Re-Evaluating Earlier Generations of Shakespeare Film
Shakespeare Association of America Meeting, New Orleans 2016
Leaders: Toby Malone, University of Waterloo; Michael P. Jensen, Shakespeare Newsletter

Characterizing Ophelia: The Use of Female Space in Olivier's Hamlet
M. G. Aune, California University of Pennsylvania
Shakespeare's text of *Hamlet* mediates the characterization of Ophelia (as with many other female characters) in large part by limiting the number of her lines and her time on stage. Despite this, academic and popular interest in Ophelia (particularly, though not solely, in the 20ᵗʰ century) has created demand for a more fully realized Ophelia. As a result, Ophelia has been the subject of paintings, plays, novels, and fan fiction. On the academic side, numerous articles and books appeared creating a rich trove of scholarly work. Stage productions responded by giving Ophelia more time on stage and emphasizing the non-verbal aspects of her character.

Film provides an ideal means to explore the shifting characterization of Ophelia through the 20ᵗʰ century. Further, with its greater potential for settings and the compression of time, film would seem to be an ideal medium to create an Ophelia of greater depth and sophistication. In Laurence Olivier's 1948 *Hamlet*, for instance, he provided Ophelia with a room of her own. While sparsely decorated, it enabled her to receive Polonius and Laertes in her own private space rather than meeting them in public or in their chambers. More recent *Hamlet* films, such as Michael Almereyda's and Kenneth Branagh's productions of *Hamlet* (2000 and 1996) expand the text's characterization of Ophelia by granting her a space of her own. Branagh's Ophelia has a bedroom, seen in flashbacks, as well as a padded cell. Almereyda's Ophelia has her own apartment. Franco Zeffirelli's grants Ophelia some space of her own, but, like Olivier's it seems to be semi-public.

In this paper I will focus on the characterization of Ophelia in Olivier's film, looking in particular at the *mise en scene* that surrounds her. She is given a space (as is Gertrude) but rather than grant her any greater depth of character or importance to the narrative, it seems to reduce her character even further. If space permits, I will extend the study to later films of *Hamlet* as a contrast to Olivier's.

"King of Shadows": The Warner Brothers A Midsummer Night's Dream *as Source, Intertext, and (Counter)Example*
Stephen M. Buhler, University of Nebraska-Lincoln
This essay will explore the long-lasting impact of the Max Reinhardt- and William Dieterle-directed film version of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* for Warner Brothers Studios (1935) on subsequent film and stage realizations of the play and on Shakespearean screen adaptations more generally. I am particularly interested in the precedents set in four areas: 1) Casting, especially aiming for recognizable "star-power" throughout the ensemble and not only in major roles; 2) Textual rearrangement and intervention, as the film opens with Theseus's triumphal return to Athens; 3) Musical meaning, both in the use of Mendelssohn's incidental score and in the blurring of musical and verbal boundaries in the fairy realm; and 4) Translation (in multiple senses of the term) into familiar film genres, including the Hollywood musical, and into other art forms. My examples will include MGM's Shakespeare films (*Romeo and Juliet*, *Julius Caesar*); versions of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* from Benjamin Britten, Peter Brook, and Michael Hoffman; and, expanding further through the post-Branagh era, Shakespeare films by Julie Taymor and Michael Almereyda. The essay will conclude with an

examination of the film's still shifting place in critical response, audience reception, and industry lore – a range of judgments that mark the film as a pharmakon, both box-office poison and herb of virtuous property.

Silent Story Telling in Early Shakespeare Films
Catherine Canino, University of South Carolina Upstate
In 1927, the German theatrical producer Max Reinhardt wrote an essay for *the New York Times* in which he railed against the relatively new medium of film. "Moving pictures are a dangerous parasite of the theatre," he writes, "Music borrowed from opera cannot save film from that unfortunate dumbness to which is its fate. Whither is this ever increasing staging of masses to lead?" Less than a decade later, Reinhardt was named the director of Warner Brothers' filmed production of Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream*, and, in a remarkable example of self fulfilling prophesy, created an over-staged, over-cast, overwrought jumble of Rococo décor, Pre-Christian Greece, Sixteenth Century England, Nineteenth Century Book illustrations, and Victorian etchings, interspersed with extended ballet sequences and an overpowering operatic score. The film failed at the box office, as did the other "pre-Olivier" Shakespearean films of the 1930s. The problem did not lie in the subject matter—Shakespeare had succeeded in the silent era of the 1900s and 1920s---but in a basic misunderstanding of film that was voiced by Reinhardt and shared by others in the nascent industry. Film is not a parasite of theatre, as Reinhardt claimed, because it is not artistically related to theatre. Rather, film is an artistic descendent of the visual arts, or precisely, of the still photograph, and became a brilliant realization of that medium. At its inception, film was intended to be entirely visual, and in the silent era that intention was perfectly fulfilled. Stories were told through moving pictures, characters communicated with gesture and facial expressions and, periodically, the more complicated dialogue or expository material was visually displayed on inter-titles. When sound was introduced into film, many filmmakers saw the art form differently and attempted to make movies into filmed stage plays, using material that was dialogue heavy and more appropriate for the theatre. Occasionally, as in the case of musicals or comedies, they were successful; more often, as in the case of Shakespeare or other adaptations of classic literature, they were not. The reasons were based on the expectations of genre. Musicals rely on short, snappy dialogue and visual spectacle. Comedies rely on short snappy dialogue and physical action. Shakespeare and classic literature rely on complicated language, significative subtext, and emotional nuance, none of which were easily realized in early film. This tension between the vision of film as an expression of images and the vision of film as an expression of dialogue is conspicuously evident in two Shakespearean films that were produced by rival studios within a year of each other. The first is Reinhart's *Midsummer Night's Dream* from Warner Brothers, and the second is George Cukor's *Romeo and Juliet* from MGM. These films attempt, and fail, to reconcile both of the aforementioned cinematic visions. They have extended periods of dialogue but are bloated with spectacle and visual effect. They feature a collection of stage and film actors who are trying to negotiate iambic pentameter while learning the art of the close-up. They contain overlong scenes that are in serious need of editing, and camera shots with an unnecessarily narrow field of vision. Nonetheless, despite their failings, each of these films includes one scene that works remarkably well, primarily because it reaches back to film's original intent and art form. Reinhardt and Cukor both begin their movies with extended pantomimes that function primarily as silent films. These scenes are wordless, and rely exclusively on gesture and facial expression to give the audience exposition and understanding. In addition to the actions of the

characters, the scenes also provide remarkable narrative images that testify to film's unique storytelling abilities. These are not the first instances, of course, when the "talkies" returned to their roots and inserted a "silent film scene" within an otherwise sound film; the Marx Brothers were famous for such scenes even before Reinhardt and Cukor imagined them.   Within a few generations, the "silent scene" became a staple of movie-making, and, in effect, now functions as an ancient chorus for modern films—providing background and off-stage information, displaying character and time development, and bringing the audience closer to the narrative. However, the Cukor and Reinhardt opening pantomime scenes, though not as famous as the mirror scene in *Duck Soup* or the monster's encounter with a little girl in *Frankenstein*, proved to be particularly influential on subsequent Shakespearean films. Since the release of these two films, directors of Shakespeare films invariably use a pantomime scene not only to act as a chorus, but also to allow the director to become both *auteur* and Shakespearean scholar and insert his own personal interpretation of Shakespeare's work into the film. This paper will examine Cukor and Reinhardt's pantomime scenes in detail, and trace their influence on subsequent Shakespearean films.

Sacred Space, Cosmic Trees, and Labyrinths: Hierophany in Kurosawa's Throne of Blood
Melissa Croteau, California Baptist University
Kurosawa's *Throne of Blood* sets itself apart as consecrated space from its first moments: the film opens and closes with a chorus of male voices chanting about the violence and vanity of man, who is in this earthly world for but a moment yet arrogantly and bloodily pursues his own ambitions. Both scenes feature thick mists blanketing the ruins of a castle, a visual illustration of the Buddhist doctrine being sung, underlining the circular, *mandala*-like structure of this film and echoing the many circular patterns depicted within it. In Mircea Eliade's influential study *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, he defines *hierophany* as "anything which manifests the sacred" (xviii), and goes on to discuss the ways in which cultures have imbued objects, rituals, spaces, and concepts of time with sacred significance. Filmic hierophany has increasingly gained scholarly interest since critic and screenwriter Paul Schrader influentially argued that static, contemplative films embracing a "blank realism," such as those of Yasujiro Ozu and Robert Bresson, best communicate the transcendent. In this paper, I will examine the techniques— cinematic and narrative—Kurosawa uses to delineate sacred spaces and forms in *Throne of Blood*, analyzing how he employs both kinesis and stasis to create multivalent hierophanic moments. Indeed, his vacillation between these poles embodies the ambivalence of hierophany: the transcendent is simultaneously pure and polluted, supernatural and earthly, salvific and destructive. In addition, Kurosawa's extensive use of Noh theater elements in *Throne of Blood*, written of illuminatingly by Donald Richie and Keiko McDonald, among others, demonstrates that a formalist cinematic style, rather than stark realism, can vividly express the sacred, particularly when it evokes the rituals of Buddhism, Shinto, and shamanism.

Royal Shakespeare, Radical Cinema
Samuel Crowl, Ohio University
Peter Brook and Peter Hall transformed the playing of Shakespeare and the primary theatrical institutions responsible for maintaining his legacy in England in the 1960s and 70s. Brook was the determined iconoclast trying to find his way back to the essential Shakespeare and the minimalist playing space. Hall was the company man; the maker of institutional Shakespeare. Though they regarded themselves as artists very much of their own time and place, neither

became as attracted to film as they were to the stage and this at a moment now regarded as something of a Golden Age in British film when John Osborne's Angry Young Men took their new interest in working class drama from the stage to film in works like *The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner*, *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, *Billy Liar*, *Morgan*, and *The Entertainer*.

Brook and Hall each made a handful of films with most of those later in their careers intended for television rather than commercial release. Only Brook's early The Lord of the Flies generated critical attention and wide scale release. Each man did, however, develop one of his early RSC stage productions into a film: *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1968) and *King Lear* (1971). Although Hall and Brook would each direct an occasional production in the future for the RSC, their films of the *Dream* and *Lear* can be seen in retrospect as their farewells to the company and the work they had pioneered there.

And both films are far more radical than the stage productions from which they are adapted. In a curious paradox Hall and Brook were willing to challenge the conventions of film even more than those of the stage.

Both men were influenced by the work of Jan Kott whose *Shakespeare Our Contemporary* (1963) had influential chapters on both the Dream and Lear. And by the naturalism of the French New Wave cinema championed by Godard, Truffaut, and Resnais. Brook had, between his stage and film versions of Lear, moved through several seasons of work with a company of RSC actors devoted to Brecht and Artaud. Both men were acutely aware of the way in which the political and cultural events of the 1960s inevitably influenced their work with Shakespeare.

Though Hall and Brook took different theatrical paths after their years together in Stratford, each remained committed to the revival of the theater in the age of film and Shakespeare remained central to each man's work. In their single (Brook's late *Hamlet* was made for television and was never commercially released as a film) Shakespeare film they pushed the boundaries of film as far as they have been pushed in dealing directly with Shakespeare's text and leave us with two stunning alternatives to the Shakespeare films of recent decades where Hollywood production values and genres have largely triumphed.

The Many Masculinities of Hamlet *on Film*
Andrew Darr, University of Missouri

Laurence Olivier infamously began his award-winning film of Shakespeare's most famous play *Hamlet* with the statement, "This is the tragedy of a man who could not make up his mind." This supposedly one-dimensional reading has been criticized over the years for being reductive and overly simplistic but I believe Oliver's statement cuts to Hamlet's core struggle; Hamlet is a man divided. My only issue with the provocative statement is the word "tragedy." Olivier's phrase implies that Hamlet's indecision leads to his tragic demise; because Hamlet took too long to make a decision about killing Claudius, Hamlet died. But I believe Shakespeare's text alludes to an alternative tragedy at the heart of the play: that society requires Hamlet to make a choice concerning what type of man he wanted to be.

My paper focuses on the depiction of masculinity in film adaptations of *Hamlet*. Specifically, I will be contrasting a selection of key performances of the titular character pre-Branagh: Sarah Bernhardt (1900), Asta Neilson (1921), Lawrence Olivier (1948), and Mel Gibson (1990). By analyzing the final moments of each film contrasted, I deconstruct the

portrayal of masculinity both in the context of the critical theories being promoted at the time and intertextually between films.

Beyond Page and Stage: Intermedial Adaptation in Laurence Olivier's Henry V

Kristin N. Denslow, UW-Green Bay

In this paper, I study intermedial references to visual art in Olivier's *Henry V* (1944). The lens of intermediality yokes form to content in the study of adaptation, and considering intermedial reference, in particular, requires thinking about the shifting and overlapping boundaries of various media. This particular study extends previous analyses of Olivier's medial strategy in shifting the action of the film from what Harry M. Geduld calls "anti-illusionistic theatrical" space of the Wooden O to the "quasi-naturalistic" cinematic space of the Battle of Agincourt. I am interested in the representational layer between these two extremes—scenes set in the Boar's Head Tavern, Southampton, and the French Court—and the visual references to Dutch Baroque painting and medieval illuminated manuscripts in these scenes.

Acknowledging that artists are always operating in a space between ambition and constraint, imagination and reality, and creativity and commerce is in many ways to restate the obvious. Yet, articulating this phenomenon in the study of Shakespearean adaptation can continue the conversation about how Shakespeare's plays exist in what Douglas Lanier refers to as a rhizomatic relationship with other texts, authors, and ideas. Studying the particular intermedial rhizome of Olivier's *Henry V* is in the service of extending what we mean when we talk about adaptation. The intermedial reference in *Henry V* to the medieval illuminated manuscript *Les Très Riches Heures du Duc de Berri* demonstrates some of these tensions. Though the sets for the French court are based on the *Très Riches Heures* panels, the visual reference may have had as much to do with the contemporary discourse on "color consciousness" in Technicolor films and the recent color reproduction of the *Très Riches Heures* as it did with Olivier's desire to "[catch] the spirit of fourteenth century [*sic*] paintings" (Qtd. Geduld 18) and to replicate "the vegetable dyes of the Middle Ages" on screen.

Works Cited

Geduld, Harry M. *Filmguide to Henry V*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1973.
Lanier, Douglas M. "Shakespearean Rhizomatics: Adaptation, Ethics, Value."
Shakespeare and the Ethics of Appropriation. Eds. Alexa Huang and Elizabeth Rivlin. New
	York: Palgrave, 2014. 21-40.

Banishing Jack: Chimes at Midnight *and* My Own Private Idaho

Jennifer Flaherty, Georgia College and State University

My paper will explore how Orson Welles adapts the character of Falstaff from a variety of Shakespearean source texts in his *Chimes at Midnight*, and how Gus Van Sant then adapts several of Falstaff's scenes from *Chimes at Midnight* in *My Own Private Idaho*. In creating *Chimes at Midnight*, Orson Welles used selections from *Richard II*, *Henry IV Parts 1 and 2*, *Henry V*, *Merry Wives of Windsor*, and even Holinshed's *Chronicles*, reworking and reorganizing the Shakespearean scenes to focus on Falstaff. Lines from *Richard II* (a play in which Falstaff never appears) are repurposed to refer to Falstaff and set up the opening scene of the Hal/Falstaff relationship in the film. Contrary to the stage directions in *Henry IV Part I*, Falstaff hears and responds to Hal's sun speech, and the man who rails against the king in *Henry*

V due to "excess of wine" is heavily implied to be Falstaff. Welles's film joins a disparate group of sources into a unifying script that explores friendship and nostalgia.

When Gus Van Sant made *My Own Private Idaho* in 1991, he sampled heavily from Welles' *Chimes at Midnight* when writing and filming scenes for Bob Pigeon, his Falstaff figure. Bob's scenes use lines, camera angles, frames, and musical scores that echo the corresponding scenes from *Chimes at Midnight*. Van Sant even follows the reorganized structure of *Chimes at Midnight* rather than the original organization of the Shakespearean source texts. But even as the scenes demonstrate the connections with Welles' Falstaff-centric film, Van Sant de-centers Falstaff and the Hal/Falstaff friendship by privileging the Scott/Mike relationship. The same scenes that establish and focus on the Hal/Falstaff relationship in *Chimes at Midnight* seem tangential in *My Own Private Idaho*. Van Sant appropriates scenes that center Falstaff while de-centering Falstaff within his own narrative, simultaneously inverting and paying homage to Welles' film. Where Welles imposes order, Van Sant celebrates chaotic entropy, revising Welles, history, and Shakespeare as part of a fragmented examination of attachment and abandonment.

"There Begins New Matter": The Origins and Influence of Film and Filmstrips in the Teaching of Shakespeare in American Schools
Joseph Haughey, Northwest Missouri State University
As costs associated with bringing film and audio visual technology into the secondary classroom gradually decreased, the 1930s and 40s saw film Shakespeare take its first direct role in everyday American classroom experience and planted a seed that would eventually alter perceptions and practices regarding the learning and teaching of Shakespeare's plays through to the present day. My paper will examine teacher responses as told through *English Journal* contributions from the period – *English Journal* being a primary outlet for practicing high school English teachers since 1913 – to five early Shakespearean film adaptations: the 1935 James Cagney *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the 1936 Leslie Howard and Norma Shearer *Romeo and Juliet*, the 1944 Laurence Olivier *Henry V*, the 1948 Laurence Olivier *Hamlet*, and the 1948 Orson Welles *Macbeth*, and tie these responses as an early ancestor to some of our most innovative strategies for teaching Shakespeare today. The paper will also consider the advent of filmstrip technology, which, much more cost effective for schools than film, also helped bring visualizations of Shakespearean productions, as well as other documentary programs and images, to students. Further, the paper will consider how Shakespeare texts from the period edited for school use likewise reproduced production stills and emphasized new ways of thinking about and studying Shakespeare in terms of film. The reception of these early technologies in schools reveals insights into the teaching of his plays – changing classroom methods increasingly willing to consider, even if not always embrace, performance-based perspectives – that have developed today in the twenty-first century into cutting-edge units involving performance-, technology-, and language-centered lessons.

This work is part of a larger research project regarding the history of Shakespeare in American schools from the nineteenth century to the present that I am currently conducting and intend to publish as a book in the next two to three years. One thread of that book will explore technology's impact – from the phonograph to the web – on how and why we teach Shakespeare in the United States, and this paper as a result is intended to consider the early origins of film Shakespeare contextually within American education.

Falstaff, Unstuck and on the Cheap: Commercial Iconoclasm in Orson Welles' Chimes at Midnight

Scott Hollifield, The University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Among expectations for cinematic Shakespeare through the early 1960s, foremost were those cultivated by Laurence Olivier's *Henry V* and *Hamlet*. The Warner Brothers prestige productions of the 1930s (the Leslie Howard-Norma Shearer *Romeo and Juliet*; James Cagney, Olivia de Havilland, Mickey Rooney, Joe E. Brown and Dick Powell in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*) had established an artifice-forward, all-star dynamic not unlike that studio's musical-revue frame narratives 42nd Street and Footlight Parade. By contrast, Olivier's Shakespeare films of the 1940s and 50s each progress from inherently theatrical spaces to definitively cinematic ones, appearing to transform from source to adaptation in projection. Orson Welles not only pushed against these baselines of commerce and tradition in *Chimes at Midnight*, but also against the overt experimentation of his 1948 *Macbeth*, a trait which afforded that controversial project an air of legitimacy. Welles' Shakespeare films can be read as a series of reactions against classical Hollywood, often playing fast and loose with their vaunted source material and daring cinematic Shakespeare's emerging audience to pick up one gauntlet after another.

Cinematic productions of Shakespeare have tended to bypass the subtle gesture, moving boldly towards authoritativeness, definitiveness, and the sense of a permanent text. These ambitions shed further light on the proprietary processes, multichannel soundtracks, and roadshow presentations so ubiquitous in the 1960s. These stabs at literary-cinematic prestige usually declare themselves through allegiance with a well-known theatrical precedent (the Reinhardt-Dieterle *Dream*, the 1995 McKellen-Loncraine *Richard III*); a diverse, often international cast of film actors who sometimes tread the boards or vice versa (though never exclusively Shakespeareans); and, among others, a famously qualified director.

While many of Orson Welles' productions between *Citizen Kane* (1941) and *Chimes at Midnight* (1965) were compromised by studio interference, Welles could claim full final-cut ownership of both. This is more or less where their similarities end. Cinematically, there is little in *Chimes* to rival any of Kane's iconic sequences ("News on the March," the breakfast-table montage, the Chicago Opera House, and so on) beyond the Battle of Shrewsbury. That singular sequence, however, was constructed on the editing bed, its cinematographic possibilities having been severely limited by a dearth of extras and budgetary factors. Among Welles' great talents was the ability to successfully cut intangibles together when the tangibles eluded him. Once *Citizen Kane*—among the most purely cinematic narratives ever produced—established him as a proto-auteur, the practical needs of Welles' projects often grappled with his directorial will.

By all appearances, Welles conceived *Chimes at Midnight* as a big-budget vanity production, a Shakespearean portmanteau with Falstaff as its bulk and hinges, shooting an international cast on location with limited funds and pre-1960s film technology. In spite of the latter's potential aesthetic benefits and Welles' final-cut control, Chimes is among the very few A-picture aspirants to suffer such a persistent—and well-documented—series of blows to its prestige. Beyond its director's ongoing effort to rival the achievement of Citizen Kane, Chimes was hobbled by severe budget, scheduling, and technical issues. Poor on-set conditions and sound recording necessitated the postproduction dubbing of several actors, a few like Fernando Rey's Worcester looped in Welles' instantly recognizable baritone. The director's freewheeling adaptation and shooting style further compounded these lapses in continuity and verisimilitude. Unless gritty, fragmented, low-budget Shakespeare was what audiences expected in 1965,

Chimes at Midnight builds a complex case study for an auteur's determination versus the perceived cultural value of his source material.

Music for Silent **Merchants**
Kendra Preston Leonard, Silent Film Sound & Music Archive
In 1912, the Thanhouser Film Company produced a two-reel 1912 silent production of Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* in which the screenwriters, director, and actors presented a rarely seen interpretation of Shylock as a sympathetic character. Film critic Louis Reeves Harrison agreed with this novel representation of the character in his in-depth review of the film for *The Moving Picture World* in July 1912, shortly after the film's general release. What is even more interesting about this interpretation of the play and Shylock in particular is the approach film music critic Clarence E. Sinn took when he published a list of suggested pieces to accompany the film in the same journal a month after Harrison's review. Sinn's recommendations, which eschew the stereotypical music previously used for Jews on stage and screen, indicate a dramatic shift in attitudes towards both the play and Shylock as a representation of Jews on screen. I examine these musical precedents and the ways in which Sinn's suggestions diverge from them, creating the first sympathetic musical portrait of Shylock on the screen.

Addressing the Eye: Silent Shakespeare and the Spectator
Amanda Ruud, University of Southern California
The earliest Shakespeare films find themselves caught between the visual codes of the theatre and the emerging splendors of the screen. Laced with trick shots and surprises but also relying on stagey histrionics, these films are marked by what Judith Buchanan has called "medium impurities." In my reading, however, these impurities also serve a reflexive purpose: by crystallizing the plays into brief, imagistic experiences, they underscore the methods that the early filmic medium relied on for grappling with Shakespearean subjects. While the silent Shakespeare films *do* seem invested in presenting a relatively true image of Shakespeare's plays (at least as they were then performed on the stage), they also employ a set of visual tricks and self-aware camera work which reflexively interrogate the meaning and impact of addressing Shakespeare to the eye. To what extent, the films seem to ask, can Shakespeare made available by means of the image alone, and what kind of viewer would have the ability to see it?

 This paper explores the visual reflexivity of the 1916 Tanhauser *King Lear*. The film relies heavily on medium specific devices—most notably a heavy use of the iris shot or vignette—to convey the affect of the play to viewing audiences. My essay compares the film's meta-cinematic reflections on visual storytelling with the meta-theatrical interrogations of vision that drive the plot of *King Lear*, asking how this play, and its silent interpretation on the early screen, construct their understanding of viewership.