Essentializing Shakespeare in the Shakespeare Aftermath: Dmitry Krymov's *Midsummer Night's Dream (As You Like It)* , Matías Piñeiro's *Viola* , and Annie Dorsen's *Piece of Work: A Machine-Made Hamlet*

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This essay has three complementary aims. I want, first, to demonstrate how some of the more venturous reenactments of Shakespeare undertaken in this age of new media may productively range from the most basic, foundational forms of artisanal theatrical presentation to the most nonrepresentational forms of postdramatic, indeed, posthuman expression. Negotiating a path between performative extremes that encourage a return to "original practices" and the participatory embrace of all things virtual, I focus on three examples of contemporary Shakespeare production that exploit the multiplicity of approaches available in the Shakespeare aftermath: as much a state of consciousness or awareness as a temporal condition in which all things Shakespearean are always already present and available for reenactments, adaptations, or appropriations reflectively grounded on avowed Shakespearean precedents. The subjects I explore move from the sheer materiality of a stage filled with acrobats, puppets, a performing dog, and a tree trunk to the cinematic two-dimensionality of actors literally (and figuratively) rehearsing Shakespeare in the streets, stages, and flats of Buenos Aires to an algorithmically generated production medium dominated by typographically variegated text cast on a screen and supplemented by collaterally programmed vocalizations, sound effects, and colored backdrop alterations, with limited intervention of a physical human presence.

My second aim is to indicate how two conspicuously free adaptations—Dmitry Krymov's *Midsummer Night's Dream (As You Like It)* (2012), a play-

I would like to thank Annie Dorsen and Matías Piñeiro for graciously sharing insights into their work as well as illustrations, and Dmitry Krymov for making hundreds of images available to me when I only asked for one. Thanks also to Bruce Smith for organizing the 2015 Shakespeare Association of America (SAA) plenary session where I presented an early version of this essay, and to Katherine Rowe for making crucial suggestions at a formative stage of the essay's development. To see figures in color and to access supplemental materials for this essay, visit sq.folger.edu.

fully deft stage performance presented at the 2012 World Shakespeare Festival, and Matías Piñeiro's *Viola* (2012), a remarkably inventive Argentine film that offers an inspired variation on *Twelfth Night*—radically depart from, displace, and recalibrate Shakespearean playtexts and plots while generating vital lines of engagement with the plays in question.[1] Displaced variations on two different Shakespeare plays, these projects manage to keep faith with their source plays' core concerns in ways that more overtly faithful productions do not. I advance this claim having long maintained how poorly the fidelity model serves not only audiences and critics but also would-be adapters themselves, who often produce lavishly appointed but lifeless reproductions of Shake-speare. Offering largely uninflected renderings of playtexts and conforming to other difference-deadening dramatic or filmic conventions, such "indifferent" reproductions generally *make no difference* with respect to the stage or film history of a given play's production, failing to open up new avenues of engagement or interpretation.[2]

By way of contrast, *difference-making* reproduction may, paradoxically, offer a more promising road forward to sustaining the essence (or defining features) of long-established plays and playtexts. The engines of that illuminating difference—opportunistic elisions, inventive displacements, or targeted refocusings—facilitate the drive to concentrate and clarify not just what is essential to the director in question but also, arguably, what is essential to the interrupted playtext itself. Indeed, as Peter Brook contends in an interview with Alan Riding, distillation by way of elimination may constitute the surest route to sustainability for Shakespeare's plays: "In all Shakespeare's plays, there are things which were so much written for the styles and audience of their time that they don't necessarily carry the same weight today. Underneath, there is very often a purer and stronger and deeper work that today is more relevant. And you can reveal it by delicately removing the superstructure."[3] I would more emphatically add that in some instances recutting new matter with old and playing the cuts

[1] Peter Kirwan offers informed commentary on Dmitry Krymov's *Midsummer Night's Dream (As You Like It)* as performed at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon in *A Year of Shakespeare: Re-Living the World Shakespeare Festival*, ed. Paul Edmondson, Paul Prescott, and Erin Sullivan (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 142–44. Krymov's direction was undertaken on behalf of the Chekhov International Festival and Dmitry Krymov's Laboratory and the School of Dramatic Theatre Art (Moscow). *Viola*, directed by Matías Piñeiro (Révolver Films and Universidad del Cine, 2012; New York: Cinema Guild, 2013), DVD.

[2] As W. B. Worthen observes in a different context, "Not all differences make a difference because some differences are indifferent and hence inconsequential." See W. B. Worthen, "Shakespeare 3.0: Or Text Versus Performance, The Remix," in *Alternative Shakespeares* 3, ed. Diana E. Henderson (New York: Routledge, 2008), 62.

[3] Alan Riding, "Theater: Peter Brook Prefers His *Hamlet* Lean" (includes an interview with Peter Brook), *New York Times*, 10 December 2000, http://www.nytimes.com/2000/12/10/theater/theater-peter-brook-prefers-his-hamlet-lean.html (accessed 13 October 2016).

with imagination and conviction can allow the "thing itself" to emerge even more powerfully.

My third aim in this essay is to critically explore and assess a more determinedly radical project of disassembly, disintegration, and serial (re)production: Annie Dorsen's algorithmically generated *A Piece of Work: A Machine-Made Hamlet* (2013). This profoundly collaborative project, strongly shaped by the contributions of systems programmer Mark Hansen and scenic/video designer Jim Findlay among others, started out under the working title *A False Peach* (2012) and was successively performed throughout 2013 in Seattle, Oslo, Bergen, Vienna, Rotterdam, and Paris, culminating in a series of performances at the Brooklyn Academy of Music from 18 to 21 December 2013. Dorsen's deconstructive approach to Shakespearean reproduction would appear to have little in common with the more essentialist approaches of Krymov and Piñeiro were it not for the fact that each performance of *A Piece of Work* effectively essentializes a different version of *Hamlet* each time it is algorithmically produced—although each performance also renders itself *in*essential to its ensuing iteration: an inoperative template (as described below) for each equally ephemeral performance to come.

What these three works have in common is that they have all been conceived, developed, and performed in and as products of the Shakespeare aftermath, construed as both a temporally defined condition and state of consciousness and awareness presumably shared by the makers, if not the receivers (audiences), of the productions in question. For the makers, the intact or representative play—in these instances, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Twelfth Night*, and *Hamlet*—is an always already known commodity: one that (they assume) the most knowing receivers are prepared to see twisted out of shape, disintegrated, or dispensed with beyond the point of recognition, as, for example, would be the case for any informed patron of a production of Heiner Muller's *Hamletmachine* (1979), especially as realized by Robert Wilson. The largely negative assessments the more extreme approaches receive from reviewers and audiences alike, however, suggest that the makers more often than not mistake the readiness of their receivers to accept, much less applaud, their displacements and/or disintegrations of Shakespearean playtexts. I take this to indicate that we do not collectively occupy a shared "after Shakespeare" state of mind after all, or, if we do, we occupy it differently in the face of different challenges to expectation and style of address.[4]

[4] For example, see my account of the hostile audience response accorded the 2012 Wooster Group/RSC production of *Troilus and Cressida* in Stratford-upon-Avon; "'The Killing Stops Here': Unmaking the Myths of Troy in the Wooster Group/RSC *Troilus and Cressida* (2012)," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 64.2 (2013): 233–43.

If we nonetheless take the suppositional notion of the Shakespeare aftermath as animating the makers of the productions in question, we may begin to see the reproductive work I will describe as analogous to the imaginative restructuring and contextual reframing that succeed archeological recovery. Unlike the ruins of a medieval house or the faint tracings of a formal garden, Shakespearean remains come in the form of largely intact, if variable, and variably edited and composited texts, and also as a rich, recorded or remembered archive of reenactments. Contested though they may be, whether they are produced in composite, multiple, or single-text editions, such scripts require no special contemporary tools or technology to read or reanimate in the form of performed plays. We have, however, reached a moment in media history when these equal opportunity, fair-use scripts have become so accessible—not only in digital formats but also in the reiterated form of film spin-offs and stage adaptations, YouTube videos and mash-ups—that sheer mass and sameness have eroded their capacity to generate defamiliarizing effects. At such a moment of boundless technical potential and comparatively limited expressive artistry, "the discovery of *new* insight," in the words of Mike Pearson and Michael Shanks, "depends on a nervous novelty which avoids the settling of montages into accepted equations and identities."[5] "The aim" of acts of recovery and reassembly, they write, "is to construct something new out of old, to connect what may appear dissimilar in order to achieve new insights and understanding. This emergence of new meaning depends on the perception of instability, of retaining energies of interruption and disruption. . . . So the new understanding comes through *contaminated* representation rather than through pure reference to the depicted subject-matter."[6]

I am drawing here on Pearson and Shanks's discussion of collage and montage, which involve, respectively, "an extension of an artist's palette or a writer's vocabulary . . . to include actual pieces of reality or fragments of what the artist or writer is referring to" and "the cutting and reassembling of fragments of meanings, images, things, quotations, borrowings, to create new juxtapositions."[7] Both procedures constitute gestures of interruption and redirection that are variably applied in the reproductive work to which we now turn. But I could just as well be drawing on the debate between Polixenes and Perdita on the ontological status of *techne* or art in the fourth act of *The Winter's Tale* where Perdita naïvely objects to the "contamination" that grafting would introduce into the "natural" process of the planting and generation of flowers. Although Polixenes's response—"So over that art / Which you say adds to nature is an art / That nature makes" (4.4.90–92)—fails to satisfy Perdita's purist demands, his

[5] Mike Pearson and Michael Shanks, *Theatre/Archeology* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 52.
[6] Pearson and Shanks, *Theatre/Archeology*, 52 (emphasis added).
[7] Pearson and Shanks, *Theatre/Archeology*, 51, 51–52.

position applies especially well to the impure art involved in the grafting of alien contemporary matter onto early modern plays.[8] Like the ostensibly dead Hermione, these plays are only waiting for that which was lost to be found and the consequent awaking of faith, to step out from house arrest and resume engagement with ongoing life.[9]

I. Projective Displacement: Krymov's *Midsummer Night's Dream*

Admirers of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* could no more do without one angle of that play's maze of complications than admirers of *King Lear* could endure elimination of its storm scene. But I would venture to say that however much one may enjoy the debate between Titania and Oberon, the lyrical musings of Theseus, and just about every appearance of Puck, a singularly sustaining source of audience engagement is the rude mechanicals, beginning with their rehearsals in the forest and climaxing with their anarchic performance of "Pyramus and Thisbe." Krymov exploits the appeal of subplot over main plot by producing a *Midsummer Night's Dream* that includes nothing *but* rude mechanicals, apart from the substitution of comparably rude (and designedly crude) Russian playgoers for the play's Athenian aristocrats. Deploying outsize puppets on stilts in the roles of Pyramus and Thisbe—who subside with considerably more pathos than attends their demise in Shakespeare's play—Krymov adds acrobatics and a wonderful performing dog to compensate for the loss of the play's verbal magic and more materially magical dimensions (figures 1 and 2).[10]

The result is less an adaptation than a displacement of an "original" by something that is itself arguably original, despite its obvious dependence on its Shakespearean source or host text. I say "displacement" because, however conscious Krymov makes us of what's gone missing in a performance that retains

[8] All quotations from Shakespeare are drawn from *The Norton Shakespeare*, gen. ed. Stephen Greenblatt, 3rd ed. (New York: W. W. Norton, 2016), cited parenthetically.

[9] Both my thinking and wording here are indebted to two passages in Rebecca Schneider, *Performing Remains: Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment* (New York: Routledge, 2011). In the first, Schneider observes that "the scandal of performance relative to the archive is not that it disappears . . . but that it remains in ways that resist archontic 'house arrest' and 'domiciliation'" (104–5). In the second, in describing her response to the section of the Wooster Group's three-part performance piece, *Poor Theater* (2004), devoted to an emulation of Jerzy Grotowski's *Akropolis*, she writes that "the literalness and hard labor of the reenactment provoked something that flickered in the space between 'original' and 'copy,' as if between stone statue and live passer-by" (121).

[10] Krymov "has built an international reputation through performances that are directed, devised, and performed, perhaps surprisingly, by stage designers. . . . Following no obvious linear narratives," Krymov mixes "visual and aural elements from various sources," generating "dynamic montages" that his "designers construct and deconstruct . . . before our eyes." James Thomas, "The Visual Poetics of Dmitry Krymov's Theatre Laboratory," *Contemporary Theatre Review*, 21.3 (2011): 340–50, esp. 340.

Figure 1. Rude mechanicals with Pyramus and Thisbe in Dmitry Krymov's *Midsummer Night's Dream (As You Like It)* (2012). Photograph by Natalia Cheban. Used by permission of Dmitry Krymov Lab.

Figure 2. Pyramus interacts with playgoers (plus dog) in Dmitry Krymov's *Midsummer Night's Dream (As You Like It)* (2012). Photograph by Natalia Cheban. Used by permission of Dmitry Krymov Lab.

Figure 3. Stagekeeper with little ballerinas in Dmitry Krymov's *Midsummer Night's Dream (As You Like It)* (2012). Photograph by Natalia Cheban. Used by permission of Dmitry Krymov Lab.

the title *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, his production looks forward rather than backward; it is more *pro*jective than retrospective, *con*structive than reconstructive, stylistically addressed to an audience of *our* time in exactly the way that Brook envisions. The production also functions as a peculiarly Russian variation on its British original—a point made most vividly when a concluding dance drawn from *Swan Lake* displaces the Bergomask the mechanicals offer to perform at the end of Shakespeare's play (figure 3).

Krymov's production begins appropriately at the level of pure materiality as a group of men dressed as workers laboriously carry the facsimile of a good-sized tree trunk from the rear of the stage, across it in a downstage direction, and then down an aisle through a side exit. The workers then do much the same with a simulated stone fountain, liberally spraying water on the first two or three rows of seated auditors in the process. The apparent purposelessness of these actions seems mainly designed to establish the status of the workers as workers, possibly so that we can take them as such when they next emerge from backstage uncomfortably dressed in formal clothing that seems to inhibit their freedom of movement. Having accounted for the standing of workers as actors (and, by extension, of actors as workers), the Krymov company next doubles in size to admit to boxes and seats to the left and right of the thrust stage its own cast of actor-auditors, clearly designated (and self-styled) as the social superiors of the worker bees. Debating among themselves what to do next—and occa-

sionally with their impatient, opinionated actor-auditors—the "workers," abetted by their exuberant Jack Russell terrier, begin to show both acrobatic flair and considerable technical adroitness in manipulating two outsized rod "puppets," standing about twelve feet high and recognizably inhabiting the roles of Pyramus and Thisbe played by Bottom and Flute in Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream*. This arguably portends the true beginning of Krymov's production, though it would be mistaken to deny that it really starts with the tree.

Instead of being impersonated by rude mechanicals, Pyramus and Thisbe appear as semi-independent versions of themselves, oddly graceful assemblages constructed of odds and ends, including, as Peter Kirwan observes, "a cutout image of a youthful Grecian boy (one of the so-called Fayum portraits)" as a head for Pyramus.[11] Their status as more humanoid than human allows Thisbe's head to "unhinge" in order to "swallow" the fruits the doting Pyramus puppet feeds to her, and allows Pyramus, in turn, to grow erect as his "crotch panel [is] unscrewed to reveal an enormous phallic balloon pumped up" by one of the mechanicals. The technical ingenuity of its construction also enables the explosion of the Pyramus puppet, "arms and torso being carried to different corners of the stage and coming back together three times" upon his discovery of "bloodied strips" of puppet Thisbe's clothing.[12] The production's prevailing style of exuberant comedic and acrobatic entertainment notably darkens in this its last movement as it seeks to dramatize—more sincerely than Shakespeare does—the mistaken apprehensions that lead to the demise of Pyramus and Thisbe, transforming Shakespeare's knockabout farce into "an extraordinarily moving sequence."[13] As Kirwan further observes, "Capturing the spirit of *Dream*," the production "stumbled to a close in [a] combination of beautiful images juxtaposed with the mundane, seeking the universal story buried under the momentary spectacle."[14]

[11] Peter Kirwan, "*A Midsummer Night's Dream (As You Like It)*," 144 (see n. 1).

[12] Kirwan, "*A Midsummer Night's Dream (As You Like It)*," 144.

[13] Kirwan, "*A Midsummer Night's Dream (As You Like It)*," 144.

[14] Kirwan, "*A Midsummer Night's Dream (As You Like It)*," 145. For another wonderfully informed rendering of the aims and effects of this production, which includes both rehearsal and performance footage from its Moscow previews, see World Shakespeare Festival Director Deborah Shaw's YouTube commentary, "As Dmitry Likes It: *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (*As You Like It*)," https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PFxJb7e6kjE (accessed 28 March 2016). Shaw brilliantly analogizes the Krymov company's trepidation at performing in the heart of Shakespeare country with the mechanicals' fear of performing at Theseus's court, and concludes by appraising the technological essentialism of the production as consisting of "ten performers, a bit of wood, some slightly lop-sided puppets, and a performing Jack Russell." Also see these remarkably expressive clips from a Moscow performance of Krymov's production, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (*As You Like It*), 2012, School of Dramatic Art, Dmitry Krymov Lab, http://eng.krymov.org/performances/kak_vam_eto_ponravitsia_po_pese_shekspira_son_v_letniuiu_noch/ (accessed 28 March 2016).

II. Repurposing *Twelfth Night*: Piñeiro's *Viola*

Similar forms of projective displacement obtain in Piñeiro's repurposing of *Twelfth Night*.[15] *Viola*'s opening credit sequence supplies an establishing shot of an unhurried Buenos Aires street scene that catches a seemingly insignificant young woman—who will later emerge as the film's eponymous protagonist—riding past on a bicycle. But the film's first sustained scene focuses on a character we will come to know as Sabrina speaking emphatically into a telephone, insisting that her listener (later identified as Agustin) repeat after her "Sabrina no me quiere" ("Sabrina does not love me") many times over. The connection between this sequence and *Viola*'s evocation of *Twelfth Night* emerges when we next find Sabrina positioned as Olivia in an all-female omnibus production of Shakespeare's romantic comedies in which words and names from one play migrate to others as a convenient linking device—so that Bassanio and Antonio replace the names of Cesario and Orsino as fragments of *The Merchant of Venice* give way to fragments of *Twelfth Night*. As it screens the production, the film cuts back and forth between the stage and a handsome, seemingly lovelorn playgoer (the stubbornly faithful Agustin) whose gaze is intently fastened on the production's Olivia (Sabrina). Piñeiro next cuts between a second female actor in female dress performing lines delegated to Cesario/Viola (later identified as Cecilia) (figure 4) and another seemingly fixated male playgoer (Javier) (figure 5), whose infatuated gaze becomes the subject of the four female actors' backstage conversation.

As that conversation evolves into a spirited debate about when and how the women are prompted to love or let love go, Cecilia contests the smugness with which the discernibly vain Sabrina—channeling Olivia—resists her claim that no one can, or should, refuse love when it is passionately tendered (film clip 1, http://muse.jhu.edu/resolve/16). Resolving to demonstrate how easily Sabrina's resistance can be broken down, Cecilia mounts an assault against Sabrina's defenses while the two casually run through their lines in Sabrina's apartment, using Viola's "willow cabin" speech as both preferred weapon of assured seduction and distilled essence of *Twelfth Night*:

> Make me a willow cabin at your gate
> And call upon my soul within the house;
> Write loyal cantons of contemned love
> And sing them loud even in the dead of night;
> Halloo your name to the reverberate hills
> And make the babbling gossip of the air

[15] Piñeiro is a thirty-something Argentine filmmaker with an established fixation on Shakespeare's romantic comedies. His latest films, *The Princess of France*, a free variation on *Love's Labor's Lost*, and *Hermia and Helena*, an even freer spin on *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, had their premier screenings at the New York Film Festival in October 2014 and October 2016, respectively.

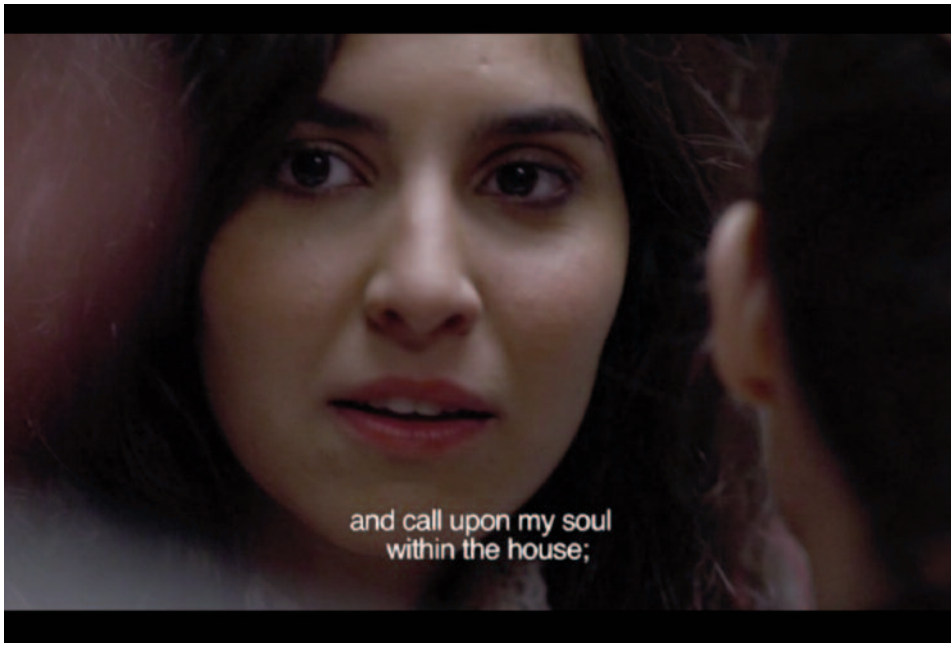

Figure 4. "And call upon my soul within the house." Still from Matías Piñeiro's *Viola* (2012). Used by permission of Matías Piñeiro.

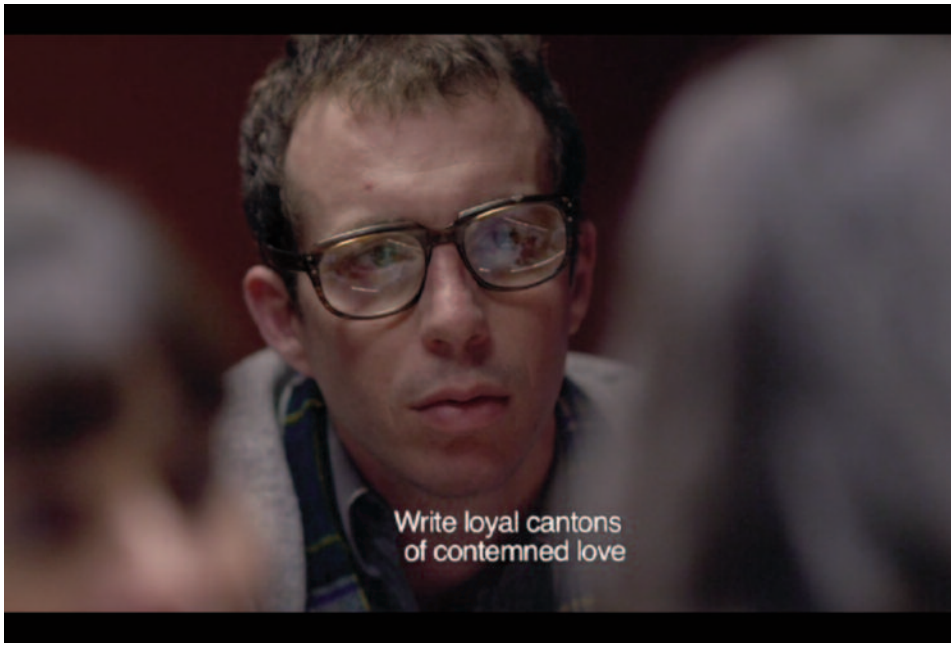

Figure 5. "Write loyal cantons of contemned love." Still from Matías Piñeiro's *Viola* (2012). Used by permission of Matías Piñeiro.

Figure 6. "If I did love you in my master's flame." Still from Matías Piñeiro's *Viola* (2012). Used by permission of Matías Piñeiro.

> Cry out "Olivia!" Oh, you should not rest
> Between the elements of air and earth
> But you should pity me.
>
> (1.5.250–58)

Rather than stop or continue on each time she rehearses the speech, Cecilia restarts the run-through no less than six times, performing the speech with greater intensity, intimacy, and directness each time until Sabrina herself brings the process to a close by passionately kissing Cecilia (figure 6, film clip 2, http://muse.jhu.edu/resolve/17).

Sabrina's kiss effectively proves Cecilia's point while also bringing the same-sex potential of Viola's wooing of Olivia on Orsino's behalf to a different fruition than Shakespeare dared. Cecilia plays this cut like a virtuoso entirely assured of the effect she's having on her audience. Appropriating the lines of a surrogate speaking on behalf of a desiring subject (Cesario speaking on behalf of Orsino), Cecilia becomes the object of another subject's desires by preemptively transforming the expressive intensity of the "willow cabin" passage into a free-standing speech act. This would be no less, no different, than what occurs in the first movement of *Twelfth Night* were it not for Cecilia's repurposing of the entirely accidental effect of Cesario's speech into an intentional design—a design that she achieves through carefully orchestrated repetition while casually dressed as the young woman she is. Piñeiro does not, however, offer this intervention with the aim of sustaining the moment's same-sex twist. Instead, true

to the form of *Rosalinda* (2011), his earlier filmic spin on *As You Like It*, he and his characters are more intent on sustaining the playfulness or gamesmanship that informs their rehearsals of Shakespeare's romantic comedies, the young women's conspiring together in the dressing room to take down a proud character at once echoing and displacing the tricking of Malvolio in *Twelfth Night*.[16] Having proven her point, Cecilia's next move is to visit Agustin, Sabrina's persistent but recently rejected lover, presumably to tell him that now that she has taught Sabrina her lesson, he—as one of the film's two Orsino surrogates—should renew his single-minded pursuit of his standoffish Olivia.

The second movement of Piñeiro's film introduces us to the quietly unassuming character whose real name is Viola and whose boyfriend (the aforementioned Javier) ends up rejecting her for the false Viola played by Cecilia—a plot turn recounted in a closing voiceover but left unrepresented in the film. Where the repurposed Cesario/Viola connection seems to end—with the conquest of Sabrina—the film's second surrogate Viola begins, bicycling through the streets of Buenos Aires as a messenger/go-between in order to deliver DVDs ripped and toasted by Javier who—at the start of the film, unknown either to himself or to the real Viola—has already been bewitched by Cecilia. Viola and Javier's business—whose brand name "Metropolis" gestures to the German expressionist film of the same name—notably consists in the appropriation, reproduction, marketing, and sale of pirated DVDs and CDs: all processes that echo Piñeiro's pirated appropriation, rebranding, and marketing of *Twelfth Night*. As producer of the packaged messages Viola delivers and as a singer/musician in his own right, Javier serves as the film's second surrogate Orsino just as surely as Viola serves the go-between function delegated to Cesario.[17] Indeed, though less erotically compelling than Cecilia while performing Cesario's lines, the more self-effacing Viola, in her intelligence, modesty, and sensitivity, repeatedly proves attractive to the several young men who flirt with her over the course of the film (figure 7).

One of the pleasures of Piñeiro's treatment of his material is his skewing of time and temporal relations in bewildering but suggestive ways. Cecilia's seduc-

[16] *Rosalinda*, directed by Matías Piñeiro (Jeonju Digital Project, 2011). As my student Sabrina DeWeerdt has observed, "This plan of Cecilia's echoes the manipulation that forms the major subplot of *Twelfth Night*—the tricking of Malvolio by Sir Toby, Sir Andrew, and Maria. They make a plan to take down a proud character, like the girls conspiring together in the dressing room." Unpublished paper.

[17] Cf. John Semley: "In essentially offering up *Twelfth Night* as a hazy Shakespearean mash-up, *Viola* isn't so much deeply disrespecting notions of ownership, authorship, etc., as charitably redefining them. . . . [The film] takes material as broad and endlessly redone as Shakespearean drama and stamps it with Piñeiro's authorial imprint, not so much restaging *Twelfth Night* as transmuting it." John Semley, review of *Viola*, directed by Matías Piñeiro, *Slant*, 18 March 2013, http://www.slantmagazine.com/film/review/viola/6898 (accessed 28 March 2016).

Figure 7. "Viola invited me." Still from Matías Piñeiro's *Viola* (2012). Used by permission of Matías Piñeiro.

tion of Sabrina, which concludes the first movement, is, for example, punctuated by a series of phone calls and increasingly insistent door buzzings, all but one of which go unanswered. But it takes an additional fifteen minutes of film time to recognize that the source of the earlier calls, door buzzings, and knockings is the true Viola, trying to make what becomes the last of the three packaged DVD deliveries that the film recounts. The ostensibly synchronic cut from Sabrina's passionate kissing of Cecilia to the start of the film's second movement—which at first seems meant to function as a direct commentary on what we've just witnessed—actually resituates us three deliveries backward in time, so that we replay the first movement's elapsed time diachronically, but this time from the point of view of Viola. We don't catch up with Sabrina and Cecilia again until they finally answer the door, at which point the film's third movement begins.

Possibly feeling as if they have been caught in the act, Sabrina and Cecilia are notably cooler toward Viola than her two earlier, male clients have been, one of whom seems oddly concerned about her unbuttoned blouse while the other repeatedly asks why Viola does not return his calls. Trying to deliver a package of pirated DVDs ordered by the rejected Agustin, Viola enters Sabrina's apartment just after Cecilia's "willow cabin" seduction has concluded, at which point the cross-fertilization of play and film unwinds in sometimes uncanny, circuitous ways. Dismissively rerouted to Agustin's address by Sabrina—who seems impervious to *this* Viola's charms—Viola is ambushed there by Cecilia, who invites her to join her in her car while they both wait for the absent Agustin

to return. A conversation on Shakespeare and acting and the difficulty of remembering lines, which is dominated by Cecilia, slowly dwindles as Viola—lulled by the haunting diegetic music coming from the car's CD player—seems about to fall asleep.[18] At this point, the film suddenly skips a beat: the weather abruptly changes from sunny to stormy, a hard rain falls, and yet another character, Ruth (a mutual acquaintance of Cecilia and Viola), enters the car (film clip 3, http://muse.jhu.edu/resolve/18).

Piñeiro refers to this as a dream sequence, which he deploys in order to have Viola play out anxieties about what she is doing with her life while being challenged and criticized by the opinionated Cecilia and the self-assured Ruth. Within the dream sequence, Viola reveals an interest in becoming a performer herself, reciting (with uncanny recall) Rosalind's Epilogue from *As You Like It* after hearing Cecilia run some of the same lines (which, given the standing of the sequence as a dream, we assume the "true" Viola long ago committed to memory). Viola even "hears" Ruth offer her the chance to take her part in the play before being returned to reticence and self-defensiveness by Cecilia and Ruth's criticism of her relationship with Javier, in a reprise of the opening backstage conversation focused on Sabrina. This sequence is staged by having the camera exclusively focus on Viola while the voices of Cecilia and Ruth fly at her, occasionally from implausible directions. At times, this two-pronged attack gestures toward a critical conflation of Shakespeare's Viola with Piñeiro's Viola who is represented as an essentially reactive character, for whom everything always works out and who needs to "de-automate" herself. The message is that the true Viola may need to free herself both from her delegated role as delivery boy and from her routinized attachment to Javier—whose moony fixation on Cecilia at the film's beginning and whose standing as a musician double his associations with Shakespeare's Orsino.

Piñeiro's Viola is abruptly returned to the present—the sun shining and no Ruth in sight—when Cecilia alerts her to Agustin's return, but the contents and message of her dream (including an aroused interest in participating in the omnibus Shakespeare production) leak into the film's final turn. In its fourth and last movement, Viola returns to Javier's apartment and, under the spell cast by Cecilia (whose music she is already listening to on headphones), rehearses the dream-vision injunctions to be less mechanically affectionate with Javier as the two go about their business, greet visiting musicians, and discuss attending another performance of the Shakespeare production, which Javier admits to

[18] John Aylward, *Stillness and Change*, recorded by East Coast Contemporary Ensemble, Albany Records, 2011, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K0xQ9aYY4bQ (accessed 28 March 2016).

having already seen and liked. A wistful sadness emerges here. As the two improvise a playful song while the credits roll, we witness and come to understand why Viola loves Javier at the very moment that we hear (in Viola's voiceover) that they are drawing apart and that the *naufragio* or shipwreck she anticipates in the song has already happened. In the song, Viola imagines the two "traveling afar and never returning to this city" and then claims:

> if, at the beach, you decide to abandon me,
> I am not going to trouble myself
> Because I go to the sea to be shipwrecked
> Alone, to be shipwrecked
> I won't care for you if you behave badly
> You won't matter to me
> And I will forget you.[19]

But particularly because Viola is doing the recounting and telling us that she will "forget" him, the feeling that the sensitive Viola is a hardy and resilient survivor also emerges, in a way that works a rather exquisite twist on Shakespeare's original and helps to bridge the Viola character's transition from the early modern to the modern world.

Other components of Viola's stage persona are just as essential to her character construction in *Twelfth Night*, not the least of these being the tenderness, care, and consideration that she displays in revealing her love to Orsino without his noticing, when, in form as Cesario, Viola claims to know "Too well what love women to men may owe" (2.4.102). It's for such reasons that Piñeiro's true Viola needs to appear on the scene in order to repossess her identity and to do so disguised as only a shadow version of her more fully expressive Shakespearean self: timid, modest, self-effacing, deliberative, and unspontaneous. True to Shakespearean form, this Viola needs to be brought or taken out of herself in order to become herself, but more in terms of her *Viola-ness* than as a clone of the "boy" Cesario. Tutored (in her own imagination) by Cecilia to be truer to herself (whoever *that* is) than she has been, and also tutored (again, in her own imagination) to enjoy the playfulness of her long-stored memory of Shakespeare's resilient and resourceful Rosalind, Viola emerges from her shipwrecked relationship with her sweetly nerdy Orsino with the promise of becoming a similarly resilient and resourceful woman: authored, at least in part, by other female figures as well as by Shakespeare and Piñeiro.

[19] The lyrics in Spanish read: "*Nosotros viajar al más allá y no volver nunca más / A esta ciudad, qué ciudad / Y si en la playa decidís abandonarme no me voy a hacer problema / Porque me voy a la mar a naufragar / Sola, a naufragar / Podés dejarme de importar si te portás mal / Me dejás de importar / Y te voy a olvidar.*"

In this and other respects, I detect a gesture of homage to one of the most under-regarded filmic modernizations of Shakespeare, Éric Rohmer's *Conte d'hiver* (1992). *Conte d'hiver* similarly fastens on a young woman's resilience and resourcefulness in the face of apparent defeat, and it also arguably essentializes the redemptive spirit at the heart of Shakespeare's *Winter's Tale* while seeming entirely original.[20] Rohmer notably conflates Shakespeare's Hermione and Perdita figures in the form of an unwed mother (Félicie) searching for the lover (Charles) from whom accident—not jealousy and rejection—has separated her. What animates and informs *Conte d'hiver*'s correspondence with Shakespeare's romance is its concentration on Félicie's unwavering faith or intuition in the rightness of her connection to Charles, and her refusal to accept perfectly acceptable substitute lovers (or fathers for her daughter) in his stead. In this respect, Rohmer's ostensibly free variation on *The Winter's Tale* remains remarkably faithful to that play's climactic moment when both Leontes and Hermione must "awake [their] faith" (5.3.95)—his in the capacity of this miracle of forgiveness to happen, and hers in the miracle of his moral transformation. It is the circuitous movement to this exchange of faith (and mutually intuited belief in the miracle of uncanny restoration) that *Conte d'hiver* at once replicates and recreates as if for the first time in the context of modernity.[21]

Piñeiro proceeds more elliptically. Where Rohmer conflates two characters—mother and daughter—into a single subject position, and replicates the notorious time-lapse that informs Shakespeare's romance plot, Piñeiro multiplies the number of characters who inhabit *Twelfth Night*'s subject positions, and substitutes a skeletal shell of a latter-day plot for Shakespeare's. Piñeiro also does something here that he had already done in the earlier *Rosalinda*: he concentrates so intentively on each play's female protagonist that that character becomes the contemporary surrogate for, or comes to embody, the play itself. However, whereas María Villar (who plays the title character in both films) is clearly the earlier film's primary focus—dominating the outdoorsy rehearsal scenes in the film's first movement and becoming, in a clever reversal of *As You Like It*'s design, the victim of the other characters' playful machinations in its second—Piñeiro's aims in *Viola* are more diffuse. In a manner that echoes Kristian Levring's displacements and occasional doublings of *King Lear*'s delegated subject positions in his film *The King is Alive* (2000), Piñeiro's characters

[20] *Conte d'hiver*, directed by Éric Rohmer (Paris: Compagnie Éric Rohmer, 1992).

[21] See Stanley Cavell's brilliant reading of this film in "Shakespeare and Rohmer: Two Tales of Winter," in *Cities of Words: Pedagogical Letters on a Register of the Moral Life* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP), 2004, 421–43; and a much briefer commentary on the film in Thomas Cartelli and Katherine Rowe, *New Wave Shakespeare on Screen* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2007), 38–40.

seem to fall into subject positions claimed by, and *named*, Orsino, Olivia, and Viola to such an extent that *Viola* seems less an appropriation of *Twelfth Night* than its temporally and geographically displaced reincarnation.[22]

III. Disassembly, Montage, and Meaning-Making: Dorsen's *Piece of Work*

Though she too generates something akin to reincarnations of a Shakespearean playtext, Annie Dorsen's methodology in *A Piece of Work* relies almost entirely on the audio and visual projection of verbal montages drawn from an unspecified edition of *Hamlet* that are so maddeningly methodized as to be rendered largely incomprehensible.[23] In this piece of algorithmic theater, visible human agency is all but evacuated from the reassembled play's five acts, an actor appearing only in the third act to rehearse newly cut text as it is transmitted into his or her earbuds a second or two before their recital (figure 8).[24] Disembody and dislocate as she may, Dorsen draws on the complete textual resources of *Hamlet*, which she recycles in a different way in each successive performance, such that the whole playtext presumably gets a hearing, if not in one go, then in the course of a week's performances. As she states in an interview, "When the algorithm starts parsing language and finding different patterns you get something like a very distilled essence of the play. And this is maybe due to the brilliance of Shakespeare, but the images, the grammar, the sounds that are called for, the emotional spaces you find yourself in, every little bit is Hamlet."[25]

[22] *The King is Alive*, directed by Kristian Levring (Hvidovre, DK: Zentropa Entertainments, 2000). See also Quintin, "Role Models: The Films of Matías Piñeiro," *Cinemascope* 52 (2012), http://cinema-scope.com/cinema-scope-online/tiff-preview-6-viola-night-across-the-street-after-the-battle-the-hunt-liverpool-me-and-you-no-the-sessions-tower-west-of-memphis/ (accessed 28 March 2016): "*Rosalinda* and *Viola* are not adaptations in any sense; rather, they explore what film can do with theatre as a subject and as a source, how film can expand, question and reveal theatre. . . . The films take Shakespearean promiscuity to the limit: in the end any actor can play any character—including sex changes—as if all the bodies, the names, and all of Shakespeare's and Piñeiro's characters are impossible to distinguish."

[23] As noted in the bio on her website, Annie Dorsen "works in a variety of fields, including theatre, film, dance and, as of 2010, digital performance." Recent productions include *Hello Hi There* and her "pop-political performance project" *Democracy in America*. Dorsen is the co-creator of the 2008 Broadway musical *Passing Strange*, which she also directed. See http://www.anniedorsen.com/ (accessed 14 October 2016).

[24] Joan MacIntosh, a former member of Richard Schechner's Performance Group, and Scott Shepherd of New York's Wooster Group, alternated in the role of actor-transmitter during the production's brief run at the Fishman Space of the Brooklyn Academy of Music (BAM Fisher) in December 2013.

[25] Alison Sargent, "'A Piece of Work' is an Algorithmic Hamlet" (includes an interview with Annie Dorsen), *City Arts*, 19 February 2013, http://www.cityartsonline.com/piece-work-boards-algorithmic-hamlet-boards (accessed 28 March 2016).

Figure 8. Scott Shepherd channeling newly cut text in Annie Dorsen's *Piece of Work: A Machine-Made Hamlet* (2013). Photograph by Bruno Pocheron. Used by permission of Annie Dorsen.

Dorsen divides her performances into five parts, aligned with the five acts of Shakespeare's play, taking "five passes through the text," applying "five distinct principles of algorithmic rewriting"—all of which imply selection or path-finding or connecting: a remarkable outcome for what appears to be arbitrary cutting. First, she "excerpt[s] 5% of the play by length, skipping through the scenes in order." Then, she "sort[s] lines of the play by keyword, snaking through the play, finding repetitions and echoes." She next "parse[s] all the soliloquies, looking for grammatical structures," replacing "nouns with other nouns and verbs with other verbs, group[ing] selections of the most-used grammatical phrases." For her fourth and fifth acts, she "generate[s] new scenes by re-sequencing words [and "letters"] using Markov chaining."[26]

In addition to the third-act performance of a live actor, the production's textual monopoly is relieved by typographic size and color variations and superim-

[26] Program notes for *A Piece of Work: A Machine-Made Hamlet*, directed by Annie Dorsen, Brooklyn Academy of Music (Brooklyn, NY: BAM Fisher, 18–21 December 2013). In the program notes, Dorsen adds that Markov chains are "'finite state machines.' . . . They don't grow or learn; they are memory-less. . . . They analyze sequences of words appearing in a given source text and can generate new text according to the frequency or infrequency of those patterns. Each time the program runs, it makes new . . . choices, which can be surprisingly different from night to night." In other words, a Markov chain is a statistical concept for describing the evolution of a system over time according to random variables. In this case, the "system" is the performed text of the play. For a more graphic, wonderfully inventive take on the subject, see http://setosa.io/blog/2014/07/26/markov-chains/ (accessed 28 March 2016).

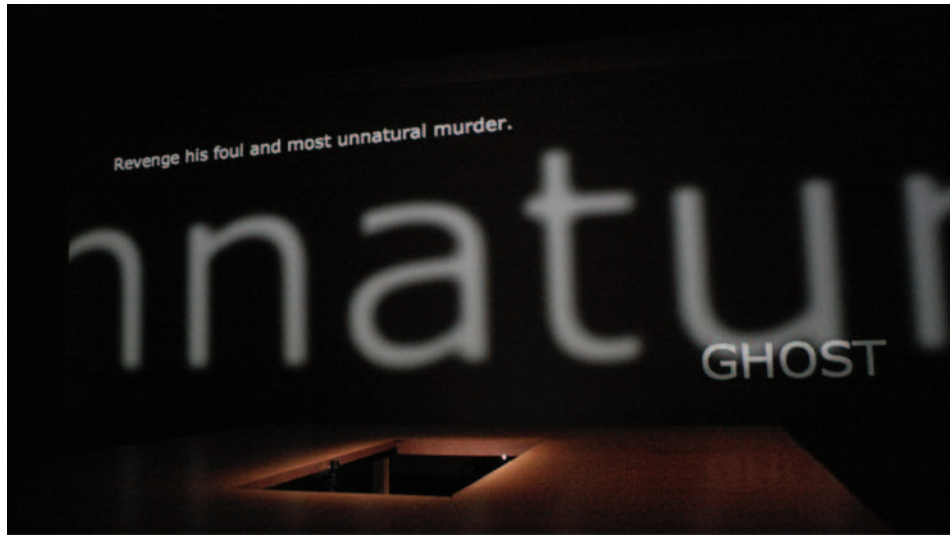

Figure 9. The Ghost speaks in Annie Dorsen's *Piece of Work: A Machine-Made Hamlet* (2013). Photograph by Jim Findlay. Used by permission of Annie Dorsen.

positions; computer-generated vocalizing and sound effects; emotive musical underscoring; and puffs of smoke that emerge from a hole in a table whenever the Ghost's lines or character are cued (figure 9). Dorsen notes that she also did "a full emotional tagging of the script," giving each word "four scores, corresponding to four basic emotions: anger, joy, sadness and fear. In some scenes . . . the system keeps a running tally of the average emotion . . . that determines things like background music and lighting color or intensity." She adds that such emotional scoring also had "an impact on the typography in some scenes, [including] a relationship to font size."[27] Indeed, the on-the-beat synchronization of vocalizing, typographic representation, color-coding, and emotive musical underscoring at times delivered the same kind of dramatic effect as might be conveyed by the speech-act of a physically present actor, especially when the multisensory performance combined with more than usually coherent textual generation.[28]

All well and good, but why reduce *Hamlet* to variably sized and colored type fonts, automated vocalizing, and visual and sound effects choreographed and orchestrated by arbitrarily chosen algorithmic programs in the first place?[29]

[27] Private communication, 17 July 2014.

[28] See the first half of Vimeo clip from start to 04:00 mark, roughly corresponding to *Hamlet*, 1.1 and the fourth act of the *Piece of Work* BAM performance on 21 December 2013, https://vimeo.com/92057482 (accessed 28 March 2016).

[29] Why, indeed, asks Jemma Alix Levy in her review of the performance: "Rather than watching live theater, the audience essentially watched subtitles without an accompanying film" (507).

Dorsen offers a few clues to her starting premises: "I began thinking about a theatre without human actors, in which that timeworn mirror becomes a glossy screen onto which human audiences project themselves, mediated by data, algorithms and interfaces. We would no longer see ourselves onstage, in other words; we would see an expression of computer-generated, human-*ish* processes."[30] But even the "human-*ish*ness" of the process gets elided as Dorsen goes on to claim that "the program is the performer. One might even call it the protagonist, with the audience tracking its choices and changes, instead of those of a human actor. Rather than a mystical exchange of energy between performer and spectator, or a process of identification or 'union' between the two, algorithmic performance creates an asymmetric relationship, in which the human spectator confronts something that can't confront her back."[31] As Dorsen proceeds, we discover that this suppression of "a mystical exchange of energy between *performer* and spectator" is itself displaced by a possibly more mystifying than mystical exchange between *performance* and spectator generated by an always newly iterated *production* (as opposed to reproduction) of a *Hamlet* text drawn from the *Hamlet* textual archive or database. As Dorsen writes, "The language arises from the operation of the software, and at times may suggest consciousness, but never actually issues from it. So . . . seeing through language to the thought 'beneath,' is revealed to be an act of imagination on the part of the listener, rather than merely an act of reception."[32]

Implicit in this claim is not only the transfer of traditional forms of theatrical representation from the speaking voice and embodiment of human actors to computer-generated sound and textual display broadcast on a screen, but also the transfer of imaginative activity itself from actor to audience. Faced with a radically reduced, syntactically disordered, and dramatically disassembled iteration of *Hamlet* indifferently vocalized and splayed across a screen, Dorsen's audience is either made restive with impatience, rendered passively inert, challenged to find sense in nonsense (method in the textual equivalent of madness), or "subdued" to the element Dorsen "works in, like the dyer's hand." The effect would resemble trying to digest a slice of Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* extempore were it not that the text in question is always genealogically derived from the

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See Jemma Alix Levy, review of *A Piece of Work: A Machine-Made Hamlet*, by Annie Dorsen, 2013, Next Wave Festival, *Shakespeare Bulletin* 32.3 (2014): 506–9.

[30] See "On Algorithmic Theatre," 1. Originally published on the blog of *Theater Magazine* 42.2 (2012) in tandem with the "Digital Dramaturgies" edition, http://www.anniedorsen.com/useruploads/files/on_algorithmic_theatre.pdf (accessed 28 March 2016).

[31] "On Algorithmic Theatre," 2.

[32] "On Algorithmic Theatre," 3.

play formerly known as *Hamlet*:[33] a play preoccupied with memory and forgetting, whose most memorable passages are likely lodged in the minds of even the least knowing auditor.[34] So, although the machine may not remember, the audience does, and it is by activating memory that an algorithm that forgets may generate meaning-making activity in its auditors.

In a recently published "group self-interview," Dorsen supplies an example of how meaning-making may be generated from a "Markov version" of "Gertrude's well-known speech from act 4, scene 7, in which she describes Ophelia's death."[35] Dorsen prefaces her display of this example by noting that "coherence (when it exists) is an emergent property of the statistical order of the words in the original text. This means that the text generation system does not impose grammatical or semantic logic. Rather, when the system generates coherent sentences or plot, they emerge because the system is probabilistically following the order of the original words in the text."[36] Coherence, in other words, is rather more *in*cidental than *ac*cidental, though it never can be the conscious choice of algorithms that "don't know what they say, or what they have said before. . . . don't know what grief is, or revenge, or an entrance, or an exit."[37] Lest the incidental collision of displayed and perceived coherence, and the collateral act of meaning-making, prove unachievable on the system's scale of probability, Dorsen and her collaborators have "create[d] a small set of semantic and theatrical rules to impose on the generated text," which "serve only to keep some semblance of theatrical reasonability," such that "a character may only speak

[33] My reference to Joyce and *Finnegans Wake* could not be more apposite. As Lydia Liu notes, Jacques Derrida was among the first of many to recognize the many ways *Finnegans Wake* anticipated "the future of computer technology," going so far as to accuse Joyce of generating a "hypermnesiac machine"—"joyceware"—"designed to anticipate all one can possibly say in a language and exhaust every conceivable combination of verbal elements." Liu herself specifically speaks of Joyce's "effort [in *Finnegans Wake*] to bring the statistical properties of letter sequences and spaces among words and nonwords to light." See Lydia H. Liu, *The Freudian Robot: Digital Media and the Future of the Unconscious* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2011), 102–4. Also see Jacques Derrida, "Two Words for Joyce," in *Post-Structuralist Joyce: Essays from the French*, ed. Derek Attridge and Daniel Ferrer (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1984), 147–48.

[34] As Marvin A. Carlson notes, "Our language is haunted by Shakespeare in general and *Hamlet* in particular, so much so that anyone reading the play for the first time is invariably struck by how many of the play's lines are already known to her. Even more experienced readers (or viewers) can hardly escape the impression that the play is really a tissue of quotations. Our iconic memories are haunted by *Hamlet*." See Marvin A. Carlson, *The Haunted Stage: The Theatre as Memory Machine* (Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 2001), 78–79. Dorsen herself quotes this passage, as well as the two sentences that precede it, in her program notes to *A Piece of Work*.

[35] Annie Dorsen, "Talk about *A Piece of Work*: A Group Self-Interview," *TDR* 59.4 (2015): 133–48, esp. 136.

[36] Dorsen, "Talk about *A Piece of Work*," 135.

[37] Dorsen, "Talk about *A Piece of Work*," 135.

after entering, should not say his/her own name . . . that sort of thing." As with her previously discussed "tagging" of emotions, these rules involve "[tagging] each word in the play with various information: not only who is speaking, but what act and scene the word belongs to, whether it is poetry or prose or a song, and the part of speech of the word."[38]

Such admissions or explanations indicate that there is sufficient method in the programming of Dorsen's algorithms to assure that her projective medium will generate word series, sounds, and typographic markers that produce the semblance of sense from which meanings may be drawn, supplying chains of verbiage coherent enough to be associatively broken down and unpacked. Though it would be difficult to maintain that something approximating narrative structure or continuity emerges at such moments from Dorsen's *Hamlet* database, auditors (in my limited experience of a single performance) were on the lookout for shreds and patches of text that might cohere in new and unexpected ways—a quest that Dorsen appears to have wanted (occasionally) to satisfy. As she notes just before offering the aforementioned sample from Gertrude's speech from the performance's scrambling of Act 4, scene 7, "The original speech as written by Shakespeare is beautiful and rich in pastoral imagery," and "the Markov version retains those qualities, since it selects its words from Shakespeare's text-as-data, but a new kind of poetic logic is introduced."[39] The speech in question—which immediately follows Ophelia's last (Vimeo recorded) farewell in the fourth act of the 21 December 2013 performance—is presented *dramatically* on Dorsen's actorless stage through the concatenation of variably sized, colored, and synched typography and computer-generated vocalizing and musical accompaniment. On the page, in black and white standard typography, it reads as follows:

> Fell in the poor wretch from her weedy trophies and herself
> When down her weedy trophies and herself
> Clambering to hang, on the glassy stream;
> Therewith fantastic garlands did she chanted snatches of old lauds;
> Therewith fantastic garlands did she chanted snatches of her weedy
> trophies and
> long purples
> And, on the weeping brook
> Therewith fantastic garlands did she chanted snatches of old lauds;
> Drowned,
> That shows his hoar leaves in the pendent boughs her up:
> Fell in the poor wretch from her crownet weeds
> Or like a willow grows askant the pendent boughs her garments,

[38] Dorsen, "Talk about *A Piece of Work*," 136.
[39] Dorsen, "Talk about *A Piece of Work*," 136.

Pulled the poor wretch from her garments, mermaid-like, drowned.
Clambering her up hang own distress call distress
Fell
One woe
But our
But our her weedy snatches snatches wretch time
One woe.

Oddly (or maybe not so oddly), "The repetitions, digressions from proper sense or grammar, disintegrations and so on," Dorsen observes, "give the text a jagged, modernist quality," such that "one could almost say the text has been 'traumatized'" by its transit through the disordering/reordering machine of new media.[40] This dispersive reordering also thickens our impression of the disembodied "character" of Gertrude who, in the flesh, never commands so affecting an array of disarrayed perceptions. These effects are "maybe not so oddly" produced because they have already been desired, if not exactly anticipated. As Marsha Kinder observes, "As soon as . . . database categories are determined and the task of what to retrieve defined, one is launched on a narrative quest with motives and consequences. Since such decisions are made in social and historical contexts that inevitably have narrative content, the process of retrieval necessarily involves ideology and desire: where we are permitted to look and what we hope to find."[41] Kinder suggestively adds, "Although a database narrative may have no clearcut beginning or ending, no three-act classical structure or even a coherent chain of causality, it still presents a narrative field with story elements arousing a reader's curiosity and desire: urges that can be mobilized as a search engine to retrieve whatever is needed to spin a particular tale. In calling attention to the database infrastructure of all narratives, these works reveal the arbitrariness of the choices made and thereby challenge the notional master narratives whose selections are traditionally made to seem natural or inevitable."[42]

As an example of how an algorithm's arbitrary choices can challenge *Hamlet*'s master narrative, one might also cite a passage from an earlier textual recomposition of Act 4, scene 5 of *Hamlet* in the fourth act of the same evening's performance that brings Ophelia into the same kind of sympathetic fold that allows Gertrude to emerge in deeper relief:

[40] Dorsen, "Talk about *A Piece of Work*," 136.

[41] Marsha Kinder, "Designing a Database Cinema," in *Future Cinema: The Cinematic Imaginary after Film*, ed. Jeffrey Shaw and Peter Weibel (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003), 348–49.

[42] Kinder, "Designing a Database Cinema," 349.

They say the owl was a baker's daughter.
Then goes he to the ground did not go
With true-love showers.
And thrice his head a grass-green turf,
Alack, and down-gyved to his ankle;
Which bewept to the noble mind
Rich gifts wax poor when givers prove unkind.
At home, my lord, you are keen,
my lord.
I do not know;
Whiles, like a puffed and reckless libertine,
He never will come again.
Indeed, my lord, he comes before me.
Where is the false steward, that stole his master's daughter.
Lord, we know what we may be.
God buy you.
To-morrow is Saint Valentine's day,
(voice Sings).[43]

In this representative slice of a much longer textual montage (which includes bits of text delegated to Hamlet), Ophelia speaks at once all her parts—daughter, sister, spurned lover—drawn from all her speech acts in the play (even singing as prompted), such that one may find the character more uncannily and urgently present here than when she rehearses in fixed order the series of discrete speech acts assigned to her in established texts. In an interview with Brendan Kiley, Dorsen comments on the parts allotted Ophelia in such iterations and asks the leading question "What if Ophelia has access to some of Hamlet's text?" before opining, "Then she pops out in three dimensions that you don't even notice in the original, where she basically just suffers." In the same interview, Dorsen takes a fairly corrective tack toward *Hamlet* itself, claiming that "it's so central to our consciousness, we don't have to be reverent" toward it, but "can deconstruct it, look at the damage it's done, and move beyond it."[44] Though Dorsen makes no

[43] Readers can see and hear this text, generated mainly from *Hamlet*, 4.5, starting from the 04:10 mark in the second half of the Vimeo clip. This corresponds to the fourth act of the *Piece of Work* BAM performance on 21 December 2013, https://vimeo.com/92057482 (accessed 14 October 2016).

[44] Brendan Kiley, "Hamlet Machine: Annie Dorsen's Recombinant Shakespeare" (includes an interview with Annie Dorsen), *The Stranger*, 20 February 2013, http://www.thestranger.com/seattle/hamlet-machine/Content?oid=16050946 (accessed 28 March 2016). When asked what "damage" *Hamlet* has done, Dorsen suggests that in his characterization Shakespeare has anticipated something along the lines of the Cartesian split of mind from body, saying that "her larger philosophical goal is to try to help 'put the brain back in the body' and 'put human beings back into a sane relationship with objects, animate and inanimate . . . give space, objects, and elements their due'" (ellipsis present in text). She continues, "Events are not a product of man's action, but of the relationship between all these objects."

other overt claim about "challeng[ing] notional master narratives," she may be doing just that by repurposing *Hamlet* from its status as a master narrative into a database archive out of which an infinite number of tributary narrative streams may be generated, no one of them the same as the other, with some seeming to contest the centrality of the play's title character.

I use the term "narrative streams" advisedly because *A Piece of Work* never composes in its series of iterations, much less seeks to compose out of its constituent parts, a substitute or surrogate narrative for the already complicated story *Hamlet* tells in its own varied textual permutations. At best what it aims for with respect to meaning-making is to produce what Dorsen calls "a new kind of poetic logic," brief patches of sense, affect, and effect that could likely defer to reasoned articulation on demand, but need not be articulated to satisfy the desire or expectations of its less demanding auditors. I say "need not" because delivering anything approaching the narrative coherence or dramatic satisfaction of the Shakespearean point of departure is never Dorsen's aim for a form of postdramatic theater whose operating principles involve responding to the audience's understandable "rage for understanding" with what Hans-Thies Lehmann terms "an aesthetic of 'meaning in retreat.'"[45] Lehmann concedes that "the adjective 'postdramatic' denotes a theatre that feels bound to operate beyond drama, at a time 'after' the authority of the dramatic paradigm in theatre."[46] But he pointedly contends that "*post*dramatic theatre . . . does *not* mean a theatre that exists 'beyond' drama, without any relation to it. It should rather be understood as the unfolding and blossoming of a potential of disintegration, dismantling, and deconstruction within drama itself": a formula that fits *A Piece of Work* like a glove and that also embraces less mediatized "dismantlings" of Shakespeare such as Krymov's *Midsummer Night's Dream*.[47] Lehmann adds that "from the *decomposition* of the whole of a genre into its individual elements develop new languages of form. Once the formerly 'glued together' aspects of language and body separate in theatre, character representation and audience address are each treated as autonomous realities."[48] Dorsen's replacement of human agency, human presence, and dramatic interaction by posthuman agency, digital projection, and affectless vocalization in all but one corner of her *Piece of Work* may well be dismissed as an experiment that fails to merit replication or further elab-

[45] Lehmann appropriates the term "rage for understanding" from Jochen Hörisch, *Heads or Tails: The Poetics of Money*, trans. Amy Horring Marschall (Detroit, MI: Wayne State UP), 2000, 32. See Hans-Thies Lehmann, *Postdramatic Theatre*, trans. Karen Jürs-Munby (New York: Routledge, 2006), 88.

[46] Lehmann, *Postdramatic Theatre*, 27.

[47] Lehmann, *Postdramatic Theatre*, 44.

[48] Lehmann, *Postdramatic Theatre*, 51.

oration. But though it is, admittedly, the kind of production one finds more pleasure in recounting than experiencing, its capacity to generate an endless succession of new *Hamlet* texts *after* the ones we thought we had always already known clearly marks a powerfully emergent shape of Shakespearean stagings to come—with Piñeiro's and Krymov's more humanly engaging takes on *Twelfth Night* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* marking two very different others.

Coda

These productions constitute only three points on a map of Shakespearean performance so multivarious that to cite additional examples would scarcely do it justice. Indeed, if one were to envision a production history of our time drafted fifty years hence, the term "intermediality" would probably dominate the discourse, largely on the ground of its recent emergence, with long-sustained projects like the Wooster Group's *Hamlet* (2007–13) and Ivo van Hove's *Roman Tragedies* (2007–17) serving as landmark examples.[49] But intermediality is itself only an intermediate stage between extremes. As I noted at the beginning, these extremes range from productions that insist on foregrounding the physical presence of actors and bare-bones production values to those whose only stage is a screen inviting guests to participate in virtual reversionings of Shakespeare, and even to those—like Punchdrunk's *Sleep No More* (2003–present)—that literalize such virtual spaces in the form of painstakingly designed rooms and choreographed performances that "audiences" walk through and witness, masked performers in their own right.[50] If there is a common strain that runs through these extremes—and van Hove's *Roman Tragedies* as well—it would be a variably tendered and interpreted invitation for audience participation, interaction, or even immersion, which also surfaces as a component in Dorsen's and Krymov's compositional designs. And then, of course, there is the continued emergence of Shakespeare on film, whose latest avatar, *Macbeth* (2015), directed by Justin Kurzel, aims to wrap its audience within the play's established immersive pull, though mainly through the visual force of powerful atmospherics.[51] In the face of such tendencies, Dorsen's focus on virtually nothing but language may seem, in retrospect, positively quaint.

[49] See W. B. Worthen, "*Hamlet* at Ground Zero: The Wooster Group and the Archive of Performance," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 59.3 (2008): 303–22. See also Thomas Cartelli, "Channeling the Ghosts: the Wooster Group's Remediation of the 1964 Electronovision *Hamlet*," *Shakespeare Survey* 61 (2008): 147–60; and "High Tech Shakespeare in a Mediatized Globe: Ivo van Hove's *Roman Tragedies* and the Problem of Spectatorship," in *The Oxford Companion to Shakespeare and Performance*, ed. James Bulman (Oxford: Oxford UP, forthcoming).

[50] See W. B. Worthen's brilliant analysis of *Sleep No More* in *Shakespeare Performance Studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2014), 80–147.

[51] *Macbeth*, directed by Justin Kurzel (London: See-Saw Films, 2015).