

Darlana Ciraulo, University of Central Missouri

### Shakespeare's Bust as Speculative Object in the 1966 *Batman*

The 1960s live-action television series *Batman* introduced a new incarnation of the Caped Crusader that drew on the global prestige of Shakespeare. Created by William Dozier, *Batman* aired for three seasons from January 1966 to March 1968 on the American ABC network where it occupied a coveted primetime slot. Anticipating the wide-appeal of the thirty-minute show, *Batman's* producers ran weekly episodes on two consecutive nights; this crowd-pleasing, cliffhanger format was eventually scaled back, however, in the final year of production. Many eager TV goers who first tuned into the program--especially those diehard fans who expected to see their favorite comic book superhero triumph over Gotham City's villains--expressed surprise, if not disdain, to encounter instead what has been called a "campy" batman. This newfangled batman (played by Adam West) possessed a perversely sophisticated appeal: he danced chicly to the "batusi"; drove a sleek Lincoln Futura "batmobile"; and utilized a broad assortment of state-of-the-art "bat" devices and gadgets in the cavalier fashion of James Bond. Batman's bat paraphernalia and charm helped to fashion the Dark Knight, as well as his sidekick Robin (played by Burt Ward), into amusing avatars of crime-fighting.

One outlandish set prop, Shakespeare's bust, appeared regularly on the series and became specifically associated with Batman's millionaire alter-ego, Bruce Wayne. Located prominently in the study of Wayne Manor, Shakespeare's bust contained a hidden switch that, when turned, permitted access to the Batcave. This mechanism blurred traditional aesthetic boundaries by invoking Shakespeare as an icon of both highbrow and pop culture. Shakespeare's bust not only contributed to the campy finesse of the show, but it also functioned as a symbol of Bruce Wayne's distinguished standing in society as a cosmopolitan socialite. My paper draws on the work of speculative realism, or object-oriented philosophy, by exploring how, in the words of Graham Harmon, "*certain* things are connected rather than others" (201). The object, Shakespeare's Bust, is associated with two diverse cultural states simultaneously. As Timothy Morton states, "Objects are contradictions" (210). This object-related simultaneity has led recently to the "weird" reinvention of the object, Shakespeare's Bust, for Batman fans: the Bust has lately been refashioned as a type of piggy bank, or collectible toy money bank. This paper analyzes Shakespeare's Bust as an object that not only serves to redefine Batman but also the cultural capital of Shakespeare as well.

Andrew Darr, University of Missouri

### Ludonarrative Harmony in *Hamlet* Video Game Adaptations

Video games are, by their very nature, a liminal medium caught between the ludic, another word for gameplay, and narrative elements. Early games like *Pong* (1972) focus entirely on gameplay with almost no narrative,[1] but forty-years later games like *Dear Esther* (2012) foreground narrative while eliminating almost all game mechanics. *Dear Esther's* gameplay consists of walking; there are no puzzles or action elements that require any skill outside of maneuvering the

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first-person camera through the linear landscape. While the game may lack typical gameplay mechanics, *Dear Esther*'s non-linear narrative confronts themes of loss, the afterlife, guilt, and transcendence. The two games exemplify the wide range of experiences encapsulated within the medium of video games.

Game have often struggled to rectify the balance of these two sometimes contradictory elements, and when the game is based on *Hamlet* the difficulty is heightened even further. How can one make a game based on Shakespeare's famous, constantly delaying prince while ceding control to the player? What makes the upcoming video game adaptation of *Hamlet*, titled *Elsinore*, exceptional within the history of video game adaptations of *Hamlet* is that it strikes that rare balance between the ludic and narrative aspects of video games. In this way *Elsinore* exemplifies the development of the video game medium during its roughly forty-year history.

This paper argues that video game adaptations of *Hamlet* – I survey several different of Shakespeare video games as I build toward *Elsinore* – reflect the progress the maturing medium of video games has made as an art form in terms of the growing ability to create and maintain ludonarrative harmony.

**Vernon Dickson, Florida International University**

**Agency and (Board)Gamer Shakespeares**

As board games undergo a Renaissance of popularity and growth, new Shakespeares emerge within this age of gaming, revealing his ongoing agency in popular culture (and outside of his usual places of representation). Board games offer a distinctive tactical and social space for Shakespeares. While Shakespeare has most often been invoked in quite broad terms within party games (such as *Apples to Apples* or *Charades*) or relegated to a corpus of lines and facts within trivia games, contemporary designer board games offer richer and more engaged approaches into new Shakespeares as current places of agency and power. This paper studies three of the most well regarded (in gamer circles) Shakespeare-themed board games—*Shakespeare*, *Council of Verona*, and *Kill Shakespeare*—examining how ideas of Shakespeare are enacted and acted upon within new networks of play. These board games frequently use Shakespeare as a thematic center, allowing players to become agents themselves within an almost mythic network of Shakespeare, engaging players in active and dynamic roles—creating their own stories within new worlds/experiences/games that invoke new Shakespeares. [175]

**Kyle DiRoberto, University of Arizona**

**Entwining Shakespeare:  
Community, Critical Gaming, and the Politics of Pastoral**

This paper details the experience of teaching Shakespeare's *As You Like It* through gaming. More specifically, it reviews the results of using an open-source nonlinear narrative game-design platform, Twine, in an attempt to build a semester-long collaborative research project in an upper-division Shakespeare class. Juxtaposing lectures about the feminine as pharmakon, female

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agency, and rebellion in the male political subject with research on the historical socioeconomic events and inequality in England in the 1590s, such as The Enclosure Riots, this critical game/academic play will attempt to express elements of the intertextual nonlinear conversation that, in part, constitute *As You Like It*.

Moreover, the paper will examine the use of games to explore the aesthetic versus the logocentric political construction of nature and the relationship of desire to knowledge. It will ask, for example, what this imagined nature shares with cross-dressing female heroines, as the two are often juxtaposed in Shakespeare's plays. In short, the paper will probe what it means to find knowledge in the pleasurable and vice versa: "tongues in trees, books in . . . running brooks, sermons in stones, and good in everything" (2.1.16-7)

**Lowell Duckert, West Virginia University**

**"It is very cold":  
Hamlet's Northern Exposure**

This paper investigates the impersonal yet affective "[i]t" behind Hamlet's mundane comment to Horatio on the battlements of Elsinore. Taking up the play's interrogational impulse – "Who's there?" (1.1.1) – I speculate: what *is* "cold" in the early modern period? Culling hypotheses from contemporary pamphlet literature and natural-philosophical treatises concerning the substance of cold during the spell known as the Little Ice Age (ca. 1350-1800; *Hamlet* [1600-1]) – I argue that the "it" materializes cold's animacy – its indeterminate "thing-power," to borrow from Jane Bennett – a ghost-like tactile presence rather than a simple deprivation of heat. "The air," after all, "bites shrewdly" (1.4.1). While other scholars connect the play's coldness to the masculinity and heroism displayed by English voyagers to the far north-west and east (Palmer), or, to Mount Hecla, the supposed location of purgatory (Poole), I examine cold's "bit[e]" at the instance of embodiment. *Hamlet's* cold occurrences constitute physical human-nonhuman networks between spectator (Danish guard) and landscape (shrewd "air"). In addition, the questionable "[i]t" and the various alliances (the "is") that "[i]t" engenders sponsor ethico-political as well as ontological speculations. Bringing the drama's "geohumoralism" (Floyd-Wilson) into conversation with material ecocriticism highlights, in Stacy Alaimo's words, "the insurgent vulnerability" of exposure, "a fraught sense of political agency that emerges from the perceived loss of boundaries and sovereignty." How might exposing ourselves to the early modern "cold" actuate alternative ecological presents at the world's most northern places of protest – against the drilling of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and the displacement of the indigenous Gwich'in people, for example, or on behalf of the protection of Caliban Mountain and Ariel Peak located at the Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve? What does the fraught embrace of "[i]t" afford?

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Michael Lutz, Indiana University

**“The Promised End”:  
Shakespeare and Extinction**

This paper will investigate the uncanny implications of Ben Jonson’s claim that William Shakespeare was “not of an age, but for all time.” That this encomium was issued only after Shakespeare himself was dead and his works posthumously assembled emphasizes the point I want to consider: what does it mean to take seriously Jonson’s tribute not as indicating Shakespeare’s timelessness, but rather an *untimeliness* in the face of human finitude? Using philosopher Ray Brassier’s idea of extinction – a cosmological fact according to contemporary science, an inevitable annihilation that undoes the correlationist impulse to figure the human mind as the motor of history, “the thought of the absence of thought” (*Nihil Unbound* 229-230) – I aim to recontextualize the critical tradition of Shakespeare’s futurity in a cultural moment where economic, political, and ecological disasters loom ever larger.

As my title indicates, I will centralize my argument around Shakespeare’s *King Lear* and its attendant critical history as the image of a Christian (or, depending on the critic, sometimes very un-Christian) apocalypse. Despite Brassier’s arguments, we are not the first generation capable of comprehending the end of our species and what we think of as “our world.” Furthermore, by looking at the recurrence of Shakespeare and *Lear* in media of the post-apocalypse, such as Godard’s unusual film adaptation and Emily St. John Mandel’s novel *Station Eleven*, this paper will trace how Shakespeare operates as an instrument for imagining a future that, despite the nominal continuance of Shakespeare himself, has no place for us.

Robert Sawyer, East Tennessee State University

**Collaboration, Computation, and Speculation**

In the last decades of the twentieth century and the early ones of the twenty-first, the dispute over early modern collaboration has become much more polemical if not personal. The more theoretically-driven arguments, such as Jeffrey Masten’s in *Textual Intercourse* (1997), rely on Barthes and Foucault to minimize the notion of the singular, romanticized author, specifically when he considers what constitutes “authorship” in the early modern period in relation to those composing for the theatre. Agreeing with Masten that we should “no longer regard collaboration as an aberrant form of textual production,” I would also side with his notion that further “anachronistic attempts to divine the singular author of each scene, phrase and word” is not particularly productive. Yet, as Brian Vickers reminds us, these writers consisted of flesh and blood bodies, and so it does matter which author wrote what scenes, phrases, and words.

Most recently, there has even been a “rebirth of the author” in Shakespeare and early modern studies more generally, scholars who challenge Masten’s “dispersal of authority” in favor of a more “possessive authorship,” according to Heather Hirschfeld. These proponents of an “authorial personality” use Shakespeare “to show the other collaborators in his canon” and also

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to “demonstrate[e] Shakespeare’s hand in other works.” Examples of this trend include Jeffrey Knapp’s book *Shakespeare Only*, which insists on “keep[ing] authors squarely in the picture.”

A second group of attribution specialists identified by Hirschfeld also believes in a stable and identifiable author, and by employing computational studies, critics such as Hugh Craig and Gary Taylor feel confident they can “establish the identifiable, distinguishing use of language of individual Renaissance playwrights.” In the last year, however, Hirschfeld has warned against such big-data approaches, claiming “we should not be blind to their [computational] reinforcement by the institutional appeal . . . of big-data analysis within the academic community,” particularly in this time of an assault on the humanities. She concludes that it is “an irony worth noting that these explicitly ‘humanist’ scholars are now enabled by what seem like the de-humanizing, mechanizing, and economizing work of computerized number crunching that turns style into machine-readable coordinates.”

I take a stance somewhere between these conflicted and somewhat opposed views on collaboration and the authorial self, just as object-oriented literary criticism challenges any singular approach to literary analysis. If, as Graham Harman argues, “real individual objects resist all forms of casual or cognitive mastery,” perhaps an object-oriented analysis offers a via-media between the death of the author and the death of the culture in sorting out attribution qualities. In an attempt to avoid both “*undermining*” or “*overmining*” such collaborative issues, I hope to show that perhaps both ways of determining authorship may be correct in some “weirdly speculative” manner.

**Geoffrey Way, Washburn University**

**A Preview to Nowhere:  
The Shakespearean Performance Trailer**

This paper will consider the existence and shaping of trailers used to advertise upcoming theatrical Shakespearean performances for theaters and festivals. In many cases, these trailers feature (almost) no elements from the actual productions they seek to promote, broadly marketing and anticipating live performances before they have started to take form. Such trailers present temporally weird creations, gesturing towards performances yet unknown and unbegun. While it seems easy to attribute this increasingly ubiquitous practice as simply the influence of the filmic or cinematic on theatrical performance, I will argue that the rise of the trailer is the result of a more complex network of factors, from the prominence and pressure of digital platforms such as YouTube and Facebook that host the trailers and facilitate their spread, to the growing marketing emphasis on the film trailer (with smaller teasers and trailers being created to hype full trailers) and its cultural prominence not just as a marketing tool but also as its own art form, to the yet-unknown live theatrical performances they attempt to anticipate, to the enormous network of Shakespearean playtexts and performances that transcends any single institution or individual production. Through focusing on these performance trailers as nodes within larger networks that exist in both past, present, and future, I will highlight how a seemingly-

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straightforward marketing practice is less reactionary and more complex than its existence would suggest.