts to order to explicate meaningful performance. Barton’s work illustrates how different actors activate the text differently; different meanings are produced for different performance situations.

An early exercise Barton directs involves Ian McKellen, David Suchet, and Ben Kingsley articulating the opening lines from *Merchant of Venice* a variety of ways, using the “hidden direction” in the text. Barton calls upon McKellen to articulate Antonio’s opening line, “In sooth, I know not why I am so sad,” with a variety of intentions in mind. McKellen performs Antonio’s opening line “sadly,” “humorously,” with the intention of “avoid[ing] explaining [him]self,” “mak[ing] light” of the sadness, and attempting to put an end to the conversation. Barton instructs Suchet and Kingsley to perform their lines as Salanio and Salerio with equally diverse intentions. After a few iterations, Barton concludes that the whole opening dialogue has
become a “lively, balanced mixture, heightened, yet very real” (24 emph. mine). The meanings of Antonio’s, Salanio’s, and Salerio’s lines were conveyed, in the sense that the audience could make intelligible sense of them, but moreover the lines were “lively, balanced,” and poetic. Antonio’s opening line about his sadness, which I will concentrate on by way of example, with the intentions McKellen used by interpreting the text behind them, had a sense of being real. Antonio articulates profound ambivalence about his sadness to Salanio and Salerio. Whether Antonio actually does know why he is “so sad,” he demonstrates ambivalence about those feelings. Barton’s assessment of the verisimilitude speaks to how the audience of McKellen’s performance shared in the ambivalence Antonio expresses regarding his sadness. McKellen conveyed real ambivalence about sadness to the audience. “Antonio” cannot feel sadness, however. To describe Antonio as having any feelings problematically implies that the fictional Antonio of Merchant of Venice is an extra-textual subject capable of varied emotions. On the contrary, “Antonio” is not a person, but is only represented by a series of lines. That which we call “the character Antonio” is only a scroll of lines and cue lines. The Renaissance did not use the word character to describe this role, and referred to playing a role as “personation.” As a subject capable of feelings and emotions, Ian McKellen does not share Antonio’s given circumstances in Merchant of Venice. While empathy for Antonio’s situation is necessary for McKellen’s performance, McKellen does not, and cannot, feel what Antonio feels. McKellen communicates this ambivalence about sadness by performing actions in conjunction with words that demonstrate it. Even though “Antonio” is not capable of feeling ambivalence because he is not an extra-textual subject, the ambivalence about sadness that is transmitted by McKellen’s performance is, as Barton puts it, “real.”
Instead of feelings, what is transmitted between actor and audience can most closely be described as being affect. Silvan Tomkins, in his landmark, four-volume collection *Affect Imagery Consciousness* (1962, 1963, 1991, 1992), outlined nine innate affects in human psychology: interest-excitement, enjoyment-joy, surprise-startle, fear-terror, distress-anguish, anger-rage, disgust, dismell, and shame-humiliation (Kelly 7). Interest-excitement and enjoyment-joy are positive affects, surprise-startle is a neutral affect; fear-terror, distress-anguish, anger-rage, disgust, dismell, and shame-humiliation are all negative affects. Affects differ from “feelings” in that affects are universal, while feelings are unique to situational contexts. Antonio’s psychological condition (his “feeling”) is called “sad[ness],” but to communicate the intentions of Antonio’s line, Ian McKellen performs a recognizable affect. If his intention, as in Barton’s exercise, is to encourage Salanio and Salerio to stop inquiring regarding his sadness, he might perform the affect of shame. If McKellen’s intention is to communicate genuine perplexity and a desire to engage actively in pursuing the root cause of the feeling of sadness, McKellen might perform the affect of surprise. While these affects are called “surprise” or “shame,” the affects are more basic and universal than the feelings that accompany shame or surprise. McKellen performs surprise to communicate a desire to pursue the cause of sadness. This desire has specific roots in the given circumstances of *The Merchant of Venice*. The affects, however, are universal. To perform the affects, McKellen need not feel sadness, the interior condition of feeling referred to in Antonio’s line, himself. To perform the intention, he only needs to communicate a corresponding affect.

Silvan Tomkins’s early work on affect theory focused on how affect manifests on individual’s faces and is visible through gesture. Teresa Brennan’s conception of the transmission of affect between persons is outlined in her 2004 posthumously published *The*
Transmission of Affect. Brennan’s treatment of affect is most useful for explicating how plays create meaning through reciprocal, visceral and neurological engagement by audiences and performer. When McKellen performs the “real” ambivalence about sadness, a transmission of whatever affect he performs goes from him to the other actors in his scene, as well as to director John Barton, and to the small studio audience present for his performance. McKellen’s affect is in the atmosphere. Teresa Brennan reminds her readers that most people have, “at least once, walked into a room and ‘felt the atmosphere’” (1). Brennan posits that, when affects are transmitted, that palpable “‘atmosphere’ or the environment literally gets into [an] individual” who enters the environment (1). Brennan’s ideas about environments entering individuals through the transmission of affect represent a turning point in affect theory, and in psychoanalytic theory generally, because of the perception by contemporary western culture that “emotions and energies are naturally contained, going no farther than the skin” (2). The post-Enlightenment celebration of the individual causes Western humanists to disregard how individuals might be emotionally and affectively permeable. Early moderns, however, lacked this notion of discrete individuality. Renaissance humanism was only starting to create individualized subjectivity during Shakespeare’s career. Not only in the playhouse, but also generally, early moderns understood affect to be freely transmittable between persons. As Brennan puts it, in “other times” there “have been ... different, more permeable, ways of being”¹ (11). Brennan notes how Montaigne observed the phenomenon of energy transfer from an old person to a young: “an old rich man would find his energy enhanced while the younger man

¹ Reinforcing this permeability, Allison P. Hobgood, in her essay “Feeling Fear in Macbeth,” notes how early moderns conceived of contagious disease as being transmitted by merely the fear of the disease (32-33).
(Montaigne himself) in his company would find his energy depleted” (16). Brennan’s work on the transmission of affect posits that this transmission is still effective today.

Renaissance playwright Thomas Dekker, in his parodic “How a Gallant Ought to Behave in the Playhouse,” describes how the crowded playhouse was full of close, mingling bodies. (Dekker 60). Brennan explains how affects transfer in this type of environment freely. This transmission of affect was, and is, based not only on visual and aural cues demonstrating affects but also because people “imbibe each other via smell,” which, along with other “forms of neuronal communication” does not respect the boundaries modern psychology enforces between persons (Brennan 10). Renaissance playhouses were sites of intense and intentional affective transmission. A performance full of “real” transmissions such as Ian McKellen’s performance of Antonio creates a world of affective engagement. Lauren Berlant, describing engaging public spaces like the playhouse, explains that intimate public spaces “are affective insofar as they … magnetize optimism about living and being connected to strangers in a kind of nebulous communitas” (xi). Berlant’s description of intimate public spaces as “optimis[tic]” speaks to the high levels of energy flowing between individuals. As described above, Shakespeare begins Henry V with encouragement to viscerally respond to rousing personations of monarchy. The Merchant of Venice opens with an opportunity for the performer playing Antonio to perform affect. As I will discuss in the first chapter of this thesis, Shakespeare’s Richard III begins with affective engagement on the part of the title character. Encountering this energetic atmosphere hooks the audience and hails them into the “nebulous communitas” of the playhouse. It is clear that this communitas was powerful in the playhouses, since the breakdown of social barriers and energetic transmission was precisely what Puritan anti-theatricalists objected to in dramas. In 1597 the Lord Mayor of London wrote to the Queen’s Privy Council denouncing the “great
inconvenience” of drama. The Lord Mayor’s letter objects to “lewd and ungodly practices” that take place in theaters, and to how theaters are “ordinary places for vagrant persons, masterless men, thieves, horse-stealers, whoremongers, cozeners, coney-catchers, contrivers of treason,” and other “dangerous persons” who mingle with “her Majesty’s people” to the detriment of the latter law-abiding citizens. Philip Stubbes’s *Anatomie of Abuses* famously derides the theater for being places of “bawdry” where one could learn “good examples” but also “falsehood” (qtd. in Evans 6-11).

In addition to conceiving of the individual as more permeable, Renaissance performance conventions lent themselves to biosocial and neurological transmission. Outdoor, daylight performances at theaters like Shakespeare’s Globe Theater gave audience members the opportunity to interact more viscerally with each other and with the actors onstage. Instead of sitting in dark theaters as is the case during many productions today, audiences at the Globe could see, hear, feel, and smell each other and the actors, who in turn could see, hear, and, potentially, even feel the audience. Because they were the recipients of so much reciprocal sensory input, the audiences of Renaissance drama were more of a focal point than audiences are today. Western culture today is primarily visual, but Renaissance audiences were more attuned to listen for aural cues than we are. While the audiences could not always see what was happening onstage, or see the rest of the audience, they could hear, feel, or smell what occurred onstage, as well as hear, feel, and smell the other audience members. In order to be performed in this affective atmosphere, texts like *The Merchant of Venice* would have been encoded so as to include latent opportunities for affective performance like the one McKellen gave. This encoding demonstrates the priority that affect held in the work of the play. Actors activate these encoded affective clues by empathizing with the affects suggested by the lines of the part. As
McKellen’s execution of Antonio’s opening lines from *Merchant of Venice* suggests, the most “real” performances—the most engaging and exciting ones—are the ones that best transmit affect.

This thesis will address how Shakespeare’s plays present opportunities for performers to seize upon the transmission of affect. Both in the Renaissance and today, actors can activate affective cues latent in dramatic text and transmit affect in order to do, as Barton terms it, the “work” of the play. Activating these cues depends, as Barton’s exercise above illustrates, on understanding and committing to the intentions evident in the lines of a given role. This thesis bridging disciplinary boundaries of theater, performance studies, literary and cultural studies, and critical theory, will examine relationships between audiences and performers to uncover the ways in which performance on audience’s “imaginary forces work[s]” and how, reciprocally, audiences “deck … kings” with their “thoughts.”

My first chapter will examine the mimetic and non-mimetic modes of performance in medieval English drama as these modes inform performance practices in the Renaissance. While there is often thought to be a sharp contrast between medieval drama and Renaissance drama, Shakespeare’s plays demonstrate how vestiges of performance conventions solidified throughout the Middle Ages were still relevant to the engagements between audiences and performers in the Renaissance. To illustrate how Shakespeare employed theatrical tradition toward affective engagement, I will draw upon the character of Richard Gloucester of *3 Henry VI* and *Richard III*.

In the second chapter, I will turn to *Hamlet* to examine Shakespeare’s treatment of representation and demonstrate Shakespeare’s validation of what I call the “non-mimetic” onstage. Throughout the play, Prince Hamlet struggles with imperfect representation, and with the impossibility of perfect verisimilitude. Encountering a group of travelling players who arrive
at Elsinore, Hamlet’s concerns turn to stage representations. Shakespeare’s treatment of performance in *Hamlet* demonstrates that the playwright values presentational narrative modes over imitative representational ones. Two contrasting contemporary adaptations of *Hamlet* for the screen provide examples of the differences between a mimetic *Hamlet* and a non-mimetic *Hamlet*. Gregory Doran’s 2009 film is based on the stage production he directed in 2008 for the Royal Shakespeare Company. Doran’s film demonstrates a distinct lack of imitative mimesis, relying instead on presentation and direct narrative modes. By comparison, Kenneth Branagh’s 1996 film, famous for being uncut and conflating different Quarto and Folio texts of *Hamlet*, is distinctly mimetic. Branagh’s direction, casting choices, and performance all reference what W.B. Worthen has termed the archive of performance. This mimetic engagement in performance, I argue, is only possible through the medium of film.

In the final chapter, I will examine how *Twelfth Night* and *As You Like It* are hyper-aware of the power of affective transmission. While extending a larger comment about the power of stage performance, *As You Like It* and *Twelfth Night* at every point remind their audiences that what they are watching is fiction. These plays tell us much about Shakespeare’s own anxieties about audience empathy, particularly the way they ask the audience to think about how characters engage different empathetic responses.

The ultimate goal of this thesis is to dispel misconceptions about the authority, authenticity, and quality of performance. I hope to make room for scholarly conversation amongst the fields of Renaissance studies, literary and cultural studies, and theater and performance studies that will lead to fruitful adaptive and interpretive work.
Chapter One: “In a trice, like to the old Vice”: Contexts for the Transmission of Affect in the Playhouse

“A play’s a briefe epitome of time,
Where man my see his vertue or his crime,
Lay’d open, either to their vice’s shame,
Or to their vertue’s memorable fame.”
— John Taylor, “To my approved and good friend M. Thomas Heywood” (Apology for Actors)

Allison P. Hobgood describes Renaissance plays in performance as “dangerous endeavor[s].” The performance of Macbeth, for example, is “an affective encounter … characterized by playgoers’ perverse participation in the dangerous transmission of fear from stage to player” (29-30). That early modern audiences responded to plays not merely intellectually, but also “with their hearts, hands, viscera, hair and skin,” implies that early moderns associated the imaginative worlds presented by staged drama more closely with the body than we do today (Craik and Pollard 3). Imaginative engagement with drama could have real, visceral effects on audience members. Playgoing in the Renaissance was “not only visual and auditory,” but “also tactile, gustatory, and even sometimes olfactory” (6-8). Classical texts like Aristotle’s Poetics describe how theater should bring audiences to catharsis, and elicit pity and fear. Tragedy, Aristotle wrote, generates “pleasure (hedone) which comes from feeling pity and fear” (Aristotle qtd. in Craik and Pollard 10). Renaissance thinkers interpreted Aristotle’s charges for drama and poetry and reappropriated his charges toward purgation into more “hostile” and violent processes (10). The Renaissance also expanded Aristotle’s assessment to include comedy, which could therapeutically purge melancholy emotions, which the early moderns understood as manifesting themselves through humors in the body (11). These

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2 Feste, Twelfth Night (4.2.115).
emotional responses were not confined to the minds and hearts of early modern playgoers; their emotional, humoral responses manifested themselves bodily.

In her 2004 *The Transmission of Affect*, Teresa Brennan describes how the “entainment” produced by social interaction that transmits affect can occur simply by watching gestures and movements of others, but also occurs when individuals “imbibe each other” through more invisible neurological processes like smell (10). The Renaissance playhouse was a crowded and busy atmosphere full of “biosocial noises” and noxious “shared smells,” an atmosphere that infected audiences and transmitted this infection between and among audience members (Soule 128). Renaissance playwrights characterized the playhouse as a site where individuals found themselves at their most “permeable,” as it were, and where affects transferred freely. The Renaissance playwright Thomas Dekker’s parodic essay “How a gallant should behave himself in a play-house” famously describes the lively interaction between the audience and the actors. His account confirms these invasive biosocial conditions, describing the boxes as being full of a “conspiracy of waiting women and gentlemen-ushers [who] sweat together” (60). The Lord Mayor of London’s 1597 letter to Queen Elizabeth’s Privy Council disparaging theater lamented the risk of infection in the playhouse due to proximity of bodies, since, during outbreaks of disease, “many, having sores and yet not heart-sick, take occasion hereby to walk abroad and to recreate themselves by hearing a play” (qtd. in Evans 6). These disease-ridden theater patrons expose others to the risk of disease and would often “miscarry,” or die from the illnesses contracted in the playhouse.

The minds and hearts of early modern audiences were as susceptible to infection as their bodies. Renaissance playwright Thomas Heywood’s *Apology for Actors*, considered among scholars to be “the most balanced account” of the relationship between the page and the stage
from any of Shakespeare’s contemporaries, confirms how susceptible audiences were to what they saw onstage (Weimann and Bruster 23). Heywood relates an instance in which the Earl of Sussex players were “presenting a woman who … mischieuously and secretly murdered her husband,” during which performance “a townes-woman … suddenly skritched and cryd out Oh my husband, my husband! I see the ghost of my husband fiercely threatning and meanacing me.” This guilty woman told those present “that seuen yeares ago, she … had poisoned her husband, whose fearefull image personated it selfe in the shape of that ghost” (Heywood qtd. in Hobgood 40). By Heywood’s account, the performance forced her to admit her guilt. Heywood’s Apology for Actors also describes the goals of theater as articulated by Melpomene the Muse, who prioritizes audience engagement, saying she “held in awe the tyrants of the world, / and played their lives in publicke theaters, / Making them feare to sinne” (17). Melpomene describes how she has “showed Pryde his picture on a stage.” The members of the audience of this drama, regardless of station, are hailed into the action onstage and affected by the presentation.

In order to demonstrate how conventions of Renaissance drama transmitted affect viscerally, and not simply mimetically, this chapter will trace how English drama throughout the Middle Ages developed affective convention. The affective nature of Renaissance drama did not spontaneously erupt from the genius of Renaissance playwrights. Although Renaissance authors like William Shakespeare are often characterized as better dramatists than their medieval predecessors, the affective conventions employed by early modern playwrights were inherited from medieval drama. James Burbage’s Theatre, the first dedicated urban playhouse, was built just outside the City of London in 1576. In twentieth-century scholarly circles, the shift from medieval to Renaissance drama was long marked by the building of The Theatre, and scholars ascribed significant changes in performance practices to this event. However, the fact that many
of Shakespeare’s plays internalize performance practices reminiscent of medieval theater and maintain awareness of audience consistent with medieval drama implies that the transition was more fluid. Understanding the vestiges of medieval performance practices upon which Shakespeare drew is crucial to understanding how affect functions in the performance of Shakespeare’s plays.

During the course of the Middle Ages, theatre was increasingly *mimetic*, imitative, and representational, and less *diegetic*, or narrative based. The challenge approaching the difference between mimetic and non-mimetic modes in drama is that there exists in contemporary scholarship some dispute over the terms themselves. Jonathan Holmes and Adrian Streete, in their introduction to the volume *Refiguring Mimesis: Representation in Early Modern Literature*, helpfully trace uses and implications of mimesis throughout Western thought. In quoting Robert Weimann, Holmes and Streete convincingly assert that “[i]f mimesis is to be used as a ‘catch-all’ term, encompassing notions as diverse as ‘imitation’ and ‘representation,’ then we also need a sharper historical and critical awareness of the interconnecting valence of these terms” (2). The use of the term “mimesis” in scholarship has also long been overshadowed by Eric Auerbach’s *Mimesis: Representation of Reality in Western Literature* (1946), which many essays in Holmes and Streete’s collection cite. Mimesis, in short, cannot simply be something that “stands for an epistemologically transparent ‘reflection of reality’” (Holmes and Streete 3).

Sir Philip Sidney, in his *Defence of Poesy*, written around 1579, describes mimesis as, according to Aristotle’s terms, “the art of imitation … a representing, counterfeiting, or figuring-forth” and explains that mimesis is characterized by “a speaking picture” with the aim “to teach and delight” (Sidney qtd. in Holmes and Streete 3). Sidney’s understanding of “mimesis” “represents a conceptual hybridity that accounts for a variety of representational practices,” but is...
largely iconic (Holmes and Streete 4). Sidney thinks of mimesis as pictorial, and therefore also thinks all staged drama is pictorial. Since the publication of Sidney’s *Defence of Poesy*, the terms “mimesis,” “imitation,” “representation,” and sometimes “invention” have been used basically interchangeably. Some contemporary scholars use the term “mimesis” and related terms to describe all stage action. However, the implications of “mimesis” and the above related terms are that staged actions are static pictures, as in Sir Philip Sidney’s usage. I am more interested in diegetic, narrative-based aspects of theatrical performance, however, the action of which, while not mimetic or purely imitative, do generate meaning. Scholars still describe moments in dramatic narrative as “mimetic,” using the adjective imprecisely to mean many things. Lorna Hutson, for example, refers to *all* staged action as “mimetic,” while Lesley Wade Soule employs the term “anti-mimesis” to describe specifically interactive performance and distinguish it from iconic, tableaux-based performance. For this reason, readers must understand that a binary between what is “mimetic” and what is “non-mimetic” cannot effectively be set up. Throughout this thesis, when I refer to the “mimetic,” my terminology connotes synonyms from Sidney’s Aristotelianism. When I refer to the “non-mimetic,” I am referring to action onstage that disrupts a modern audience’s expectation for narrative; a performer narrating the action to the audience, for example, directly talking to the audience, or more subtly breaking down what we know today as the “fourth wall.” Representational, mimetic performances are much closer to what we recognize as performance conventions for the screen. Medieval drama employed non-mimetic forms to engage audiences and transmit affect; from this medieval drama, Renaissance playwrights inherited non-mimetic conventions. While Renaissance playwrights often blended these conventions with mimetic ones, non-mimetic engagements remained meaningful.
Medieval and Renaissance theater inherited fascination with non-mimetic modes of drama from religious ritual. Scholarship broadly defines medieval drama as having two distinct genres: liturgical and secular. All English drama before the Tudor period, however, was deeply enmeshed in religious concerns and borrowed from liturgical ritual practices. The earliest English liturgical drama was performed in churches by monks and had a solely monastic audience. These plays seem to have lacked a mandate to instruct on theological teaching but rather functioned to reify their audience’s existing beliefs in the sacred (Dillon 9).³ The esoteric audiences of the earliest liturgical dramas saw themselves as hailed by the drama they watched not as pupils but as participants in the drama. That drama incorporates reciprocally reified belief foregrounds the affective engagements of Renaissance playhouse audiences. Rather than creating knowledge in the audience subjects (the neoclassic humanist charge to instruct) these early liturgical dramas reinforced what we might call existing affects. In the Renaissance, the visceral, affective engagement of plays was reciprocally performed by all participants in the drama: audiences and actors. Early liturgical plays reinforced the awe of God, reverence, or piety in their audiences through reciprocal confirmation of the presence of these numerous affects. This transmission is similar to the way in which the specific affect of guilt was mutually confirmed by transference of guilt from stage to audience in the case of the murderess Thomas Heywood describes above.

The first mystery play, a form of drama not confined to monasteries or churches, the Corpus Christi cycle, is mentioned in English records as early as 1376. Mystery plays were

³ Jeanette Dillon posits that this early English liturgical drama had little to do with medieval mystery plays, but audience behavior seems to have become commonplace to the extent that reciprocal confirmation of belief carried over into the later medieval forms of drama: mystery cycles and morality plays (9).
popular in England from the fourteenth into the sixteenth century. To commemorate liturgical holidays, mystery cycles were performed in towns by local guilds. Extant mystery play cycles remain today, named after the locales in which they were performed, such as the Towneley Cycle, the York Cycle, the Wakefield Cycle, and so on. These cycles were performed on pageant wagons that not only served as stages but also carried the actors and their limited costumes, props, and scenery around the town. Meg Twycross elaborates on the construction of pageant wagons: “Our clearest description of one is a laconic pair of items in an inventory of ‘particulars apparynyng to the Company of the Grocers’ of Norwich in 1565: ‘A Pageant, that is to saye, a howse of waynskott [a sheet of wood much like modern-day plywood] paynted and buylded on a carte with fowre whels ... A square topp to sett over the sayd howse [sic]’” (46). The upstage space of a pageant wagon was covered by a roof and included set pieces. This upstage space is where tableaux were enacted. In the conjectural reconstruction

![Figure 1. A reconstruction of an English pageant wagon and ground plan. Wickham, Glynne. Early English Stages 1300-1660. London: Routledge, 1959. Print.](image)
 pictured in Figure 1, this upstage space is referred to as the “Position of Loca.” Robert Weimann has termed this space the locus. Lesley Wade Soule summarizes Weimann’s assertions about locus space, explaining that this area of the stage was “associated with mimesis and its ideological authority” (120). In that pictures, tableaux, simply are, and do not perform action, this upstage space was reminiscent of the earliest liturgical drama and to the Christian liturgy itself, which is based around the “mystery” of the Eucharist.

The downstage space of a pageant wagon, the platea, on the other hand, was a more active space. The platea was “associated with the actor” and gave greater interpretive authority to the performer (Soule 120). In platea space, the actor was closer to the audience, and had more freedom to interact with spectators. Mystery cycles, as they were performed in celebration of liturgical holidays, incorporated spiritual characters including God, devils, angels, and biblical characters. Characters who represented ideological authority performed mostly upstage, while transgressive characters like devils performed in the downstage platea space. On pageant holidays not only did the pageant wagons move throughout the town, but audiences also moved freely while plays were being performed. To maintain the attention of crowds, all actors needed to be loud and forceful. To perform outdoors to itinerant crowds, actors needed to be “sufficiant in personne and Connyng [sic],” which Meg Teycross glosses as referring to requisite “physical presence and skill,” whereas “insufficiany [sic] personnes either in Connyng voice or personne” were to be avoided (43). Twycross further explains how the structure of the mystery plays of medieval pageant drama encouraged performers to project their voices and also helped the audience follow the drama (43-44). She reminds us that the audiens, the Latin root word for “audience,” means “listening” and that the “audience [of medieval drama] are constantly
reminded that they are to listen actively” (55). Performances of all kinds on the pageant wagon stages were engaging to audiences, but *platea*-based performances particularly so.

Transgressive figures like devils that performed on *platea* space were closer to the audience and they were more engaging than their upstage counterparts by design. The breach of mimesis by devils and other transgressive characters marked a shift in theatricality, since liturgically reminiscent *locus* performance simply presented inert tableaux and *platea* performance was active. Anti-mimetic characters explicated the narratives of plays, as prologues or as a chorus might do, and improvised their parts with audience participation. By breaking from imitative conventions employed by *locus*-bound characters, devils “asserted that they were not written characters, but ritual performative presences.” Their presences “declared affinity with the audience” by demonstrating that they, like the audience, “were at home in the non-mimetic world [of] anonymous spectators.” The non-mimetic, anonymous spectators were encouraged to reciprocate the devils’ engagements since “[t]he power of their numbers and energy would have established with the audience a kind of brute *communitas*, inciting the spectators to mob rather than audience behavior, to an assertion of ritual power against the authority of civic morality” (87). The ritual performative presences of these devils descended through dramatic tropes to find resonance in Renaissance figures. That these devils and similar tropes from the medieval period incited audiences in “ritual power” against “civic morality” confirms the connection between developing stage practices and ritually sanctioned Carnival, a relationship which I will discuss below.

Analogous to the devils of mystery plays, Vice characters of morality plays transgressed playing space and affected the audience. While mystery plays were popular in smaller towns, morality plays were performed in the court and in schools. Morality plays were not performed in
lengthy cycles, as mystery plays were, but rather one at a time, indoors, to commemorate holidays and celebrations. Instead of biblical-historical figures, characters of morality plays were tropes intended to stand in for God, man, spiritual bodies, virtues, and vices. Their roles were signified by their names: God, Everyman, Death, Knowledge, Justice, Deceit, and so on. Figures like God and Everyman, generally speaking, interacted with each other mimetically, remaining in upstage space, equivalent to the *locus* characters of pageant wagons. Figures representing vices and virtues, however, engaged with the audience like *platea*-inhabiting characters. Vices are emblematic and universal, whereas sins are contextual, just as affects are universal while feelings are contextual. Teresa Brennan describes how negative affects are “identical” to vices, as conceived of in theology. Vice characters only act with any sort of autonomy to prove that they are analogs to their names. Brennan’s list of negative affects including “pride, sloth, envy, lust, anger, gluttony, [and] avarice” could easily be mistaken for an excerpt from the *dramatis personae* of a morality play (21).

Both characters impersonating vices, Vice characters, and characters impersonating virtues, Virtue characters, engaged with the audience, but Vices were more playful. Although they were “morally abhorrent figure[s],” the “infectious buoyancy” of Vice characters made Vices more seductive than their virtuous counterparts (Weimann and Bruster 38). As Meg Twycross puts it, “Virtue is no fun: vice is” (73). Vice characters “enlisted [the audience] in the debate between good and evil” and asked the audience to “take sides” with either Vice, who tempts Everyman protagonists, or Virtue, who attempts to save their souls (Belsey 23). The straightforward mission of Vice characters was to cajole Christian protagonists and manipulate the sentiments of the audience. Vice characters’ “nimble corporeality” affected not only performance conventions, but “affect[ed] the performed” (Weimann and Bruster 38). The
affective nature of the Vice informed conventions of playwriting, and more than any contemporary figure, “Shakespeare seized early on the old-fashioned convention and adapted the traditional timelessness of ritual and eccentricity” to conventions of “temporality” and “particularity” that were developing in the Renaissance (47). Just as the Vice had broken conventions of mimesis and instruction in favor of affective engagement, these affective performances challenged Aristotelian unities of time, place, action, and form. Neoclassical humanists opposed these changes in theater even long after Shakespeare lived. John Dryden, for example, complained in his An Essay of Dramatick Poesie that “the Historical Playes [sic] of Shakespeare” “crampt” the lifespans and reigns of kings “into a representation of two hours and a half,” resulting in not an imitation of “Nature” but instead a drawing of nature “in miniature … in little … through the wrong end of a Perspective,” resulting in a play “infinitely more imperfect then [sic] … life” rendering the play “ridiculous” (21). Characters reminiscent of Vice on Shakespeare’s stage act as conduits between the audience and the action. The game Vice characters play with the audience is one in which the audience is “more than once invited to see through, and thus participate in” (Weimann and Bruster 48).

The decades leading up to Shakespeare’s career, immediately after the opening of The Theatre and The Curtain outside of London, must have been a time when performance conventions were being challenged by and adapted for these playhouses. Importantly, it is, for scholars, also a period where “the extremely small number of extant texts sits uneasily with the widespread flourishing of performance practices” (Weimann and Bruster 42). This flourishing of performance demonstrates how performance practices influenced the conception of drama as a whole.
To further contextualize how drama was conceived of, I will trace the structure of argument in plays throughout the Middle Ages, into the Renaissance. *The Castle of Perseverance*, the oldest known vernacular play, a morality from the fifteenth century, includes a protagonist, Mankind, with whom the audience is meant to identify (Belsey 22). The relationship between the audience and the performers in *The Castle of Perseverance* works to engage the audience in the battle for Mankind’s soul, rather than position them as observers of his struggle. Vices and Virtues battle onstage for Mankind’s soul. Mankind is not a character, in the modern sense, but a “configuration of fragments,” in the same way that the Vice and Virtue characters in conflict over Mankind are emblematic. *The Castle of Perseverance*, however, “requires spectators to make choices” as if the fragments of Mankind were “unified agents of their own actions” (23). The audience can make intelligible sense out of the pattern of personation, but the fragmented Vices and Virtues are never treated as individuals having subjectivity. However, the play “offers the audience a coherent pattern of emblematic meanings defining their disunity” and simultaneously “provides a single and unified position from which that pattern is intelligible” (23). Audience members are brought into the world of *The Castle of Perseverance* by being asked to participate in the battle over Mankind’s soul by making choices supported by the arguments furthered by the parts—Virtues and Vice—but not by conceiving of these figures as discrete subjects.

The battle over Mankind’s soul is conducted by argument between the Vices, Virtues, and the fractured parts of Mankind. The audience is called upon to actively choose Vice or Virtue. Recently, Lorna Hutson has suggested that medieval changes to legal proceedings molded interpretive frameworks that playwrights employed to structure the flow of time and which gave “liveliness and power” to stage action (2). Judicial *narratio* (narration), as Hutson
describes, is a mode of engagement in courtroom proceedings that developed during the Middle Ages and involves presenting evidence to support a case—a paradigm for legal practices we still use today. These evidence-based practices informed the argument of medieval drama. Evidentiary proceedings differ from liturgical proceedings, which governed the way medieval subjects thought of truth, belief, and representation. Catholic liturgy values the mystery of transubstantiation, for example. The performance of Christianity, “sacramental drama,” is not based on evidence but rather on faith (5). The words of the mass declare that “This is [Christ’s] body,” and require no support of evidence for belief in the mystery. During the course of the development of legal practices, witnesses and laypeople were increasingly involved in determining the outcomes of cases based on evidence presented during the trial. Dramatic conventions reflected this, as plays depended on the affective engagement to work, since playwrights like Shakespeare “absorbed … an awareness of underlying legal and forensic quality of narratio” (131). The narratio of the courtroom either presented a compelling case or it did not. Shakespeare seems to have absorbed an awareness of evidentiary practices in drama, since Hamlet, whose lines consider deeply what effective stage presence looks like, as I will discuss in the next chapter, repeatedly refers to the plot of a play as its “argument” (2.2.354, 3.2.148, 242).

The imitatio (imitation) of liturgical practices requires no reciprocal confirmation. Imitatio simply is, like the locus tableaux of pageant wagons. Because narratio is non-mimetic it is often also non-linear. As a result, in the theater, “logical progression of plot … was not taken for granted” by late medieval audiences (107). That, for example, The World and the Child, a later

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morality play than *The Castle of Perseverance*, features a protagonist who ages significantly over the course of the short drama and whose name frequently changes, would not have fazed the early sixteenth century audiences for which it was performed. From the staging of *The Castle of Perseverance* to the staging of *The World and the Child*, the figure of the empathetic protagonist and the Vices and Virtues became more fractured, as opposed to developing stronger subject centers. As the Tudor period went on, audiences recognized fragmented figures as presenting evidence that built toward the argument of the play. Catherine Belsey notes that these figures are fragmented; Lorna Hutson notes that evidence-based proceedings molded the way audiences responded to plot structures. It is my goal to demonstrate, in the rest of this chapter, that the confluence of these developing conventions in medieval theater contributed to the way in which Renaissance drama thoroughly engaged audiences and performed transmission of affect on them. Audiences recognized these fragmented characters as echoes of liturgical history. What interests me is the contrary emotions these characters elicited. This odd position both in and outside the diegetic scene of the play serves as an example of the affective work of the play, demanding that the audience be a part of the on-going narrative, but also judge their distance relative to it.

While lack of unified time, place, and action would not have been confusing to Renaissance audiences, other, more nuanced confusions would have given them pause to consider the affective transmission they were subject to. Scholars often point to Thomas Kyd’s *The Spanish Tragedy* for the earliest example of what can be described the new secular Renaissance drama. William N. West points out how Kyd’s play uses “confusion” to engage its audience. The dumb show that Hieronimo presents, and Hieronimo’s ensuing madness, would have confused and stunned the other characters and in turn the audience. Hieronimo’s insistence on silence, his madness, does more than evoke, as Aristotle described, “pity and fear.” It
transmits confusion to the audience. That the audience simultaneously experiences the stunned “confusion” affected onstage is the work of Kyd’s play since it forces the audience to perform interpretation, hailing them into the reciprocal affect world of *The Spanish Tragedy*. By being part of the world of *The Spanish Tragedy*, the audience is required to subscribe to or dissent from the ideological “argument” of the play. The audience actively interprets. Performing interpretive work meant being a part of the intimacy of the drama. The affective engagement of these new secular plays, descended from the modes of mystery play devils, coupled with the fragmented characterization reminiscent of Vice characters, informed the convention of the Renaissance soliloquy, which also required interpretive work on the part of the audience. While soliloquies are now, in the post-Enlightenment theater, considered reflections of a speaker’s inner self, they are actually, according to Catherine Belsey, “inhuman” utterances (36 emphasis original). Soliloquies do not reflect individual subjectivity despite their frequent use of “I.” Instead, they are “monstrous” (36). Soliloquies listen (*audiens*, they are audience to), respond, and explain to the audience as *narratio* (they narrate). Fragments descended from Vice characters come together to become a soliloquy. The Vice characters, who were previously fragments embodied by multiple players, are now conflated into one figure, whose soliloquy comes to subsume both sides of the moral debate. This marks an historical shift in theater. The arguments of Vice and Virtue characters fade into the tragic hero’s utterance—the soliloquy. In a soliloquy, the speaker’s parts are audience to each other. These fragmented utterances triangulate on the Renaissance stage, hailing the audience, as a third party, into the fragments of

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5 “Affect world” is a term Lauren Berlant employs in her work. Berlant describes public spheres as affect worlds, spheres that include the optimism and affect of many individuals. See: *The Female Complaint: The Unfinished Business of Sentimentality in American Culture* and *Cruel Optimism* (2011).
soliloquy. While we today think of soliloquies as *producing* subjects, those who refer to themselves as “I,” it is the subject *of* the utterances, not the subjects uttering, that Renaissance ears would have been attuned to (46-48). Renaissance audiences would have listened for and been open to the production and transmission of affect through these fractured utterances.

Richard Gloucester, of *2 Henry VI*, *3 Henry VI*, and of *Richard III*, for example, is a devilish, Vice-descendent character that speaks to the audience with “forthright but conspiratorial” language from *platea* space (Weimann and Bruster 48). Shakespeare’s Gloucester is an example of how the medieval techniques of dramatic representation structure the complexity of affect foregrounded in the theme of a villainous king attempting to win the support of his subjects. Because the playhouse afforded actors multiple playing areas in the “wooden O” of the Globe, all of which were surrounded by spectators, these performances had a more “lively dialectic” than the limited space of medieval performance (*Henry V* Prologue 13, Soule 120). In order to maintain this dialectic, actors and playwrights had to maintain the audience’s constant meta-awareness that the stage presents fractured, anti-mimetic representation through reinforcing the carnivalesque position of the stage (Soule 120). In the case of officially sanctioned Carnival, the imperfect representation of the performance is obvious to participants and spectators. Carnival consisted of sanctioned periods of transgression and social inversion, as during the period in the liturgical calendar immediately before Lent. Participants in officially sanctioned Carnival would mis-appropriate emblems of social status: kitchenware became

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crowns and barrels became horses, as famously depicted in Pieter Brueghel the Elder’s “The Fight Between Carnival and Lent.” Michael Bristol has called Carnival “a travesty,” because Carnival breaks down the necessary “belief in the authority of symbols and in the capacity of a natural system of ideal social ranks to reveal itself in the temporal world” (“Carnival and Theater” 63-64). The imperfect representation of theater, however, is complicated by ostensible verisimilitude and the tableaux of locus performance. Symbols of authority are believable in the tableaux of the mimetic locus. The physical crown Richard Gloucester kills for, and that the player personating him wears, looks like a real crown. If the actor playing Richard Gloucester stayed in locus space, and mimetically represented the reign of this king, even according to the distorted Tudor myth about the actual King Richard III, the performances would be merely instructional and not transgressive. It would also not be engaging. Such a performance would not do the work of 2 Henry VI and 3 Henry VI or of Richard III; it would not generate the requisite meaning. Instead, Shakespeare employs the tradition of Vice character as a “highly transgressive master of ceremonies, an agent of theatricality who easily crosse[s] the boundary between plot and complot, between representation and showmanship” (Weimann and Bruster 48). As Tudor propaganda, importing the argument of Richard III depends on action.

Affective engagement by characters in platea space takes the social inversion and transgression of theater further than officially sanctioned Carnival. Gloucester’s engagements with other characters and with the audience demonstrate this throughout Richard III, where his utterances self-consciously resemble “the formal Vice, Iniquity” (3.1.81-82). Gloucester’s opening soliloquy reminds the audience that Gloucester does not resemble proper kingship, that he is not “made to court an amorous looking-glass.” In 3 Henry VI, Gloucester outlines his Machiavellian scheme for usurpation with repetitious reference to the literal object of and
figurative position granted by the “crown.” In his third act soliloquy, which outlines his aims to usurp the throne, Gloucester repeats the word “crown” seven different times. Six of these usages are emphasized by being at the end of lines of verse. Gloucester makes more abstract reference to the object by calling his reign “the golden time” he looks for (3 Henry VI 3.2.127). This soliloquy is self-consciously about non-mimetic representation. It demonstrates the fractured parts of Gloucester’s affective argument. He asks and answers questions about himself: “And am I then a man to be beloved? / O monstrous fault, to harbour such a thought!” (164). His questions mount frustration and develop a sense of palpable excitement, both of which the audience is invited to share. Shakespeare’s Globe audience would focus on the mounting tension and affective meta-narrative of Gloucester’s soliloquy, rather than on how his “I”-utterances represent interiority. The scene asks the audience to question Gloucester’s influence on other characters. The irony is that the audience connects with his complaint about his inability to connect with others. The further irony is that Gloucester convinces his audience that he cannot be effective as a leader when it is clear that he is a masterful speaker; he comments on his own inability to represent royalty while winning the audience over. Shakespeare delights in these ironies, and it seems his audience would have delighted in them as well. 3 Henry VI creates palpable excitement in the questions of Gloucester’s use of rhetorical and emotive display.

As Richard III opens, Gloucester reminds the audience that signification and order is already broken. “Winter” has been “[m]ade glorious summer,” and “clouds” are “[i]n the deep bosom of the ocean” (1.1.1-4). Gloucester, while the protagonist of the play, is not a hero but is “determinèd to prove a villain” (30). He promises in this opening soliloquy to first engage the audience with his villainy and subsequently make them complicit in it. In his next soliloquy, the promise to marry Lady Anne sounds like a challenge to all present audiences. Gloucester’s
fractured parts challenge each other to win Lady Anne. The complete transparency with which Gloucester approaches the audience seems to ask the audience to dare him to succeed in the unlikely task. The audience is invited to participate in the stakes of his wooing, even though he explicitly stated that marrying her is the means to his usurping ends. It is easy to imagine the ensuing scene during which Lady Anne and Gloucester shoot barbs across the downstage, *platea* space, while Gloucester’s performance remains conscious of the watching audience. Their short, shared lines of verse heighten the intensity of the scene:

LADY ANNE. And thou unfit for any place but hell.

RICHARD GLOUCESTER. Yes, one place else, if you will hear me name it.

LADY ANNE. Some dungeon.

RICHARD GLOUCESTER. Your bedchamber. (1.1.109-12)

The tension of the moment is made especially clear by the shared foot of meter between Anne’s line ending in “dungeon,” and Gloucester’s beginning in “[y]our.” That Gloucester’s entirely stressed “[y]our bed chamber” overwhelm Anne’s final syllable, “-eon,” would pique the ears of early modern audiences attuned for significant aural cues, even if they could not see the physical interactions between Gloucester and Anne. The audience, whom Gloucester challenged to believe that he could accomplish the wooing of Lady Anne, is, over the course of their conversation, eagerly engaged in discovering whether he is really able to follow through with his promise, and win her. To have engaged the audience, in the case of Gloucester, is to have stirred up positive affects (instead of the negative ones he should inspire, based on his nature). Gloucester not only woos Lady Anne, he also woos the audience. The language of Gloucester’s advances demonstrate cheekiness reminiscent of the Vice character, but to fully convince Lady Anne and the audience, the performer personating Gloucester must also perform affect
supporting his intention. The positive affect of interest-excitement Gloucester displays transmits to Lady Anne and to the audience. It stops Lady Anne from killing Gloucester. It makes the audience feel loyalty to, and excitement for, Gloucester, despite his malice. Loyalty to Gloucester and excitement for Gloucester support the poor representation of kingship and make the audience complicit in his machinations.

Gloucester reinforces that he represents distortion by remarking after his successful winning of Lady Anne that he has “mistake[n]” his “person all this while” (1.3.52) Although he “cannot” see himself this way, Lady Anne now finds Gloucester “to be a marvelous proper man” (54). The audience has shared in Lady Anne’s change of perspective and is now reminded of how they are affectively supporting such a tyrant. By the time Gloucester obtains the physical crown, the audience has been thoroughly complicit in loyalty to someone who is not fit for kingship—a murdering usurper. Gloucester, now King Richard III, has abhorrently transgressed boundaries of representation by garnering support from the audience and furthermore by wearing something that looks just like a real crown, even though he looks nothing like a king should look. No longer is the presentation merely the travesty of Carnival, but it is affective tragedy. Richard Gloucester’s engagement with the audience goes beyond merely hailing them into the affect world of the play. Gloucester invades the audience’s affect world. His soliloquies anachronistically make reference to events, images, and commonplaces relevant to Elizabethan audiences, an affective tactic he shares with other Vice-descendant figures. Anachronism “can pique or quicken ‘a kind of eruption’” of empathetic and affective resonance with spectators (Weimann and Bruster 82). That the plays featuring Richard Gloucester ostensibly depict historical events reinforces the audience’s awareness that such transgression is viable, just as the performance of Vice characters and devils reminds the audience that moral transgression lurks
around every corner. Like the earliest monastic drama, Shakespeare’s goal in employing the
Vice-descendant Gloucester is not to instruct the audience about a historical figure, it is to affect
them via performance. To the end of Tudor propaganda, Renaissance painters distorted portraits
of King Richard III and historians enlarged his deformities and his crimes. Engagement onstage
goes beyond this kind of representation. Rather, the “discursive practice” of Shakespeare’s
Richard Gloucester “finds authority in neither the chronicles nor Thomas More’s portrait of the
ferocious witty tyrant” in occasions where the figure onstage “addresses not the past of stately
history [but] draws on a horizon of ordinary understanding in the present to encode its signs and
images … breaching courtly illusions by mingling laughter with terror” (Weimann and Bruster
49). The terror of Shakespeare’s Gloucester is in the reciprocal acknowledgement of tenuous
social systems that not only preceded early modern audiences during the medieval period but that
these audiences, full of intermingled classes, were still a part of. Featuring characters as
transgressive and affective as Richard Gloucester in spaces of such permeable diversity as the
Globe, playgoing in the Renaissance was a “dangerous endeavor” indeed.
Chapter Two: “I know not ‘seems’”: Hamlet and Representation

“Speak the speech, I pray you, as I pronounced it to you—trippingly on the tongue; but if you mouth it, as many of your players do, I’d as leif the town crier spoke my lines. Nor do not saw the air too much with your hand, thus, but use all gently; for in the very torrent, tempest, and as I may say the whirlwind of your passions, you must acquire and beget a temperance that may give it smoothness … Be not too tame, neither, but let your own discretion be your tutor. Suit the action to the word, the word to the action, with this special observance: that you o’erstep not the very modesty of nature. For anything so overdone is from the purpose of playing, whose end, both at the first and now, was and is to hold, as ’twere the mirror up to nature, to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure.”

— Hamlet to the Players (Hamlet 3.2.1-7, 15-22)

Part of what makes the transmission of affect such a powerful force in theatrical performance is that, as the Chorus describes in the Prologue to Henry V, performances can never approach reality. The charge by the Chorus in that Prologue, that audiences “deck” the kings of the Globe stage with their “thoughts,” implies that what is presented onstage is only a part of the whole Henry V evokes (Prologue 28). Other parts of Henry V occur in the minds, hearts, and visceral responses of the audience. The meaningful interpretive work that the audience does by becoming invested in the presentation becomes a part of the drama itself. While this might seem intuitive for performances in the Renaissance, given the atmosphere of the playhouse and ideas of individual permeability discussed in the last chapter, it might seem as if this effect of transmission is lost in contemporary performance. While the previous chapter outlined how historical contexts, playhouse conditions, and textual cues informed the transmission of affect through performance, much of the rest of this thesis will demonstrate how performers deliberately construct their performances to transmit affect. This chapter will focus on how scenes of performance in Shakespeare suggest methods that actors in Shakespeare’s day would have taken to ensure that their performances were affective. Understanding how actors in the
Renaissance would have constructed their performances will aide in understanding how contemporary performers do the same.

While scholars can piece together information about rehearsal processes, script dispersals, and editing practices in the Renaissance, we know very little about how actors conceived of their roles. Since Shakespeare himself is known to have been a performer as well as a playwright, his own plays offer insight into how he and other actors approached performance. Often, scholarly treatments examining probable acting techniques turn specifically to Hamlet’s advice to the players. If Hamlet’s insistence that the players “suit the action to the word and the word to the action,” connotes Shakespeare’s opinions on performance, then the playwright’s conception of effective theatrical performance insists on mimetic verisimilitude. But this scene merits further consideration. To us, Hamlet’s advice sounds “natural.” He cautions the players against performing meaningless gestures, against over-acting, and tells them to take their cues from “nature.” On the face of it, this advice sounds like the sort of performances we are used to seeing in movies and onstage. However, from various scenes of performance across Shakespeare’s canon, including in Hamlet, it is clear that the “naturalistic” performance we have come to expect, the sort that appears to perfectly imitate life, was not only impossible on the Renaissance stage, it was also ineffective. Hamlet’s advice is “completely at odds” with what Shakespeare would have believed, since a truly effective performance of the role of Prince Hamlet itself is contrary to this very advice (Kiernan 126). It is also completely at odds with Shakespeare’s beliefs about performance because, as this chapter will argue, mimetic verisimilitude is ultimately impossible onstage, and insistence upon mimesis misses out on the affective work of performance.
According to W. B. Worthen, Renaissance actors approached a play not looking into their parts for “detailed representation” of “individualized subjectivity,” but instead looking “for the ease and effect with which [their lines] could be phrased” (“Shakespearean Performativity” 128). Worthen describes how any “line of [stage] business—comic old man or woman, clown, fool, lover, or a tyrant … would take best advantage of the actor’s marketable skills as a performer” (128). Unlike today, where the text is often seen as the most valuable site of meaningful authority, Renaissance theatrical practices privileged the performance over the text. The “marketable skills” of actors generated the “salable commodity” of performance, rather than reinforcing the authority of the dramatic text (128). Renaissance actors rehearsed and phrased their lines to communicate effectively the meaning of the play. The most effective performances were those that sold the commodity of performance through manipulating the permeable biosocial atmosphere of playhouse crowds. Worthen’s assessment of the priorities of the Renaissance stage highlights the paramount importance of “selling” lines through stage “business,” but leaves out the nuances of the dynamic relationship between the sellers—the actors, and the buyers—the audiences. The dynamic exchange between actors and audiences in the work of performance went beyond mimetic representation and dealt also in the transmission of affect.

Transmission of affect engages more of audiences’ minds, hearts, visceral, and gestural reactions, than mimesis does. Because of the tension between presentation and representational practices onstage, many Renaissance dramas consider the nature of representation itself. Hamlet, a play in which “representation is represented at every point,” disrupts notions of social and courtly representation, and stage representation (Drakakis 211). The play ponders the impossibility of representing a subject’s interiority onstage while also commenting on the very
dramatic practices it employs (211). Since early modern theater was “a site where [the culture] interrogated the manifold representational practices used to make sense of a rapidly changing world,” Shakespeare employs scenes of acting and performance across his canon, both well and poorly executed, to interrogate representational practices in the theater (Holmes and Streete 1). Audiences are confronted by what it means to represent life and history onstage and also by how representation works, more broadly, in culture. Shakespeare’s conclusion regarding representational practices seems to indicate that perfect representation is never possible. His plays that consider representational practices conclude by privileging affective economies of narratio over mimetic imatio. Hamlet, specifically, as a site of Shakespeare’s inquiry into representation, highlights affective engagement between performers and audiences. To this end, over the course of this chapter, I will analyze the play’s concerns for representation in the context of the Renaissance, and then turn two recent films of Hamlet, Gregory Doran’s 2009 film, and Kenneth Branagh’s 1996 uncut version, in order to contrast how mimetic or non-mimetic approaches to this play might operate.

Prince Hamlet’s first appearance reminds the audience how attempts to represent interiority fall short. When the Queen implores him to “cast [his] nightly colour off” because his demonstration of grief over the loss of his father “seems so particular,” Hamlet insists that he “know[s] not ‘seems,’” because his interior grief goes beyond what he can demonstrate (1.2.68-76 emph. mine). Hamlet is frustrated that his “inky cloak,” “customary suits of solemn black,” “windy suspiration of forced breath,” “fruitful river in the eye,” and “dejected haviour of visage, / Together with all forms, moods, [and] shows of grief” cannot represent his inner sorrow, which “passeth show” (1.2.77-84). Throughout the play, Hamlet returns to this problem of representing interiority; his soliloquies examine how “[t]o be, or not to be” are both ineffectual, and yet taking
action fails to meet the interiority it represents (3.1.58). His concerns about representation extend to the representation of sovereignty. His uncle Claudius is king, but lacks the requisite interiority to be as “excellent a king” as Hamlet’s father. Claudius does not represent what a king should be; he is “no more like [Hamlet’s] father than [Hamlet] to Hercules” (139, 152-53). After speaking to his father’s ghost, Hamlet’s concerns about interiority and outward representation extend to Queen Gertrude. Considering her “frailty,” Hamlet notes how “one may smile and smile and be a villain” (1.2.146, 1.5.109 emph. mine). Throughout the play, Hamlet’s consistent struggle with interiority and action—with *being or doing*—highlight Shakespeare’s concerns about representation. Ultimately, *Hamlet* suggests that the representation of interiority is ineffectual but affective performance is effective.

Hamlet’s anxieties are turned upon dramatic representation upon the arrival of the Players to Elsinore. Hamlet’s illustration that the goal of theater is “to hold … the mirror up to nature” demonstrates that this advice goes against an understanding that perfect mimetic representation is impossible on the Renaissance stage (3.2.20). To best understand how the description of a “mirror” betrays *poor* representation instead of *perfect* representation, we must understand how mirrors in Renaissance England differed from the smooth, flat ones widely used today. Christian Billings thoroughly explains how, since most mirrors available were convex, “early modern depictions of mirrors *do not* present accurate and true representations of their subjects” (142 emph. mine). Artistic representations of mirrors from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries have obvious distortions, as in Van Eyck’s 1434 *Arnolfini Portrait*, which “requires the artist to *lie* to us” since instead of “the true reflection that would have appeared in a real mirror if one had ever existed,” that is, “the painter’s easel and Van Eyck busily at work” the painting presents “a fictional pair of visitors” to the newlywed couple’s home, as shown in Figure 2 (142-43 emph.
original). Scripture also reinforces the imperfect reflection of mirrors. Saint Paul’s first epistle to the Corinthians states, “For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known” (1 Cor. 13:12).

Saint Paul’s description of a mirror speaks to how mirrors are unreliable. Saint Paul refers to the experience of life on earth as “dark,” showing only “part” of the greater spiritual truth that God sees clearly, the whole, “face to face.”

Shakespeare would have been familiar with this commonplace description of the notorious unreliability of a mirror, and the inability of interiority to be known on earth, and deploys the commonplace in Hamlet’s description of the distortion of the stage.

In the case of the Renaissance stage, instead of accurate representations, as in the paintings, “something a lot more distorted and manipulative is going on” (Billings 142). As Hamlet’s “nightly color” distorts his sorrow, and representation is “rotten” in state of Denmark, through Hamlet, at the levels of persons, courts, and dramas, Shakespeare invites his audience to “contrast this aberrant vision of reality with the normative social and political order that we understand should exist” (1.4.67, Billings 142 emph. mine). The invitation to consider how Hamlet is a distorted picture of the world brings the audience into the play as participants. The audience is encouraged to consider how rotten Denmark is while being entering into the affect world of Hamlet. This invitation to invest in and empathize with a distorted picture is the very
paradox Hamlet encounters when faced with the fictional affect world constructed by the First Player in his Hecuba speech.

In his first conversation about the Players, Hamlet connects the fact that the Players have lost some of their “estimation” at the hands of the “late innovation” of boys’ companies to the fact that King Claudius poorly represents kingship. If the boy players can “carry … away” the battle of wits between them and the adult players, Hamlet resigns that any sort of poor representation is possible. Anything seems possible to Hamlet since his uncle Claudius “is king of Denmark, and those that would make mows at [Claudius] while [King Hamlet] lived [now] give twenty, forty, fifty, an hundred ducats apiece for his picture in little” (2.2.344-50).

Hamlet’s parallel incredulity at the inconstancy of the citizens and courtiers of Denmark and at the fickleness of theater audiences, both in the face of distorted representation, reveals his misunderstanding of how affective performance works. Hamlet wrestles throughout the play with the tension between being and doing. In perhaps his most notable moment of inaction, Hamlet hesitates to kill his uncle because of the state Claudius is in. Hamlet refuses to react to Claudius’s actions because Claudius is praying and, to borrow the Catholic term, in an interior state of grace. He is baffled by Claudius’s ability to outwardly affect citizens and courtiers into giving him what is due a king, while being inwardly unfit for kingship. This anxiety about Claudius’s kingship registers with Hamlet through his anxiety over audience response. Hamlet recognizes that Claudius should not be king because he does not represent kingship, and disbelieves that the boys can “carry it away,” since young boys cannot convincingly, mimetically represent adult characters in plays.

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8 While Hamlet may not think it likely that the boys can “carry it away,” it seems that Shakespeare certainly believed they could, as I will discuss in chapter three.
While “mimesis” appears in other Renaissance texts concerning representation onstage, the term, as Pauline Kiernan notes, is “entirely absent from Shakespeare’s canon” (96). When Shakespeare does employ the term “imitation,” “the activity is derided … the actor is condemned for trying to re-present the actual presence of people” (96). Kiernan points out how the “Pageant of the Nine Worthies” from Love’s Labour’s Lost and the Rude Mechanicals’ play of Pyramus and Thisbe in A Midsummer Night’s Dream both present problematic insistences on mimesis in conjunction with unskillful acting. Berowne and the other knights of Love’s Labour’s Lost interrupt the “Pageant” to insist that none of the actors before them can fully personate the historical figures they pretend to. Upon Costard’s announcement that he “Pompey [is],” Berowne interrupts: “You lie, you are not he”9 (Love’s Labour’s Lost 5.2.539-40). As Kiernan points out, Shakespeare “goes to some length” in order to make this point about performance (103). After Berowne’s complaint about Costard’s lack of verisimilitude, Boyet objects to the shape of Nathaniel’s nose, saying it is “too far right” for Nathaniel to be Alexander—a comment after which Berowne adds that Nathaniel also does not smell like Alexander (Love’s Labour’s Lost 5.2.58-60). Obviously, to have Alexander’s exact physical characteristics and body chemistry is just as impossible for Nathaniel, or any actor, as it is for Costard to be Pompey. Scenes like this, which insist that actors possess impossibly real traits, demonstrate how Shakespeare forces his audience “to recognize [the] fundamental flaws” of mimesis (Kiernan 103). The entirety of the Rude Mechanicals’ rehearsal for Pyramus and Thisbe in A Midsummer Night’s Dream consists of the actors conceiving of their roles in relation to mimesis instead of rehearsing effective (affective) performing. Their prologue and interjections into their play  

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9 Even if Berowne’s line is responding to Costard falling down during his entrance, thus literally lying down instead of being Pompey, as Kiernan suggests might be the case, Berowne’s joke still incorporates stubborn disbelief in anything short of complete mimesis (103).
distance the actors from their parts while also insisting on absolute verisimilitude (of which they are incapable) by reminding the audience that the wall is played by Snout, or that the “lion” is really Snug the Joiner (110-12). I furthermore argue that the fact that the stage audiences to the above scenes—in the case of Love’s Labour’s Lost, the knights, and in the case of A Midsummer Night’s Dream, the Athenians—seem to be laughing at the insistence on mimesis (in the case of LLL, even while perpetuating it) speaks to the fact that the audience at Shakespeare’s Globe found insistence on complete mimesis just as laughable.

Hamlet’s own bad acting serves as a foil for the effective, non-mimetic performance of the First Player. Just as heroic historical figures are represented in the Pageant of the Nine Worthies, the First Player personates the role of Aeneas. Unlike Berowne and Boyet, Hamlet does not complain that the First Player cannot be Aeneas. However, the Prince is stunned at the effect of the performance despite the lack of transformative mimesis. Hamlet’s reflection on the First Player’s performance describe the performance as being incredibly effective, but it does not appear that the First Player went to any lengths to become “like” Aeneas.

While the part of Hamlet has long been a vehicle for stars of the stage and screen to exercise their acting chops, Hamlet himself seems to be a largely ineffective actor. While it is not explicit in the text, given the responses by the players that Hamlet’s performance of the beginning of Aeneas’s Hecuba speech, the scene is an example of poor acting. Hamlet’s inability to be affective comes from his intellectual insistence on mimesis, an insistence that is understandable, since the Prince is a paragon of humanist virtue and is dedicated to humanist reading practices. Hamlet’s description of the play that “was never acted, or, if it was, not above once; for the play … pleased not the million,” betrays an intellectual approach to drama rather than an affective one. He confirms his intellectual, rhetorical bias in his advice to the players.
Advising that they “suit the action to the word, the word to the action,” the Prince privileges first
the word, then allowing an action to match it (3.2.16-17, Weimann and Bruster 101). Hamlet is
concerned with what drama is, rather than what dramatic performance does (that is, until he
reflects on the First Player’s recitation of the Hecuba speech). The play was, as Hamlet
describes, “caviare to the general,” but, to more discerning tastes (including his own),
an excellent play, well digested in the scenes, set down with as
much modesty as cunning ... [with] no matter in the phrase that
might indict the author of affectation, but called it an honest
method, as wholesome as sweet, and by very much more
handsome than fine. (2.2.419-26)

Hamlet’s description of the neoclassical decorum of this play, followed immediately by his
charge that if the play “live in [the First Player’s] memory” he should proceed with the speech of
Aeneas to Dido about Hecuba, is reminiscent of rhetorical practices described by Sir Philip
Sidney in his Defence of Poesy. Hamlet likens performative representation of heroic figures with
neoclassical humanist rhetorical values. Sidney defends the “heroical” as a model for becoming
great through imitation of great “champions” including “Achilles, Cyrus, Aeneas, Turnus,
Tydeus, and Rinaldo.” Imitation of these champions “teacheth and moveth to the most high and
excellent truth.” Sidney asserts,

[I]f anything be already said in the defense of sweet poetry, all
concurrith to the maintaining of the heroical, which is not only a
kind, but the best and most accomplished kind of poetry. For, as
the image of each action stirreth and instructeth the mind, so the
lofty image of such worthies most inflameth the mind with desire
to be worthy and informs with counsel how to be worthy. (29)

Sidney advocates remembering and imitating heroic historical figures and reading ancient myths as exemplars of virtue. Sidney’s charge to recall the “image of … action” and the “image of such worthies” speaks to a visual model, a mimetic tableau rather than action. For the same reason Berowne complains that Costard and the other actors in the “Pageant of the Nine Worthies” do not (and cannot) resemble the figures they personate, Sidney’s model of representation is not viable for the stage. Sidney continues to instruct his readers to “[o]nly let Aeneas be worn in the tablet of [their] memor[ies],” and reflect on “how [Aeneas] governeth himself in the ruin of his country” in order to be moved “to the most high and excellent truth” (29). Hamlet, as an excellent humanist reader, echoes the neoclassical aims of theater in the same way as Sir Philip Sidney. Hamlet instructs the Player to search the tablets of his memory for Aeneas and demonstrate how Aeneas is an exemplar of virtue.

The First Player’s recitation of this scene does not look imitative, however. Rather, the performance is deeply affective. Silvia Bigliazzi wonders “why Hamlet did not envisage an acted scene for his first example of metatheatre, or even a player caught in a monologue,” but instead chose a moment of distinct *narratio*, or narration (53). The First Player takes on a narrative role reminiscent of Vice-descendant characters that makes the audience part of the scene and, as Bigliazzi puts it, “cancels all distance” between the spectator, the actor, and the character. Instead of the First Player personating Aeneas describing Hecuba’s grief, there remains only a transmission of Hecuba’s grief which “[w]ould have made milch the burning eyes of heaven, / And passion in the gods” (2.2.497-98). In the performance of *Hamlet*, then, the actor playing the First Player enters the affective realm not only of the scene, but also of the
playhouse. The actor playing the First Player transmits Hecuba’s passionate affect. Even though the audience is removed from the “character” of Aeneas by narrative presentation, the speech so thoroughly engages the audience that, “in a good production[,] we become irritated with Polonius’ interruptions and disappointed when, at the height of his passion, the Player is cut short” (Kiernan 117). Hamlet recognizes the transmission of affect between the Player-as-Aeneas and the audience, including himself, and “draws our attention to the discrepancy between the passion and the rhetoric … [which closes] the gap between the rhetoric and the emotion, making us [realize] how effective and affective drama works” (117). Hamlet, in marveling that the Player would “weep for [Hecuba],” is astounded at the slippage and collapse between the Player seeming like Aeneas, playing Aeneas, and being Aeneas. To do, in the case of performance, is more effective than to be. Hamlet is perplexed. He possesses the “cue for passion” and the “motive” toward vengeance, but lacks the ability to act on it because he is convinced that no outward display can represent his interiority. After watching the player “force his soul to his whole conceit,” Hamlet wonders what the Player, who is so able to transcend representation of interiority and affect action would do, had he the interior “cue for passion” that the Prince does.

Because he realizes the efficacy of the affective performance of the First Player, Hamlet considers how he can manipulate the affect world of performance. Hamlet recalls how

 guilty creatures sitting at a play
 Have by the very cunning of the scene
 Been struck so to the soul that presently
 They have proclaimed their malefactions. (2.2.566-69).
He then decides to “have these players / Play something like the murder of [his] father / Before [his] uncle” while observing Claudius’s reaction (2.2.566-73). To discover his uncle’s guilt, Hamlet must rely on the transmission of affect from the stage to Claudius. Because he so desperately needs this transmission to occur, Hamlet attempts to advise the players on their performance. His advice is preoccupied with the players not breaking from the affective engagement, and thus breaking the spell, as it were, over Claudius. His anxieties, that the players “beget a temperance that may give [their performance of passion] smoothness,” culminate in his metaphor of playing as a mirror that “show[s] virtue her own feature … scorn her own image, and the very age and body of time his form and pressure” (3.2.6-22). Since mirrors did not reflect accurately, and instead distorted their presentation, Hamlet’s use of the mirror metaphor makes the audience aware of the “technique that is being exploited” in the performance of the First Player’s speech, *The Mousetrap*, and in *Hamlet* itself (Kiernan 117). Hamlet’s articulation of how the stage enlarges and makes strange emblems like “virtue,” “scorn,” or “the very age and body of time,” also speaks to the fact that mirrors reflect parts, not wholes. Whether the Prince is aware of the connection or not, his description is reminiscent of the nature of a fractured soliloquy. Through drama, a scornful person is not just made aware of his scornful own image, perfectly reflected. Scorn itself is enlarged when brought to life onstage. This distortion works in pursuit of exaggerated affect, however—which is exactly what Hamlet needs the players’ performance to do. To affect Claudius’s guilty confession, the play must reflect the affect of guilt by magnifying and enlarging it. While Hamlet seems to think that the players will affect Claudius by imitating the royal behavior of Gonzago and Baptista in *The Mousetrap*, what actually happens is an enlarged performance of the guilty action, executed by
the pouring of poison into the Player King’s ear, after which, the king rises, like Heywood’s confessing murderess, “frighted with false fire” (3.2.244).

After the performance of The Mousetrap, Hamlet seems to become more aware of the efficacy of action and the distortion of the stage mirror. Confronting his mother in her chamber, he tells her, she “shall not budge” and she “shall not go till [he] set[s her] up a glass” wherein she “may see the inmost part” of her (3.4.18-20). To present Queen Gertrude with a distorting mirror would transform her reflection from a queenly vision to a monstrous one. After watching the efficacy of the transmission of affect, Hamlet has internalized the distortion of the mirror and exploits it in his charge to his mother. He realizes the importance of outwardly demonstrating his own affect upon learning of Ophelia’s death. Jumping into her grave with Laertes, Hamlet asserts that he “loved Ophelia” and that “forty thousand brothers / Could not, with all their quantity of love / Make up [his] sum,” immediately charging Laertes to answer what he would “do for her” (5.1.254-56 emph. mine). His challenge to Laertes details actions Hamlet would take, from “weep[ing],” to “drink[ing] up eisel,” to “eat[ing] a crocodile,” and disparages Laertes’s “whin[ing]” as ineffectual (260-63). Laertes, in his grief, might embody pure affect, but his affect stagnates; it goes nowhere and does nothing. Hamlet has realized that the active transmission of affect is necessary for meaningful demonstration.

Concerns of representation and the effectiveness of non-mimetic forms of performance latent in Hamlet are clear in Gregory Doran’s 2009 film version of Hamlet. The film, based on the stage production Doran directed for the Royal Shakespeare Company in 2008, seems acutely aware of how Hamlet offers commentary on representation via a distorting mirror. Mirrors occupy much wall space of the set of Doran’s contemporary Elsinore, and the set decoration incorporates many other shiny, reflective surfaces. Mirrors are a device for added stage
business, but also make thematic commentary on representation throughout the film. For example, Ophelia’s confrontation with Hamlet over his “remembrances” includes Polonius, Claudius, and Gertrude observing the couple behind a one-way mirror. In the scene where Hamlet confronts his mother, after the Mousetrap, Polonius, instead of hiding behind a tapestry in Gertrude’s chamber, conceals himself in a closet with a mirror on the door. This mirror shatters when Hamlet shoots a handgun through the door, killing Polonius. During many subsequent scenes in the rest of the film, this shattered mirror remains a prominent set piece in front of which Ophelia, Hamlet, and other characters study their fractured reflections. This mirror motif operates in the same way as Hamlet’s metaphor to the players does; it emphasizes the play’s comment on representation by reiterating the impossibility of representation and the falseness of the represented image. Furthermore, like mirrors portrayed in Renaissance art, the mirrors in Doran’s film never reflect what actually is in front of them. They are forced to lie to the audience in the same way as Van Eyck’s Arnolfini Portrait lies to its audience. The mirrors decorating the set of the film never reflect the camera, the camera operators, or the sound and lighting crews. Thus, in most of the indoor scenes throughout the film, accurate representations are distorted in favor of affective enlargements and distortions. For the audience of the film to recognize that they are not seeing in these mirrors what is actually in front of them is to remind them that they are watching a presentation of heightened reality, not a perfectly mimetic representation.

Recordings of this production as it was originally staged are not available to the public, but it would be interesting to compare the differences between the “lying” mirrors of the film, which never reflect the cameras, and the stage production, which, if it employed mirrors in the same way, would have reflected too much truth, i.e. those mirrors would probably have reflected the audience, the lights, and the theater. This effect would have also reminded the audience that what they saw was a fiction.
Symbols of fracturing and distorted representation in Doran’s production extend to comment on the nature of soliloquy and self by the actors’ direct addresses to the camera. (Probably, in the stage production, asides were delivered from the stage directly to the audience.) Doran’s direction of Hamlet’s soliloquy beginning, “O, what a rogue and peasant slave am I,” demonstrates the impossibility of representing interiority (2.2.527). The soliloquy also demonstrates the efficacy of affective engagement. Ostensibly “alone,” Doran has directed David Tennant, playing Hamlet, to address the camera. Tennant’s Hamlet goes to great lengths to ensure his solitude after Rosencrantz and Guildenstern’s exits. He rips the security camera (another aesthetic touch and convenient plot device on the film’s set) from the ceiling, but immediately exhales, looking directly to the camera, “Now I am alone” (526). This acknowledgement of the presence of the audience/camera, and direct narrative address is reminiscent of the poly-vocal Vice character, whose affective performances developed into the soliloquy, which, as Catherine Belsey posits, eschews the possibility of representing discrete interiority. Thus, even as Tennant’s Hamlet reflects on his own inability to act affectively as the First Player has done, Doran’s mise-en-scène reiterates the play’s larger concern with privileging affective engagement over the mimetic. This speech, moreover, demonstrates Hamlet considering the difference between doing and being after being confronted with the possibility of “forc[ing]” one’s soul “for nothing” (530-34). Doran’s direction of the soliloquy involves Tennant looking at the camera as if to genuinely plead an answer from the film’s audience: “What would [the First Player] do / Had he the motive and the cue for passion” that Hamlet has? He runs up to the single camera and asks, “Am I a coward?” (548). The contemporary directness of the soliloquy forces the audience to pause and momentarily to wonder who is asking if he is a coward—is it Hamlet, or is it Tennant? He raises his eyebrows, increases vocal and gestural
pace, and strains his voice while mounting the series of questions from, “Who calls me villain?” to “Who does me this? / Ha?” with a final emphasis on “Ha?” that is decidedly not rhetorical (549-53). These questions demand answers. In addition to reflecting on an example of an affective performance by the First Player, the soliloquy as a whole offers an example of Tennant’s own affective performance. Watching the actor’s apparent distress over Hamlet’s problem of “vengeance,” the audience is forced to consider, “What’s [Hamlet] to him? Or he to [Hamlet] / That [Tennant] should weep for [him]?”

Doran’s direction of the scenes between Hamlet and the players continues to comment on the affective power of theater. Tennant, whose every other line is pronounced “trippingly on the tongue,” greets the players and, by contrast, begins Aeneas’s speech to Dido haltingly, enunciating stressed and unstressed syllables so as to all but lose the meaning of the speech. The players, led by John Woodvine as the First Player, chorally remind him of the lines of the speech, but wince at his delivery. When Woodvine takes over for Tennant, he demonstrates how powerful affective narration can be. The scene of Hamlet’s advice to the players finds the players preparing in a backstage hall of the castle. Beginning his advice, Tennant strains his voice and face, affecting incredible nervous anxiety, combing his hair with his fingers while he lectures them. In response, the Players smile at his ridiculous examples of poor acting and poking fun at groundlings, but raise eyebrows at the intrusion. His articulation of the “purpose of playing” is eloquent, but obviously unnecessary. When he comes to the line, “to hold, as ’twere, the mirror up to nature,” Tennant takes a silver tray from one clown who is applying makeup.

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11 This effect seems to be what Doran sought from the scene. In a recent interview regarding Tennant’s performance as the title character in Richard II, Doran lauded this quality, calling it Tennant’s “inability to be anything but contemporary” when performing Shakespeare. See: Doran, Gregory. Interview. “Production Diary 1.” The Royal Shakespeare Company. 30 August 2013. The Royal Shakespeare Company. Web. 1 May 2014.
makeup, and uses it to reflect a small spotlight on the by-standing players as he continues, as shown in Figure 3. The pace of the scene, both in the movement of the camera and in Tennant’s articulation, slows while he casts this spotlight. The direction and delivery of this scene serve to remind the audience of the goals of The Mousetrap as a performance, and of theater, generally. A mirror does not perfectly reflect, it either distorts or illuminates. However, while the other players smile at Hamlet’s speech, the First Player is not amused. Woodvine pushes past Tennant and adds an expectant “ah?” at the end of his line: “I hope we have reformed that indifferently with us, sir,” as if to request to be left alone. Tennant’s Prince Hamlet nods quickly and nervously, almost in synch with the syllables of his “reform it altogether” and moving for a private conference with Woodvine’s First Player while talking about (and gesturing over his shoulder to) the clowns, insisting that they “speak no more than is set down for them.” Woodvine nods and sighs impatiently. Doran’s film demonstrates how a meaningful motif, a mirror, from Shakespeare’s play may be deployed scenically as a constant reminder of the failure of absolute mimesis. The production furthermore depicts Hamlet’s relationship with mimesis in such a way as to make Shakespeare’s comment clear. While Tennant’s performance as Hamlet affectively engages the audience, the relationship between Tennant’s Hamlet and Woodvine’s First Player demonstrates

Figure 3. “To hold, as ’twere, the mirror up to nature.” Photo by Ellie Kurttz. “David Tennant as Hamlet.” The Royal Shakespeare Company, 2008. Web. 14 May 2014.
how Hamlet’s advice to the players is, as Pauline Kiernan says, “completely at odds” with Shakespeare’s aims for performance (124).

By way of contrast to Doran’s film, Kenneth Branagh’s 1996 film of *Hamlet*, famous for being nearly four hours long and incorporating conflated Quarto and Folio texts, employs a scene of the fall of Troy during Hamlet’s first encounter with the players. Branagh’s film aims at archiving not just as complete a text of *Hamlet* as possible, but also reflects a pretense toward what W.B. Worthen calls “archival totalization” with respect to the “archive” of *Hamlet* in the twentieth century (“Hamlet at Ground Zero” 321).12 Branagh has cast famous Shakespearean actors John Gielgud as Priam, Judi Dench as Hecuba, and Charlton Heston as the First Player. Heston’s speech as the First Player evokes levels of representation that I argue are only possible through film. During his speech, the scene cuts to show a distraught Dench, as Hecuba, searching for Gielgud’s Priam in a war-torn Troy. In a playhouse, only if the entire audience could suddenly watch a different play could this level of mimesis be effective.13 Otherwise, as in Doran’s film, the narrative production of the affect of the First Player through his Hecuba speech is transparent for the audience of that speech and of *Hamlet*. The First Player’s affect reaches Hamlet, Polonius, Rosencrantz, and Guildenstern, and the other players just as it would have reached the audience at Shakespeare’s Globe.

Branagh’s articulation of the “rogue and peasant slave” speech “maintains the heroical,” as Sir Philip Sidney put it, in contrast to Doran’s version. None of the scenes in Branagh’s film include direct address to the camera. Because of the consistent mimesis in Branagh’s film, the

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12 For more on how Kenneth Branagh himself articulates this objective, see: Maher, Mary Z. *Modern Hamlets and Their Soliloquies*. Iowa City: Iowa UP, 2003. Print.
13 Or if the play could be interrupted by a video, as in the Wooster Group’s 2007 *Hamlet*, the representational nuances of which are explicated by W. B. Worthen in his essay “Hamlet at Ground Zero: The Wooster Group and the Archive of Performance.”
soliloquy is a vocalization of Hamlet’s thoughts rather than an address to the audience. Branagh’s delivery of the scene includes Hamlet wrestling with his questions rhetorically. Branagh’s performance, and film as a whole, does not ask its audience “What’s [Hamlet] to [Branagh]? Or he to [Hamlet] / That [Branagh] should weep for [him]?” but reminds its audience that Hamlet is a “heroical” character for whom Branagh and the film’s audience ought to weep. The set decoration of the scene reinforces the archival aims of Branagh’s film by including a globe and a model of a theater that Branagh’s Hamlet plays with upon realizing that “the play’s the thing / Wherein [he will] catch the conscience of the King” (2.2.581-82). Reminding the audience of the legacy of Hamlet and the authority of the play in performance hails the audience in a different way than Doran’s film does, but, again, I argue that this approach is only viable through the distancing medium of film.

Much of Hamlet’s advice to the players seems, as Pauline Kiernan puts it, to “suggest more than Hamlet means” (98). Shakespeare’s metatheatrical inclusion of a scene of acting process in the First Player’s Hecuba speech, then the playwright’s inclusion of a soliloquy that ties Hamlet’s concerns about tension between being and doing—between representation and affective engagement—suggest what Shakespeare might mean by Hamlet’s advice. Instead of positing merely guidelines for matching words to gestures, passionate raging, or clownish improvisation, Shakespeare seems to be reminding his audience of the affect of the distortion they are watching. Hamlet’s “rogue and peasant slave” soliloquy, executed at its most affective, hails the audience into the affect world of the play by positing questions about how “monstrous”—how distorted—the performance of affects is. This soliloquy and Prince Hamlet’s interaction with the players metatheatrically perform the affective work of Hamlet as a whole,
and furthers Shakespeare’s position that the only effective theater is affective, non-mimetic theater.

In Shakespeare’s theater and in our own, actors do not examine their parts for individual subjectivity or for how to perfectly embody a fictional character. Even while Kenneth Branagh’s performance of Prince Hamlet takes into account the archive of performances before him, the performance Branagh executes does not reflect exactly who “Prince Hamlet” is, but rather best markets Branagh’s skills as a performer and as a director. While Branagh’s Hamlet sometimes “beget[s] a temperance that may give [his performance] smoothness,” David Tennant’s performance of Hamlet, in parallel scenes, is “not too tame,” includes the actor “saw[ing] the air,” and reminds its audience of a “torrent, tempest [or] whirlwind.” Both performances, however, “let [the actor’s] own discretion be [his] tutor.” The most effective performances are affective ones. Affective performances “hold the mirror up to nature” not to represent that nature exactly, but to enlarge, distort, exaggerate nature, molding and changing the audiences who watch them and the players who perform them.
Chapter Three: “How will this fadge?”: Affect and Empathy in Performance of *Twelfth Night* and *As You Like It*

“[A]nd yet, by the very fangs of malice I swear, I am not that I play.”
— Viola, *Twelfth Night* (1.5.166-67)

“Good my complexion! dost thou think, though I am caparisoned like a man, I have a doublet and hose in my disposition?”
— Rosalind, *As You Like It* (3.2.178-80)

Observing how Maria’s gulling trick works so perfectly on the strict steward Malvolio, Fabian of Shakespeare’s *Twelfth Night* exclaims, “If this were played upon a stage I could condemn it as an improbable fiction!” (3.4.114). Fabian’s metatheatrical remark should alarm the audience of *Twelfth Night* and force them to consider the validity and truth of everything they have seen played upon the stage before them during the course of the production. Fabian raises questions about the ability of audiences to subscribe to distorted and exaggerated presentations onstage. Sir Toby Belch’s reply to Fabian furthermore forces the audience of *Twelfth Night* to consider how effective performance and the transmission of affect in performance are inextricably linked. Even if the audience does “condemn” the scene, and the play as a whole, as an “improbable fiction,” Sir Toby reminds his co-conspirators that belief in affective fiction is infectious, no matter how improbable. Malvolio’s “genius hath taken the infection of the device” set upon him by Maria’s letter (3.4.115). In a good performance of the play, no matter how improbable the carnivalesque depiction of Illyria is, the audience’s “genius” similarly “take[s] the infection” of *Twelfth Night*. The previous two chapters of this thesis have focused on the non-mimetic priorities of affective engagement in Renaissance performance as it was inherited from medieval forms and employed in plays such as *Richard III* or *Hamlet*. This chapter will focus on how Shakespeare’s *Twelfth Night* and *As You Like It* are hyper-aware of the power of affective transmission, while extending a larger comment about the power of stage performance.
As a result of this awareness, both plays are also vehicles for actors to develop and execute performances that “infect” audiences with the belief in “improbable fiction[s].”

Both *As You Like It* and *Twelfth Night* are set in carnivalesque dream worlds, feature presences that reinforce the fractured nature of performance, and continually remind their audiences that what they witness is a fiction. Through featuring particularly affective characters, these plays also demand that audiences invest deep empathy in characters the audiences know to be fictional. Heroines Viola and Rosalind, who in the Renaissance would have been played by boy players and who both disguise their already complicated gendered identities, reinforce the distortion of stage presentation, while simultaneously building affective capital for themselves through collusion with the audience. These plays’ comments on empathy and affect extend even to unlikable characters, specifically, to Malvolio of *Twelfth Night*, who demands audience empathy despite his obnoxious puritanical behavior. Concerns for empathy and affective transmission are latent in the texts of *As You Like It* and *Twelfth Night* but require that performers understand how to execute the affective clues Shakespeare’s text offers. Actors taking on the roles of Viola, Rosalind, or Malvolio have to understand how to engage affectively with the audience, and, to that end, how to engage the affects of their characters in order to draw out empathy.

In order to discuss how Shakespeare is concerned with actors developing affective performance in *As You Like it* and *Twelfth Night*, I will employ literature by actors discussing their performances of roles in these plays. Often, in literary scholarship, contemporary actors’ interpretations of their Shakespearean roles are dismissed for being anecdotal and coming from impulsive choices based on anachronistic notions of character and subjectivity. Even though scholars like W. B. Worthen, Robert Weimann, Douglas Bruster, and others are invested in how
the authority of meaning in Shakespearean drama is “bifold,” coming from both stage and page, actors’ approaches and reflections seem ever-burdened with the proof of authority. While W. B. Worthen describes how actors’ readings can “help [scholars] locate the interface between the interpretive priorities of scholarship and those of the stage,” literary and historicizing approaches to Shakespeare are always already authoritative, the bricolage or “soup of nuance” that theater practitioners create out of history is “interested in what ‘Shakespeare’ is rather than what ‘Shakespeare’ can be made to do” (“Invisible Bullets, Violet Beards” 211, 220 emph. original).

Worthen’s critique extends to books like John Barton’s Playing Shakespeare, the Players of Shakespeare essay series published by the Royal Shakespeare Company, or interviews with directors or cast members of Shakespearean productions, all of which Worthen might criticize for relying too much on “conventional conceptions of ‘character.’” By “conventional” conceptions of character, Worthen means ones that come from twentieth-century Stanislavskian methods. Worthen laments that these methods engage too much with ideas of “integrated, self-present, internalized, psychologically motivated ‘character’” (212). Instead of character, what Worthen seems concerned with highlighting in performance are themes similar to those that literary treatments might be concerned with. An actor might articulate that their performance of a Shakespearean role highlighted what a character “wants,” or “thinks” in a certain line, rather than on Shakespeare’s cultural and social concerns. The fact that actors articulate character in this way remains problematic for literary scholars. Discussions of the desires or thoughts of characters occur sometimes even in productions that, on the whole, literary scholars laud for their treatment of themes, such as those by the Royal Shakespeare Company, or the Stratford Festival of Canada. The tension between literary scholars’ dismissal of individual actors’ articulations of
their performances and celebration of overall productions stems from a misunderstanding of theatrical practices.

Literary scholars sometimes charge actors with relying on psychologically motivated conceptions of character derived solely from contemporary realistic methods, such as Peter Thompson does when he claims that actors anachronistically privilege “character as subjectivity,” and operate with intentions of “becoming” their characters (322). Often, this seems to come from a misunderstanding of the vocabulary employed by these theater professionals. In an early scene from John Barton’s Playing Shakespeare workshop series, Barton explains to his participant actors their “modern tradition” of acting is distinct from Elizabethan traditions. Barton explains that the terms “characterization,” “motivation,” or “naturalistic” are all inventions of the last three centuries (8). However, Barton’s exercises throughout Playing Shakespeare deftly blend contemporary vocabulary and circumstances of performance relevant to Elizabethan theater to arrive at personations that are engaging and faithful to the text. Instead of positing feelings, emotions, and psychology to the characters, these performances use the intentions of lines to personate characters. Intentions are actable choices based on circumstances present in the text. Since all a Renaissance actor would have received in preparation for a part in one of Shakespeare’s plays was his own lines and his cue lines rolled up on one scroll, only circumstances present in the lines of any given part are relevant for that part’s intentions. Playing Shakespeare actor-participant Alan Howard concludes that actors “must dig into a character socially and psychologically,” while actor Ian McKellen explains that this means “being concerned with … [the] audience and other characters on the stage … listen[ing] to the words and understand[ing] the feelings and the thoughts of the other characters” (7). Developing a sense of the intentions of lines based on textual cues and
maintaining awareness of other characters onstage do not serve to posit individual subjectivities onto Shakespearean roles, but rather help the actor develop empathy for his or her own role and demonstrate affective exchange between characters onstage. The actors in *Playing Shakespeare* demonstrate that these empathetic concerns are not based on feelings in an exercise that immediately follows this conversation about empathy. John Barton leads actor Ian McKellen through iterations of Antonio’s opening lines from *Merchant of Venice*, encouraging McKellen to take on different intentions instead of “feelings.” While Antonio’s opening line, “In sooth I know not why I am so sad,” could demonstrate a number of feelings, McKellen instead performs the intentions of “searching [his] thoughts,” “avoid[ing] explaining [him]self,” “mak[ing] light of [his] sadness,” and trying to “put an end to the conversation” (10-11). These iterations of Antonio’s opening line disregard potential “feelings” Antonio might have and instead explore what goals Antonio’s utterance might have. Barton articulates how “[p]laying the *quality*” or the *feeling* of Antonio’s lines “leads to bad acting,” while “going for the *intention* is more interesting” (11 emph. original).

Renaissance audiences were able to simultaneously conceive of performer and role. Renaissance actors performed self-consciously. Renaissance audiences knew one could “copy” or “reflect” another individual’s behavior without becoming that individual (Soule 130). Renaissance accounts of performance suggest that audiences were able to shift focus between the identities of performer and personated character, and that an “actor’s playing of his two identities” was just as fluid (130). This was especially true of Vice-descendant roles, including those played by boy players, who employed non-mimetic conventions such as direct address to the audience, or asides. Boy players developed as figures in late medieval courtly love plays where they played “saucy page[s]” or “lightweight version[s] of the sharp fool” (Soule 109).
The boy players “showed a strong kinship with the Vices” and with wise fool characters, paying “little attention to consistency of mimesis and illusion, devoting themselves instead to making mischief and mocking various forms of social pretension” (109). Boy players could also control the attention of rambunctious playhouse audiences. Audiences were aware that boy players’ roles were non-mimetic, like Vices and devils, but were also invested in the “mischief” within the larger performed narrative. Audiences could pay attention to the distance between performer and role, while also committing to the narrative they saw performed. Although there is no evidence that any boy player became as famous in his own right as contemporaries like Dick Tartlon or Will Kemp, boy actors were highly skilled with a “confident, even flamboyant style of performing” and “would have developed the effective stage personalit[ies] … [and] actor’s charisma” necessary to hold their own with “such a rowdy, participative audience” as the Elizabethan playhouse invited (Soule 137).

The development of a boy player’s, or any other player’s, effective stage personality and requisite charisma comes from understanding the intentions of lines included in his role, just as an effective performance of the role of Antonio came from McKellen’s understanding of the opening line’s intention. Performing intentions is an active outward way of displaying affects. Affects are not actions, but affective displays communicate intentions because they are outwardly visible manifestations of individuals experiencing feelings (Brennan 21). To make effective use of intentions, an actor must be able to distance himself from the playing of a role and simultaneously commit to the intentions evident in the lines. Actors accomplish the simultaneous awareness of the distance between themselves and their characters and the convincing performance of affective intention through empathy. Acting techniques that lead to the transmission of affect would have been subsumed into the early modern understanding of
individuality and performance conventions. Today, however, since we understand emotions, feelings, and affects to be contained within an individual, affective performance must be honed through training. Actors are taught vocabulary words like “intention” to limit problematically positing subjectivity onto their characters.

To perform intentions, actors must empathize with their characters. This affective empathy is “a means for knowing what to do, not how to feel” (Hill and Blair 11 emph. original). That actors have to be able to relate to their characters might still be problematic for literary scholars, since, as Barton describes, discussing intentions “is often confusing to people who approach the text from a literary or non-theatrical viewpoint [because] it seems to them to imply that [theater practitioners] are saying a playwright has a character’s conscious intention in mind when he writes a given line” but that is not the case (7). Theatre artist and critic Rhonda Blair posits that “empathy” is absolutely necessary for an actor to perform a role. Empathy depends on action, however, rather than on interiority. Empathy is performative, not reflexive or imitative, and thus affective and not mimetic. The term “empathy” has roots in verbs; the word “entered English in 1909 as ‘empathy’ … derived from the Greek ‘to make suffer’” (Blair 98). While the term is a product of the twentieth century, the notion that individuals could “copy or reflect each other on a number of levels, while remaining aware that [they] are not the other [person] and have potential for different and separate actions” is relevant to the Elizabethan stage as well as contemporary performance (99). Empathy, however, does not need to mean simply “sympathy.” Shakespeare provides a negative example of empathy in the Vice-descendant Iago whose “ability to get into Othello’s head—in fact, to empathize with him profoundly [is] a prime example of a nonbenevolent use of empathy” (102). What performers do when they empathize with the given circumstances of their roles is to “get into” their heads, like Iago does to Othello.
As Iago is a clear descendent of the Vice tradition, he gets into Othello’s head and into the audience’s collective head through his fractured soliloquies that work just like the utterances of the medieval Vices of morality plays.

Rhonda Blair describes how this empathy is neurologically similar to what individuals experience when imagining pain. Imagining being in physical pain, whether the imaginary pain is drawn from watching another individual experience pain or from a painful memory, is similar to an actor’s “imaginative relationship with the given circumstances of a play in general or a scene or moment in particular.” Actors construct these imaginative relationships “either to increase or lower the ‘stakes’ or ‘sense of urgency’” of a play, scene, or moment (Blair 101). The terms “stakes” or “sense of urgency” are commonly used among actors and directors to describe how smaller parts of performance all build toward the meaningful work of the play as a whole. Constructing an “imaginative relationship” with given circumstances does not imply that the actor experiences the same circumstantial affects that he transmits to the audience. Similarly, the audience does not feel what the character “feels.” Rather, affects transmitted from the stage to the audience register as unique to audience members. Teresa Brennan sums up the difference in discrete affects transmitted and received: “[E]ven if I am picking up on your affect, the linguistic and visual content … the thoughts I attach to that affect … remain my own: they remain the product of the particular historical conjunction of words and experiences I represent. The thoughts are not necessarily tied to the affects they appear to evoke” (7). Since one “may as well say that the affects evoke the thoughts,” Brennan’s explication makes clear that the transmission of affect creates an intimate and personal experience for the person receiving the transmitted affects. The transmission of affect through performance creates meaning for the audience. The stakes of a scene heighten the audience’s imaginative relationship with the action,
deepening the affective connection. The affects evoked by the heightened stakes of the drama in turn evoke thoughts that interpret and give meaning to the play; the “thoughts” evoked by the affects are the ones that “deck” the “kings” of the stage, as the Chorus describes in the Prologue to *Henry V* (28).

*As You Like It* and *Twelfth Night* demonstrate how, as descendent of the Vice, the boy player is particularly affective and empathetic. Not only do the performers playing either Viola or Rosalind have opportunities to elicit audience sympathy through affective performance, the plays also perform meta-theatrical comment on the transmission of affect. Viola and Rosalind demonstrate not only how affect can transmit in the playhouse, but also how affect transmits in the fictional worlds of Illyria and Arden. The plays are deeply concerned with the power of performance to transmit affect through empathy, whether the performance is “an improbable fiction” or not. As Blair puts it, the charge of empathetic performance is, as the role of Iago demonstrates, to “get into” people’s heads. The boy player gets into the heads of other characters, like the Vice, and also gets into the audience’s collective head. Viola manipulates the affect world of Illyria; Rosalind manipulates the affect world of Arden. While these plays are sites that demonstrate how affective performance can work within the performer, they also model how empathy and affective engagement work by making the audience invest in the affect worlds of characters while consistently reminding the audience that the worlds are completely constructed. In a Renaissance context, this meant that the audience had to empathize with the boy player’s role—that is, with Rosalind or Viola—even though the boy player was not mimetic. The boy player skillfully vacillates between the performance of performance and deep commitment to the role at hand. Viola simultaneously has deep concern for the emotional context of the given circumstances. Yet she also reflects on how unbelievable the circumstances
Twelfth Night thematically reinforces this comment about empathizing with the unbelievable. Viola empathizes deeply with both Orsino and Olivia. Upon first meeting Olivia, Viola is able to empathize with Orsino’s position and with Olivia’s desire that love, to be effective, must be acted upon. Viola explains to Olivia that Orsino loves her “[w]ith adorations, fertile tears, with groans that thunder love, with sighs of fire,” but despite the state of Orsino’s passion, Olivia “cannot love him” (1.5.224-26). Viola demonstrates her understanding of affective love by detailing what she would do for love. Olivia asks her, “Why what would you?” (237). Her response, full of affective, active passion, and arguably a reflection of her own desire for Orsino, infects Olivia. After Malvolio “returns” the ring to Viola, the disguised heroine realizes that her modeled affect has been transmitted to Olivia. She then colludes with the audience to garner their empathy through her subsequent soliloquy. Viola calls Olivia “poor lady” (clearly empathizing with her situation), describes her own disguise as “wickedness” (taking responsibility for putting Olivia in this situation), and laments the vulnerability of women to affective transmission (2.2.24-25). Since Viola’s reflection of the situation is a soliloquy, this reflection is also a fractured utterance, as was described in chapter one. That the soliloquy self-consciously reflects upon “disguise” would have simultaneously reminded Renaissance audiences of the boy player’s true identity. The “wickedness” of Viola’s Cesario disguise should alarm the audience and make them wonder if there is something “wicked” about the boy player’s disguise as Viola. Viola’s soliloquy simultaneously desperately begs the audience for support.
Her questions “How will this fadge?” and “What will become of this?” seem to carry with them intentions of asking for the audience’s help and support. As soon as the audience is reminded of the performative distortion they watch, they are asked to remain invested in the given circumstances of the story.

While *Twelfth Night* provides this moment of a boy player’s commenting on stage fiction while garnering audience sympathy in the form of a soliloquy, Rosalind of *As You Like It* has no soliloquies, and colludes with the audience only through dialogue, until her epilogue at the play’s end. Rosalind’s frequent references to her “doublet and hose,” and the ease with which her disguise is donned or removed consistently remind the audience of Rosalind’s ostensible gender identity but also remind the audience of the identities of the boy players playing Rosalind and Celia. Whenever Rosalind remarks on her doublet and hose, it is in a moment where the audience is meant to be most empathetic to Rosalind’s circumstances. First, when she enters Arden, she remarks “that doublet and hose ought to show itself [more] courageous” than a petticoat. She later reminds Celia and the audience that, though she be “caparisoned like a man,” she does not “have a doublet and hose in [her] disposition” (2.4.4, 3.2.178). Finally, she explains that these masculine trappings will interfere with her relationship with Orlando (3.2.180). The audience has been drawn into the affect world of Arden, where they are let in on Rosalind’s secret and invited to invest in the stakes of her desire for Orlando while simultaneously being made aware that “Rosalind” is a boy player who *ought* to have a doublet and hose.

Rosalind’s epilogue directly addresses the audience and comments on not only the fact that *As You Like It* is a fiction, but on the quality of the fiction: “What a case I am in then,” Rosalind exclaims, “that I am neither a good epilogue nor cannot insinuate with you on the behalf of a good play!” (Epilogue 6-8). Rosalind explains that she is not a good epilogue
because she is a woman, but later contradicts this assertion, saying, if the player “were a woman” she “would kiss as many” audience members as “had beards that pleased” the player (14-16).

The epilogue reinforces how crucial the audience’s empathetic participation in the drama has been. As Phyllis Rackin puts it, in order to work, “the play must win both sexes” in the audience, appealing affectively to both men and women through the epilogue expressed by a figure with shifting identities “who no longer has a single name or sexual identity, combining in one nature Rosalind, Ganymede, and the boy [player]” (36).

Empathy of the kind that the boy players and other non-mimetic roles, like Vice-descendant characters, fostered in the audience is the same kind of empathy that helps contemporary actors relate to their roles and create believable non-mimetic performances. To empathize with the roles they play, actors have to “get into” the heads of their characters. This may sound as though actors are positing unique subjectivity for their characters. On the contrary, contemporary actors who recognize the affective charge of performance examine their roles for affective clues instead of for psychological understandings, just as actors in the Renaissance would have assessed their roles for the same concerns. These clues for affect come from assessing intentions, as described above. Once an actor understands the intentions of his or her line, that actor can demonstrate affect along with the intention. The several-volume series *Players of Shakespeare* collects essays written by performers who have played Shakespearean roles for the Royal Shakespeare Company. Although the productions described in this series implement contemporary theatrical conventions dictating rehearsals, casting, and design instead of Elizabethan ones, Royal Shakespeare Company productions are still largely seen as being authoritative sites of meaningful Shakespeare—places where meaning is both reified and generated. Often, productions by the Royal Shakespeare Company are adapted to historical and
local contexts far removed from Shakespeare’s original settings for his plays. Nonetheless, these appropriations adhere faithfully to meaningful elements of the plays of Shakespeare and other Renaissance playwrights such as themes and cultural anxieties. The essays in the Players of Shakespeare volumes offer concise, firsthand accounts of actors developing the requisite empathy and intentional affective context for their roles.

In a prime example of actors approaching their roles empathetically and for maximum affect, in their collaborative essay in the fifth volume of the Players of Shakespeare series, Zoë Waites and Matilda Ziegler describe the process of preparing to play and executing the roles of Viola and Olivia, respectively. They relate how early rehearsals for Lindsay Posner’s 2001 production of Twelfth Night were instrumental in the process of developing their roles. The two actresses describe the first read through as an “opportunity to … hear how these people [in the play, that is, Olivia and Viola] think, and how they express their feelings, desires, and fears” (61). While it might seem like the actresses are positing anachronistic and extra-textual subjectivity upon their roles, Waites and Ziegler seem to instead be examining the entire text of Twelfth Night in order to understand and empathize with the lines spoken by their roles with sensitivity to the entire given circumstances of the play. While Waites and Ziegler do not use the words “intention” or “affect,” they do demonstrate concerns for structural cues in Twelfth Night, suggesting intentions for Viola and Olivia that could be affectively performed. The empathy these actresses have for their roles is evidenced in the language with which they describe various scenes. They are not psychoanalyzing Olivia or Viola; these two actresses are crafting affective productions through empathy. The first scene between Olivia and Viola is, as Waites and Ziegler describe, “a definite turning point” (64). Their characterization of this turning point is based mostly on the affective work that the scene does to build the stakes of the play. The scene
operates in terms of intention; it tests, invites, challenges, and provokes (64). The actresses describe their characters’ intentions: Viola “delightfully confounds Olivia,” “undercutting” her attempts at melodrama, and “considers” the implications of Olivia’s refusal to accept Orsino’s advances, and is “determined to make Olivia take responsibility” for her actions (64). Olivia makes herself “vulnerable” then “protects herself” against Viola’s undercutting attempts, and “asserts herself” (64-5). Waites and Ziegler use empathy as a contact point for learning how Viola and Olivia think. The actresses translate this empathy into intentional affect and active performance.

To effectively personate their characters, actors must fully commit to their empathy for the character’s intentions while also maintaining enough distance from the character so as to be able to recall and perform the intentions. Sophie Thompson, in her own *Players of Shakespeare* essay, recalls how, playing Rosalind for the Royal Shakespeare Company in 1989, she “found it was important … to remember that [Rosalind] doesn’t go into the forest in order to meet Orlando” (81). Because Thompson knew the entire play so well (she had played Celia during the same year), and affectively committed to Rosalind’s romantic intentions toward Orlando, compartmentalizing these intentions took active effort on her part as a performer. Thompson articulates how actors “have to forget that [they] know the end of the play” every time they perform it. Some of Thompson’s language throughout her *Players of Shakespeare* essay refers frequently to her instincts and responses as an actor and the ways in which she had to remain aware of the larger context of specific lines. Thompson also, paradoxically, points out the fluidity between performances subsumed within the role of Rosalind. At times, there is a collapse of Thompson’s own feelings as a subject, and of the affects that are empathetic contact points for her role, or in this case, multiple roles. For example, during the scene in which
Rosalind/Ganymede teaches Orlando how to woo, Thompson explains that she “felt [she] could react directly as Rosalind rather than as ‘Ganymede,’ having established Orlando’s belief in him” (82). Not only does this reflection demonstrate concern for affect in *As You Like It* on the whole, it also speaks to a collapse of the distance between Sophie Thompson, Rosalind, and Ganymede. Later, Thompson describes how she was forced to separate her scenes with Phebe and Silvius from the plot Rosalind had with Orlando, because “with Orlando always on [her] mind [she] was finding it very difficult” to emotionally commit to her interactions with Phebe and Silvius. While Thompson felt it necessary to fully emotionally connect with Phebe and Silvius in order to give a lesson on affect, Thompson is aware that her performance of Ganymede in this scene is self-consciously a bad impersonation of a male role, which comes from Rosalind’s “trying” to perform masculinity and “not doing it very well” (83). Thompson is performing poor performance well, in another shift that again distances the actress from her role.

It is easy to imagine how actors and audience members can develop empathy, and even sympathy, for the likable heroines of *As You Like It* and *Twelfth Night*. The positive, affective charges the roles of Viola and Rosalind have seem obvious. Less obvious, however, is how affective transmission and empathy are possible in the cases of characters about whom Shakespeare seems more ambivalent. The audience of *Twelfth Night* is meant to laugh at how the strict steward Malvolio sees himself as the subject of everything and takes Feste’s jokes too personally. By the final scene of *Twelfth Night*, however, this character, who looks down on others throughout the play, garners the audience’s deep empathy. Olivia criticizes Malvolio for taking things too personally, accusing him of being “sick of self-love” (1.5.77). Over-identifying as the subject of every utterance debilitates the steward. This over-identification is the reason
Maria’s forged letter works perfectly on Malvolio, since Malvolio is poised to see himself as the subject of the letter.

Much of the scholarship on Malvolio attends to his position as a Puritan. Douglas Trevor argues that instead of leveling harsh criticism against Puritans, Shakespeare empathizes with Malvolio’s religious convictions. That is, whether or not Shakespeare sympathizes with Malvolio’s religious conviction, he clearly presents the case for empathy with Malvolio’s orthodoxy. Malvolio’s confidence that he should be the subject of everything—from Feste’s jokes to Maria’s forged letter—is a result of his over-enthusiastically applying definitive meaning to scripture; it is a distinctly Puritan trait (Trevor 68). Knowing Malvolio is “sometimes a kind of [P]uritan,” Maria “anticipates her victim’s habits as a puritan reader” and manipulates his vanity through “enabling his overdetermined reading practices, and then redirecting these practices so that they are revealed to serve a narcissistic, rather than devotional, end” (2.3.125, Trevor 71). Maria’s ability to get inside Malvolio’s head demonstrates similar nonbenevolent empathy as is evidenced by Iago’s ability to get inside Othello’s head. Not only does Maria’s forged letter speak to Malvolio, it reaches him affectively. The letter makes him “happy” (2.5.148). It transmits positive affect to him. Since Malvolio insists so sincerely that he is happy, the audience empathizes with him—even as we laugh at his overdetermined reading of the absurd letter.

After empathizing with Malvolio’s reading habits and opening an affective, empathetic channel between Malvolio and the audience, Twelfth Night offers a scene of Malvolio’s “mental torment” that challenges and, if it is well played, reverses the audience’s antipathy towards him (66). The torment Malvolio endures at Feste’s hands is a turning point in the audience’s relationship with the character. The scene forces the audience to “decide whether to laugh at
Malvolio’s expense or shudder” at the torture (Trevor 77-78). Douglas Trevor describes how during Malvolio’s humiliation, when he is “bound” in the “dark room,” Shakespeare is drawing upon the sympathetic change of heart that early modern audiences would have for victims of public executions (3.4.121). Crowds at public executions could reverse their antipathy for the victim if he “conducted himself” sympathetically or if he “suffered unduly” (77). If the audience is to reverse their attitude toward Malvolio and eventually concur with Olivia that he “hath been most notoriously abused,” Malvolio must both suffer extremely and behave sympathetically. The scene must force the audience to imagine themselves in Malvolio’s pain, or evoke a painful memory for audience members. For a full reversal of affect, the audience should weep for Malvolio’s humiliation as much as they have laughed at his embarrassment in yellow stockings.

To elicit this reaction, the performer playing Malvolio has to carefully craft his performance; to do this, the actor has to deeply empathize with Malvolio. Donald Sinden’s articulation of his performance as Malvolio demonstrates this. In the inaugural edition of *Players of Shakespeare*, Donald Sinden begins his essay on playing Malvolio in John Barton’s 1969 production by relating how, upon re-reading *Twelfth Night* for the part, he “realized that this was not the play [he] thought [he] knew” (43). Approaching the play from the perspective of playing Malvolio disrupted the entire text for the actor. Sinden describes telling Barton, “‘I am afraid you may have to recast Malvolio—I find him tragic,’” to which Barton responded, “‘Thank God for that … I thought I would have to talk you round [sic] to it’” (43). Sinden’s essay quantifies the audience’s laughter at Malvolio’s various lines and bits of stage business. Malvolio, lacking a sense of humor and detesting Feste’s joking, is probably not deliberately cracking jokes anywhere in the play, however, Shakespeare clearly intends his lines to be amusing. First, his confusion over Olivia’s questions about Cesario is meant to be funny. Olivia
has to ask three times for a description of Cesario, since Malvolio insists on taking her questions too literally. Donald Sinden describes how, when, as an actor, he is making the audience laugh, he is “one-hundred-per-cent Malvolio” because “in a comedy … the actor, must remain one-hundred-per-cent [him]self, standing outside [his] character, [his] ears on stalks listening for the very slightest sound from the audience, controlling them, so that [he is] able to steer a ‘cue,’ a ‘punch’ or ‘tag’ line clear of any interruption” (46). The actor must keep in mind his empathy for Malvolio while performing Malvolio’s intentions respective to the text. The empathy he has for Malvolio, and the careful delivery of intentions will “control” the audience.

Sinden explains how he deliberately increases audience laughter during this exchange about Cesario. Of Cesario, Olivia asks, “What kind of man is he?” Sinden’s Malvolio responds with gestures as if to say, “What an extraordinary question!” and finally answers, “‘Why, of mankind.’” This receives a laugh Sinden gauges with a one— the smallest perceptible laugh from the audience. When Olivia asks, “What manner of man[?]” the response, “Of very ill manner,” gets a laugh gauged at two—a little more laughter than Sinden’s previous line. Sinden explains that Olivia articulated her next line “as to a child,” saying, “‘Of what personage and years is he?’” After this line, for Sinden’s Malvolio, “[a] great light dawns—at last [he sees] what she is getting at.” He interposes an “ ‘Ahhh!’” that gets a laugh gauged at two. Sinden’s Malvolio attempts to follow all Olivia’s subsequent commands at once, and when instructed to “call in [Olivia’s] gentlewoman,” bangs his staff on the floor and “roars ‘Gentlewoman’” in a voice “of the parade-ground,” but when “Maria comes scuttling in,” Malvolio explains, “‘May [sic] Lady calls … with the implication that the voice that thundered ‘Gentlewoman’ was Olivia’s.” This gets a laugh gauged at four, about halfway to what can be expected as the most laughter an audience is capable of (Sinden 47). While, certainly, the audience is laughing at Malvolio over
the course of this first scene, the harmless laughter at Malvolio’s misunderstanding humanizes the steward and sets the audience up to empathize with him.

The audience is again invited to laugh at Malvolio for misunderstanding during the scene in which he finds Maria’s letter, intended to trap Malvolio into thinking Olivia is in love with him. Sinden describes his rehearsal process, explaining how embellishing his imagination of Malvolio helped him to empathize with Malvolio, and thus to embody his affects. This embodiment of intentions is fruitful for the moment Malvolio finds Maria’s letter. In Barton’s production, Sinden’s Malvolio directs his lines to the audience, as though Malvolio was daydreaming alone and then happened upon these spectators, as shown in Figure 4. While I do not believe that this staging is necessary for affective engagement between the audience and Malvolio, it would considerably assist the audience’s pity for Malvolio in the torture scene. Douglas Trevor describes how “Malvolio’s reading of Maria’s letter is all the more humiliating for the steward because he neglects to assume that he might be observed [by Sir Toby, Andrew, and Fabian] while interpreting its contents” (72). However, Sinden’s essay suggests that this does not necessarily have to be the case. Projecting this scene to the audience gives Sinden’s Malvolio the opportunity to declare directly to the audience that he is “happy.” While the audience laughs at the ridiculousness of Malvolio’s joyous discovery, the joy that Malvolio feels must genuinely be transmitted to the audience in this moment. Trevor

Figure 4. Donald Sinden as Malvolio (Sinden 59).
describes how the fact Malvolio claims he is “happy” “suggests just how dangerously [Malvolio] has invested in what the ephemeral world has appeared to offer him” (75).

However the scene of Malvolio in yellow stockings is played out (that is, whatever the “stockings” and “cross-garters” are made up of in any given production), the audience ought to laugh uproariously at Malvolio making a fool of himself and reciting Olivia’s letter. Most of the laughs, however, probably come from non-verbal cues like Malvolio’s costume, kissing his own hands, or Olivia’s shocked reaction; it is impossible to describe here all the reasons an audience would laugh at the scene. After sharing in this laughter however, the audience might sympathize even more with the misguided Malvolio because he has just entertained them, and they have come to appreciate the talent of the performance. Malvolio’s next appearance, in the “dark room” and “bound,” is meant to shock the audience [[ASL TN]]. Feste engages in cruel deception by attempting to get Malvolio to deny his religious beliefs and by attempting to make him truly mad. Malvolio recognizes the stakes of the situation, since if Malvolio “allows someone else to see or speak for him” he will be victim to “public accusations of madness that will officially establish his lunacy, and might in the end actually produce madness” (Trevor 79). Malvolio denies Feste/Sir Topas’s claims that the room he is in is bright, and simultaneously refuses to concur with Pytharogas’s theory of reincarnation. Trevor points out how Feste’s questions to Malvolio are simple questions that any Christian would hold (80). If in an individual’s state of mind “rapture and folly [are] shaped and measured by one’s spiritual and sentient relation to the world” as they were in the Renaissance, an affective performance of the role of Malvolio would take into account how the desires for experiences of “rapture” are universal, and how humiliating the experience of “folly” is (82). Sinden describes how, in Malvolio’s final scene, he “sinks to his knees and sobs,” fully broken by the humiliation played
on him. Sinden describes that the other characters are “smiling at him, a kindly smile,” but this does nothing to ease his pain (66). Finally, Sinden posits that, after his “empty” vengeful statement, “there is but one thing for Malvolio—suicide” (66). If Malvolio’s downfall has been so tragic so as to result in suicide, the production must also force the audience to sympathize so deeply with Malvolio that his humiliation and downfall remain with them even while the play ends festively.

*As You Like It* and *Twelfth Night* are metatheatrical at every turn. Both plays self-consciously demand deep empathetic connection by audiences to Viola and Rosalind. In the Renaissance, these two characters would have been played by boy players, and thus the audience would have doubly understood why Viola, the boy dressed as a girl dressed as a boy, calls herself “poor monster” (2.2.32); Rosalind would have been equally monstrous in her double disguise. Yet both plays demand that their audiences empathize deeply with these monstrous heroines. To empathize with Rosalind and Viola requires the audience’s simultaneous belief in the stakes of the given circumstances and also an understanding that what they watch is a fiction. In an example that is perhaps more relatable in contemporary theater, where women usually play Viola and Rosalind, this necessary empathy extends to the eminently unlikable Malvolio. These roles require performances that build affective capital through activating the latent potential for affective transmission in the texts of the plays. Actors must empathize with their roles along with audiences. Activating potential affect might seem like performers posit subjectivity onto their roles. However, investigating and playing the intentions that certain lines seem to carry leads to meaningful and effective performance faithful to the text of the play. These affective performances *work* on audiences. Performances like these, and like the ones described above by
Waites, Ziegler, and Sinden, are what “Shakespeare can be made to do,” rather than simply what “‘Shakespeare’ is” (“Invisible Bullets, Violet Beards” 220 emph. original).
Conclusion: Looking Backwards, Going Forwards

Over the course of the introduction and the last three chapters, I have argued that Shakespearean performances are sites that generate meaning. It has been my goal to dispel misconceptions about the authority, authenticity, and quality of these productions by examining relationships between audiences and performers. I have uncovered the ways in which performances on “imaginary forces work” and how, reciprocally, audiences “deck … kings” with their “thoughts.” The Chorus of Shakespeare’s Henry V invites the audience to be visceral participants in the performance they are about to watch. Henry V does, as Robert Weimann points out, uniquely articulate this invitation (70). However, I have demonstrated over the course of this thesis that many of Shakespeare’s plays invite audiences to respond not only intellectually but also emotionally and viscerally to the drama before them. As You Like It, Twelfth Night, Hamlet, 3 Henry VI and Richard III all consistently breach the confines of mimesis, of mere representation, consistently reminding their audiences that what they watch is a fiction. These plays also tell us much about Shakespeare’s own anxieties surrounding audience empathy, particularly because these plays ask audiences to think about how characters engage different empathetic responses. Both Malvolio of Twelfth Night and Richard Gloucester of 3 Henry VI, and Richard III are evil or unlikable characters with whom the audience nonetheless empathizes because of their affective performances. These plays, as evidenced by film adaptations and accounts of stage performances, require actors to empathize with their roles. Through this inquiry, I hope to make room for scholarly conversation amongst the fields of Renaissance studies, literary and cultural studies, and theater and performance studies that will lead to fruitful adaptive and interpretive work.
Beyond examining nuances of Renaissance performance and historicizing ideas of psychoanalysis in Shakespearean performance, my goal is to raise awareness among scholars of literary and cultural theory that practices among professional actors lead to strong choices and powerful productions. Historicizing acting practices demonstrates how the affective performances at Shakespeare’s own Globe were likely close to the affective performances of Shakespeare that happen all over the world today. A further examination of the professionalism of Shakespearean acting in the twenty-first century would necessarily bring together interviews from professional thespians, in the vein of the Royal Shakespeare Company’s series *Players of Shakespeare*, and also take into account the responses of diverse audiences of Shakespearean plays. For example, Donald Sinden’s account of his performance of Malvolio, specifically in the scene where he reads Maria’s forged letter, disrupts Douglas Trevor’s reading of that scene. Trevor insists that the scene requires Malvolio to be unaware that he is being observed while reading; Sinden’s performance of Malvolio included directly addressing the audience who observes him while reading. This disruption creates not a binary between text and performance, but space for both readings to simultaneously be meaningful, since they are both faithful to the text and keep in mind Renaissance conditions. In contemporary literary and cultural studies, the increasing breakdown of disciplinary boundaries leaves room for exciting and necessary collaboration between literary scholars, artists, and scientists who can explicate how theater touches us culturally and emotionally—as well as chemically and neurologically.

Literary studies will also benefit from serious inquiry into the dramatic artifacts of our own time. Books, like Jonathan Miller’s *Subsequent Performances* (1986), which examines the afterlives of classical plays, the *Players of Shakespeare* essay series, documentaries like the Public Broadcasting Service’s series *Shakespeare Uncovered* (2013) or Al Pacino’s film *Looking*
for Richard (1996), might all seem more popular than scholarly. However, these and other books, documentaries, and creative projects can inform literary scholars, who are outside of the discipline of theatremaking, about the processes directors and performers go through when approaching Shakespeare. These projects can illuminate how and why directing, acting, adaptation, and staging choices are made. When Shakespearean actors, who work under collaborative conditions with dramaturges, directors, historians, designers, and in open communication with each other and their own audiences, discuss the process of creating their characters onstage, scholars can gain important textual insight. Shakespearean actors do not posit individual subjectivities onto their performances, but activate the affective potential in their lines. Conventions of contemporary theatre, and the representational nature of film, can sometimes mask the affective work that happens in performance. Empathy, however, remains necessary for the transmission of affect. Empathy remains necessary for performers since it helps them build the stakes of their performance. The level of detail that scholars employ when examining Renaissance accounts of playgoing could also interestingly be applied to investigating the methods and approaches of actors. Rhonda Blair’s work on imagination, conceptual blending and empathy has begun this inquiry. Actors are trained to undertake the process of relating to their roles empathetically and conjuring the affects latent in the text, but they do not always articulate their performance this way. Examining how acting works neurologically may not only give scholars insight into how performance makes meaning, but also give actors insight into how their ongoing work shapes meaningful performances. As Helen Nicholson succinctly puts it, “one way to ensure actors’ feelings are disciplined and trained is to codify their emotions scientifically,” since “[t]he history of acting is, in many ways, a history of the science of
emotions and, in recent studies, theatre scholars have looked backwards to chart how scientific knowledge has defined theatrical emotion” (21).

Director Tim Carroll has stated that employing Original Practices approach to Shakespeare “has meant looking back to go forwards.” Carroll’s Original Practices approach involves incorporating as faithfully as possible the technical, scenic, casting, and staging practices of Elizabethan theater. While no doubt Carroll’s productions employing Original Practices have been riveting and affective, drawing out strains of Shakespeare’s text left out of more diverse casting and staging practices, literary scholars seem comfortable drawing upon Carroll’s productions precisely because they so exactly replicate the performance conditions under which Shakespeare would have conducted his theater. Looking “backwards” into science and cognition, using affect theory and accounts of contemporary performance coupled with historicization of the sort Tim Carroll employs will lead to even more fruitful collaboration. Giving actors and literary scholars shared vocabulary will foster alliances that would lead to understanding not just how Shakespeare, generally, comments on universal themes or Renaissance culture, but how productions of Shakespeare make fresh meanings through performance.
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