**2019 Seminar Abstracts - Refuge in Shakespeare's Europe**
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**The Empathy Crisis:**
**Looking at Ophelia Images to See Refugees**

The colloquialism, "I see," often substitutes for the declaration, "I understand," a casual way of expressing insight, implying empathy. In *Sir Thomas More*, the title character pleas with a xenophobic mob, asking them to, "*Imagine* that [they] *see* the wretched strangers, / Their babies at their backs, with their poor luggage" (Emphasis Mine, Add. II 6.85-86). These lines invite visualization, and this empathy is key in other Shakespearean images, too. Ophelia's drowning in *Hamlet* has become one of the most frequently represented scenes from Shakespeare's works, these respective images eliciting our empathy. We look at images of Ophelia and yearn to prevent the unfairness experienced by her character. Issues surrounding immigration and refugee crises since Shakespeare's era may also stimulate empathy on a global scale, galvanizing the pursuit of progressive change to relieve unjust circumstances.

My research questions result from the parallels of More's cry and the replications of Ophelia's death scene across four centuries: What is the agency of empathy between Shakespeare's text/stage and tragic events involving refuge? Why is empathy generated so often through visual stimuli, including representations of Shakespeare's canon and imagery of refugees in the media and historical accounts? Examining works like Moshe Barasch's book chapter, "Empathy: Toward a Definition," extends the boundaries of empathy experienced through figurative ideas, like Aristotle's argument that metaphors grant life to the inanimate, including art. Additionally, reading Dean Frye's "Reading Shakespeare Backwards" provides ideas for how we iconize a character's demise.

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**Outlaws: Fugitives of Tyranny**

This essay explores Shakespeare's use of the word "outlaw" and its cognates as in road into analyzing the concept of the political fugitive or refugee. Shakespeare uses the word "outlaw" sparingly but critically. In fact, the word arises in his work 11 times, four of which occur in stage directions. Moreover, Shakespeare specifically gives the designation "Outlaw" to three characters in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*. In almost all instances, Shakespeare employs the word "outlaw" to denote a character who has been relegated to fugitive status and/or has been politically exiled. Shakespearean outlaws, more often than not, are fugitives: cast offs escaping from despotic, biased, or tyrannical situations. In this way, Shakespeare draws on two fundamental and often interconnected meanings of "outlaw" as put forth by the

*OED*: Firstly, "A person declared to be outside the law and deprived of its benefits and protection." Secondly, "A person who has been banished or proscribed; an exile, fugitive." In both these definitions, the outlaw's marginal position within a community and/or the person's outlying location beyond a specific geographical place happen as the result of another's actions, whether dictated by a person, group, or governing body.

Shakespeare puts into play a third signification of "outlaw" that resonates more closely (but also complicates) present day usages of the word. According to the *OED*, an "outlaw" is used to designate "a person who lives without regard for the law; a miscreant, felon, criminal, especially one on the run from a law enforcement agency." Yet similar to Robin Hood, Shakespearean outlaws are not mere criminals or miscreants running from the law, but rather aligned with the cultural phenomenon of the "social bandit"--to borrow E. J. Hobswam's term. These characters, one usually based in myth, exist to expose or even overturn systems of authority that are unjust or hypocritical. For this essay, I will analyzing the word "outlaw" in *Richard II*, *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *As You Like It*, and *Cymbeline*.

I hope that a discussion of Shakespearean outlaws as political fugitives or social bandits (or both) can shed light on contemporary discussions of the refugee in Europe or elsewhere.

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**Immigration and/as Ingestion:**
**Incorporating Otherness in *Sir Thomas More***

Part of a larger project on eating (and) the Other in Shakespeare's tragedies, this essay uses *Sir Thomas More* (with some assistance from the roughly contemporaneous *Titus Andronicus*) to illuminate Shakespeare's exploration of the complexities of immigration through images and figures of eating and ingestion. Perhaps the most common figure used in early modern English depictions of foreign migrants, and the one that undergirds the early scenes of *Sir Thomas More*, is as voracious consumers—of English food, jobs, and women. In the "Hand D" passages of *STM*, however, as elsewhere in his tragedies, Shakespeare depicts immigrants not as consumers but as consumed: both as bringers of foreign foodstuffs that function as metonyms for their bearers, and as consumables themselves, to be digested— or expelled—by the English body politic. *STM*, I will argue, acknowledges the native English anxiety over consuming the foreign, but reserves its most striking figure for human consumption—cannibalism—neither for eating nor for being eaten by the Other, but for eating the self or the same: a culture that refuses to incorporate foreign migrants is left to self-destructively, nihilistically devour itself. The model for incorporating the immigrant that the Hand D fragment gestures towards, moreover, is not one of assimilation, in which the alien is

absorbed and homogenized within the body of the state, but one which preserves the difference between self and other while bringing the latter within the former: a model which, I hope to show, offers empathy—locating the other in the self rather than projecting the self onto the other—as a means of cultural incorporation.

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**What Refuge in Shared Narratives:**
**The partial truths of personal histories in Shakespeare's late romance *Pericles***

How do personal narratives, shared between strangers, assuage the various problems of refugee status? Is a narrative or other form of spoken word sufficient to ease the difficulty of being displaced? What is the relationship between refuge and a shared personal narrative? Marina's journey in Shakespeare's late romance *Pericles* resembles two contemporary forms of refuge: Twenty-first century Mediterranean crossings to Mytilene, and escape from sexual enslavement through the sharing of personal narratives with would-be rapists. While these two plot elements are remarkable for their resonance with the present day world, in this paper, I argue that Marina only experiences an enduring refuge once she, her father, and her mother realize that their isolation concealed the facts of their situations from them. They discern the truth of their lives when they tell their story to each other. In performance, the play compounds the drama of their mutual recognitions by creating anticipation in the audience and actors, which effects a unique echoing of desire amongst characters, actors, and audience. Ultimately, the play dramatizes ways that a shared narrative can create refuge.

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**'Because survival is insufficient': Imagining Communities of Refuge in *King Lear*,**
***The Tempest*, and *Station Eleven***

Emily St. John Mandel's 2014 novel, *Station Eleven*, follows a band of actors—members of the Travelling Symphony—who have been displaced from their homes due to the Georgia Flu, a global pandemic that killed 99% of the world's population. In the decades since the flu, this band of refugees has traveled from village to village, producing plays by Shakespeare. This amalgamation of post-apocalyptic science fiction, refugee narratives, and Shakespeare occurs frequently in television, film, and fiction; for example, such well-known universes as *Star Trek* and *Doctor Who* contain quotations of and references to Shakespeare's plays in the context of individuals and communities fighting for survival. As the Travelling Symphony's *Star Trek*-derived slogan points out: survival is insufficient. Thus, it seems as if science fiction repeatedly views Shakespeare as the step beyond survival and the balm for the troubles of the displaced.

This paper explores St. John Mandel's appropriation of Shakespeare and *Star Trek*, specifically in the context of displaced people. Many have noted that apocalypses are about not only devastation, but also revelation, perhaps even salvation. In that context, I will consider what the apocalypses of *Station Eleven*, *King Lear*, and *The Tempest* reveal about refuge, sanctuary, survival, and community. In the borderless world of *Station Eleven*, *everyone* is a refugee, but there is no place of refuge. Offering refuge becomes the responsibility of the individual, rather than the state, since states and nations no longer exist. My paper will argue that the Shakespearean intertexts in *Station Eleven* enable St. John Mandel to offer a vision of the apocalypse in its horror, as well as in its moments of empathy and compassion for the displaced. The novel imagines an ethic of hospitality toward the displaced and demonstrates how crisis produces unexpected, cross-cultural, and inter-generational communities.

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The European refugee crisis of the 2010s presented a number of unusual challenges to the Shakespeare industry. On the one hand, academics, theatre makers and the media read and re-interpreted the Shakespearean text to define a response to the momentous personal, political and economic issues raised by the arrival of tens of thousands of homeless extra-European migrants. In the process, objectivity was not always the highest ideal pursued, and on numerous occasions it tended to cede to a creative, propagandist reading of a number of key

texts, most notably of the central monologue from the play of *Sir Thomas More*. The renewed popularity of this play in such troubled times – no doubt also profiting from the commemorative impulse of 2014 and 2016 – alters us to some of the more challenging aspects involving the worldwide dissemination and reception of Shakespeare and his work, and these invite serious discussion.

Also to engage with the crisis, the plays were mobilized and staged worldwide. The impact was never starker than when actual refugee camps became the setting for Shakespeare productions, productions either performed by travelling companies from the West, or by interned refugees themselves. Given the often *ad hoc* nature of these productions, reviews are scarce, information tends to be scanty and myth-making rife. How may these unique theatrical ventures be incorporated into the stage history of Shakespeare in Britain and abroad?

In my contribution to the Washington seminar I will identify several examples of such refugee cultures, and try to suggest a number of lessons to be learnt from this unusual outpouring of creativity under pressure.

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**Nomadic Shylock: Nationhood and Its Subversion in *The Merchant of Venice***

Decades of contending with the text of *The Merchant of Venice*, comprising academic writing, teaching and translating the text, culminated in my own stage adaptation of the play. My production, in which the plot is set in 1516, the year the Jewish Ghetto in Venice was inaugurated, opens with a caravan of Jewish refugees wandering from the Iberian Peninsula on the ways of Europe. It is an image that corresponds both to the myth of the "wandering Jew," rampant in the popular imagination at the time (and later to be compared to the rootless or artist in general – see, eg, Nietzsche 1969 or Toller 1978); and to the acute image of displaced refugees in today's Europe. This *affect* (in Deleuzian terms) of deterritorialization, moving from the literal meaning of the term to its Deleuzian connotation, may serve as an emblem to my reading of the play, informing my stage production of it, divided between Shakespeare and not Shakespeare. My presentation will move to and fro from an account of the production and its source of inspiration in what may be conceived as the relation between Shakespeare and his cultural capital.

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Last summer, I was audience to the play *The Jungle* at St. Ann's Warehouse in London. The play is based on the refugee camp that came to life on the outside of Calais, France, in 2015, only to be bulldozed a year later. The play, with its obvious connection to Upton Sinclair's 1904 novel *The Jungle*, also resonates with themes found frequently in Shakespeare, including displacement, hostility/hospitality, belonging, estrangement, and community formation and destruction.

In *As You Like It*, *Hamlet*, *The Winter's Tale*, and *Sir Thomas More*, we see the development of a "take them in" ethic, strongly indicating the personal responsibility of those granting refuge. However, in this paper, I would like to look a bit further into this, and think not just of the benefit of the refugee, but of the benefit to the refuger, that the plays indicate. In other words, there is room in Shakespeare not only for doing the right thing, but for becoming the better community through the ethical treatment of refugees. To this extent, then, in Shakespeare we see the responsible care for the displaced and disregarded transformed, at times, into the project of community development and becoming.

As such, Shakespeare might offer us the possibility of thinking through not what we might personally gain or lose in providing welcome to the refugee, but what we might collectively achieve is we create a welcoming, inclusive, and empowering community.

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**Aliens at the Border:**
**The BBC's *The Wars of the Roses* and This Fortress Built by Nature**

In May of 2016, the BBC aired *The Wars of the Roses*, a second installment of *The Hollow Crown* series, adapting William Shakespeare's first tetralogy to celebrate the 400th anniversary of the playwright's death. Just as the series aired, the campaign to leave the European Union raged hotly in the run-up to the Brexit vote on 23 June. In those contexts, the series interpolates a prologue to *I Henry VI* that inadvertently spotlights Shakespeare's contradictory function both as a liberal humanist icon and as a convenient emblem of resurgent nationalism. The first episode of the three-film series opens with a travelling overhead shot of the English Channel and a Judi Dench voiceover taken not from *I Henry VI* but from Ulysses's doctrine of degree in *Troilus and Cressida*. Stripped of their context and presented in conjunction with the powerful symbolism of the white cliffs, the transplanted lines wed national "degree, priority, and place" (1.3.86) to a geography that keeps intruders at bay and parses no distinction between refugee and invader. Indeed, the threat of "what discord follows" (1.3.110) combines with the on-rushing camera to shorthand anxieties about

the "invasion" of displaced persons and refugees crossing the seas at peril and moving across Europe to seek asylum during 2015 and 2016. Aired just at the moment that the British electorate voted to sever EU ties and tighten borders, the series prologue situates its Shakespearean history within an isolationist national self-conception that does not heed the strangers' case.

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**'Shakespeare, Refugees and the Conditions of Compassion'**

Recent years have seen a number of attempts to appropriate Shakespeare as a powerful advocate for the replacing of xenophobia with a compassionate response to the plight of refugees and displaced people arriving in Europe and elsewhere in the privileged parts of the world - e.g. UN Ambassador Samantha Power's 'Remarks on the Stranger's case: the Power of Empathy in Art and Diplomacy' at The Lincoln Center Global Exchange (2016), or Shakespeare's Globe programming around Refugee Week in 2018. Such appropriations usually centre on Thomas More's speech attributed to Shakespeare in *Sir Thomas More* (1592-93), in which More addresses xenophobic riots in London in 1517 with a well-wrought rhetorical appeal for compassion. Yet as scholars have pointed out (Lawrence, 2018), historicizing the speech not surprisingly complicates the attempt to create parallels to contemporary events. This paper agrees with the necessity to continue problematizing the elevation of Shakespeare as a source of moral truth in relation to present-day humanitarian crises, and focuses in particular on implicit notions that a Shakespearean conceptualization of compassion might transcend historical and cultural contexts. It demonstrates that representations of compassion in the Thomas More speech and elsewhere in the Shakespearean canon are conditioned by rhetorical, religious and political factors, and argues that it is only by paying close attention to those factors that we may begin to understand how present-day compassionate responses to Europe's refugee crises are equally conditioned.

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**Taking action: refugee-responsive Shakespeare in Italy and beyond**

In "We Refugees", a short piece written in 1995, Giorgio Agamben builds on Hannah Arendt's seminal thinking about WWII diaspora to call for a radical shift in our

understanding of the condition of refugee and of its bearing on Europe's identity and political future. Rather than as a problem to be cured or contained, he argues, the refugee crisis should be seen an opportunity for a much-needed renewal of the conceptual categories that underpin the European construction. As a stateless person, the refugee breaks up the identity between man and citizen and in this way lays bare the incompatibility between the universalist concept of human rights and the exclusionary notion of territorial sovereignty. Agamben's call to reconstruct our political philosophy seems even more urgent today, faced as we are with a humanitarian catastrophe of unprecedented proportions and an equally devastating crisis of Europe as a political community. Now more than ever, the very survival of the EU seems dependent on its ability, as a new continent of immigration, to evolve a different paradigm of political subjectivity.

Judging from the impressive amount of Shakespeare performances about and/or by refugees that have been staged over the past few years in Europe and beyond, it seems clear that a growing number of artists and activists today see his works as providing a particularly suitable tool for engaging meaningfully and ethically with the current crisis. In this paper I consider some recent Italian takes on Shakespeare that reframe the plays as contemporary tales of forced displacement and refuge. The aim of my analysis is to provide insight into the cognitive and political firepower that Shakespeare can afford or has been seen as affording at the present juncture, and to examine the strategies that have been used to activate these possibilities in and through performance. I will specifically focus on refugee-responsive performances that are conceived as a form of civic action rather than a mise-en-scène, and that aim to trigger a politically relevant disturbance in the perceptual field. Enlisting Shakespeare into a process of "spatial reorientation" (Phelps 2017), these pointedly transnational projects emphasize the permeability of borders as the cornerstone of European identity, move that acquires special urgency vis-a-vis Italy's progressive reconfiguration as a fortified EU borderland under the pressure of an ever-escalating humanitarian emergency.

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## Escapes: Elisabeth Bergner, Shakespeare, and Jewish Migration

Born Elisabeth Ettel in Drohobych in the Austro-Hungarian Empire (present day Ukraine), Elisabeth Bergner grew up in a secular Jewish household. The Hebrew spoken in her home was associated with Yom Kippur and Pesach, and on her later visits to Israel, she apologized for not knowing the language better, particularly since she lectured in German.

In 1932, Paul Czinner, her husband, and soon to be fellow refugee from the Nazi takeover of Germany, directed her in a very famous German film, entitled *Der träumende Mund* ("The Dreaming Lips") in which her character, Gaby, goes missing during the plot, and she never returns to the storyline, although there are hints that she may have committed suicide by drowning herself. Three years later, she was nominated for an Academy Award for Best Actress for *Escape Me Never* (1935), another film dominated by the theme of disappearance and escape.

In 1936 she played Rosalind, opposite Laurence Olivier's Orlando, in *As You Like It,* the first sound film version of Shakespeare's play, and the first sound film of any Shakespeare play filmed in England, a movie that was also directed by Czinner. Between the years of the German films and the Shakespearean production, however, her personal escape from Germany, not unlike the characters she portrayed in the Weimer Republic film productions, was also mystifying.  As Kerry Wallace points out, both Bergner's physical and filmic disappearances are "linked to escape, emigration, and emergence." Most significantly, Bergner's "ability to reappear, both as a new immigrant" as well as "on the screens of other nations," particularly the new nation of Israel, contributed to her "overall mystique" and added to her growing reputation as a "great Jewish actress well beyond Germany" (18).

Like other famous German stage personalities of the Weimer Republic who used Shakespeare as a vehicle for immigration, -- the best known being Max Reinhardt, who directed the Warner Brothers *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1935) -- my questions focus on the following, moving from specific to more general:  How did the famous "trouser roles" in Bergner's German films contribute to her success as Rosalind in *As You Like It?* It what ways did her Shakespearean roles, as opposed to say a role in a Goethe adaption, enable her successful immigration to the U.K.? Most broadly, how did the emerging mediascape in Europe work to enable or disable immigration and migration?

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**Rome and Refuge: Sir Thomas More's Relationships to Asylum**

This paper explores the late twilight of sanctuary in Elizabethan England and its intersection with European migration. Although the formal institution of sanctuary had, in most meaningful ways, ceased to exist by the later sixteenth-century after the dissolution of the monasteries, the concept stubbornly persevered in early modern discourse (as well as its theatrical imagination). It was often conflated with the idea of a liberty more generally, signifying policies at odds with surrounding municipal jurisdiction. In other cases, however, the status of sanctuary was more complex.

First analyzing Elizabethan invocations of "sanctuary," I treat three underlying categories: (1) suppressed religious liberties the Crown repossessed and sold; (2) liberties surviving repossession, like St. Katherine by the Tower (and in a different way, Westminster); (3) liberties (regardless of post-dissolution status) infamous for lax law-enforcement.

I then explain how each of these so-called "sanctuary" zones had a different relationship with European migrants (including refugees). In some cases, "sanctuary" areas allowed robust protection for migrants practicing a trade outside of the repressive domestic guild system. In other cases, a sanctuary's preexisting associations with lawlessness or unjust exemptions kindled xenophobic and nativist sentiment: migrants, finally finding a home, remained at the mercy of their refuge space's specific legal and political history, as well as its cultural reputation already inscribed within the cityscape.

I draw from historical and archival research on sanctuary's inheritances and put this in conversation with the play *Sir Thomas More* and other texts of the period.

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