Abstracts – Novelizing Shakespeare

"That's not a great model for a romance, right?": The Romance Novel and the Re-taming of Shakespeare's Problem(atic) play.

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Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* is a problem(atic) play for its 21st century audience, yet adaptations continue to take on the challenge of retelling the story, seemingly in hopes of somehow erasing the misogyny that lies at the core of the play. Most of those adaptations fail in this task; for even as they attempt to question the values depicted in the play, they nevertheless prioritize the concept of Shakespeare and Shakespeare's works as cultural authority. This paper will argue that a potential solution to the problem of adapting Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* can be found in a literary space that is often overlooked, genre fiction that is predominantly targeted to women. For, the very conventions of genre fiction often derided as being formulaic or fluff—whether it is romance's centering of the heroine's emotions, rehabilitation of the problematic hero, or the requirement of a happy ending—force a different type of engagement with Shakespeare's work in which deference to Shakespeare is overtaken and perhaps even "tamed" by the requirements of the genre.

Shakespeare in the 21st Century: Reconciliation and Collapse in Emily St. John Mandel's *Station Eleven* (2014) and in its Spanish Translation

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Emily St. John Mandel's *Station Eleven* (2014) makes us explore the enduring relevance of Shakespearean and biblical themes in a 21st-century context. Set in a postpandemic world, the novel is an example of rich intertextuality by weaving Shakespearean references and biblical allusions where one can examine narratives of reconciliation and societal collapse. Here, Shakespeare is presented as a guiding force amid chaos, with characters like Kirsten finding profound meaning in reciting his lines despite the surrounding societal breakdown. This paradox underscores the timeless power of Shakespeare's works to inspire and connect people during crises. This study also examines the Spanish translation of *Station Eleven* (*Estación Once*, 2015) by Puerto Barruetabeña Díez, analyzing how Shakespearean and biblical intertexts adapt across cultural and linguistic boundaries. Through this lens, it analyses how Shakespearean quotations and biblical allusions, are culturally translated to maintain their resonance. By delving into the novel's intertextual layers and their stylistic implications, this research emphasizes the intrinsic connection between Shakespeare and the Bible, highlighting their impact on themes of social cohesion and reconciliation. The study contributes to broader discussions on literature and translation, showcasing how these texts remain relevant in shaping understanding during times of upheaval.

Shakespeare in *Megalopolis*
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Megalopolis (2024), Francis Ford Coppola's sprawling love child of a passion project, a summa to outdo all summae, also functions as an ars filmica and condemnation of American imperial decadence as echo of ancient Rome's. The Roman materials are thus front and center in this epic science fiction film. But I will argue that they are at times mediated by Shakespeare, who, despite critics' neglect of the issue, helps boost the film's ambition to become a timeless statement about art, politics, imperialism, and the human condition. Shakespeare is quoted twice; and various characters and situations from the Roman plays reappear. *Megalopolis's* protagonist, the visionary architect and city planner Cesar Catilina, recites most of Hamlet's "To be or not to be" speech early on. Later, celebrating the completion of his new utopian urban development in the city (the eponymous Megalopolis), Catilina quotes part of Prospero's "Our revels now are ended" speech. The connection between the two is the idea of dreaming up new worlds. As for the Roman plays that suggest or inflect the film's characters and situations, *Julius Caesar* and *Coriolanus* seem most prominent. Cesar Catilina is almost assassinated like Julius Caesar; as is Clodio Pulcher, a more obviously demagogic populist, more apt to turn tyrant. Catilina's relationship with his impossible-to-please mother may owe something to that between Coriolanus and his mother.

Novelizing Lady Macbeth
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Novels adapting Shakespeare's works are nothing new; writers have been fascinated with these plots and characters for decades, and they continue to create based on the Bard's influence. While many plays have served as inspiration for novelists, 2024 saw multiple authors turn their attention specifically to Lady Macbeth. What makes Macbeth's much-maligned wife such a compelling character to current writers? Joel H Morris''s *All Our Yesterdays*, Ava Reid's *Lady Macbeth*, and Val McDermid's *Queen Macbeth* reject, rehabilitate, and reimagine the Lady Macbeth that Shakespeare presents in his version of the story. Their recreations of the character, painted through the lenses of trauma, survival, and sisterhood, create narratives that align with political and social conversations interrogating these very ideas in our current moment. Examining the parallels between and impetus behind this examination of Lady Macbeth reveals the ways in which we still grapple with our understanding of ambitious women, and how Shakespeare's famous female "villain" still speaks to our fears and desires.

***Hamlet* in *Hamnet*: Retelling, Remembering, and Forgetting**
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Maggie O'Farrell's novel *Hamnet* concludes with a scene in which Shakespeare's estranged wife (here called Agnes) attends a production of *Hamlet*. She is not expecting to enjoy it. In fact, she is shocked and infuriated at what she perceives as her husband's inexplicable decision to take the private tragedy of their son's death and put it on stage for the whole world to see. The inward, domestic world of the novel is poised to collide with the public performance of the play that has partly inspired it, and which in turn is supposedly inspired by the events narrated in the novel. In the end, the novel nods to the play's greatness and emotional truth, precipitating a moment of

catharsis that we are led to believe will lead to the reconciliation of Agnes and her husband. But in order to achieve this moving conclusion, the novel must manage to forget four acts of the play. In this essay, I will argue that this in-novel performance is only the most heightened example of O'Farrell's subtle negotiation of the gap between her own chosen genre and Shakespeare's.

"To each our own Hamlet": The Multiplicity of Hamlets (and Shakespeares) in Jasper Fforde's *Something Rotten*
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As Andrew James Hartley notes in his introduction to *Shakespeare and Millennial Fiction*, the ways that twenty-first century authors have approached Shakespeare in their literary works is unique. These "distinctly millennial novels," he argues, "engage with Shakespeare's inspirational original while simultaneously advancing their own ideas and aesthetics," an idea which positions them as a site of both creation and adaptation (8). Jasper Fforde's *Thursday Next* series is an excellent example of this sort of slippage.

The alternate England of Fforde's novels is one in which Shakespeare has taken on cult significance, with audience members joining together to stage *Richard III* in a manner reminiscent of *Rocky Horror Picture Show* and anti-Stratfordians going door to door like traveling missionaries, bringing the "good news" of the "true" author of Shakespeare's plays. It is the series' fourth book, *Something Rotten* (2004), which most directly toys with Shakespeare as inspirational figure by focusing directly on one of his most famous creations – Hamlet, Prince of Denmark – and on Shakespeare himself. In this paper, I argue that Fforde's designation of Shakespeare as a cult classic provides an opening through which readers are invited to reexamine their own relationship to *Hamlet* and its characters. In presenting us with a multitude of different Hamlets (and, quite literally, Shakespeares), *Something Rotten* encourages a uniquely twenty-first interaction with Shakespeare by proposing the existence of "our own Hamlet" as the entry-point for our understanding of Shakespeare's canon.

A Tale of Two Idiots: Faulkner's Benjy and Shakespeare's *Macbeth*
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As *The Sound and the Fury* makes clear, American modernist author William Faulkner does not shy away from the work of his predecessors, especially where titles are concerned. *The Sound and the Fury* is, of course, a quote from the character of Macbeth in the "Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow" (5.5.16) speech near the end of the eponymously named play by Shakespeare (ca. 1606). Given that both *Macbeth* and *The Sound and the Fury* feature figures (Macbeth and Benjy, respectively) considered "idiots," this paper aims to take a rigorous approach to the study of their characters. One thing that seems to reveal itself from the outset is that in today's idiom Benjy would likely not be considered an "idiot;" he is more likely to be an individual on the nonverbal (or semi-verbal) spectrum, yet still deserving of all the dignity and humanity we accord to most if not all of our fellow beings. At the same time, Benjy does see the world and understand that world in a very different way than others do. This does not mean that Benjy's view of things is any less valid than anyone else's; in fact, at times it may be even more valid. Macbeth, on the other hand, realizes his "idiocy" when it is too late for him to do anything about it. Thanks in large part to the equivocal witches and his own grandiose ego, Macbeth –

with only anecdotal (at best) evidence to go on – has convinced himself and a cadre of others that he is the rightful heir to the throne of Scotland. That it was all a nasty lesson by life leading him to condemn himself to death is not so much a surprise to the would-be ruler as the result of the inevitable forces aligned against him. His "idiocy" is the result of his choosing what turns out to be the wrong path in life. But he takes that philosophy even further when he comments that all men are capable of becoming such "idiots" if they allow themselves to be led astray like he claims he was. It is these two types of "idiocy," Benjy's and Macbeth's, that, so to speak, take center stage in this conference paper.

Teaching the Hogarth Shakespeare's *Vinegar Girl*: Adapting Shakespeare for Accessibility and Cultural Currency
Julie Prior, *Dallas College*

When it comes to Shakespearean adaptation, a commonly studied reconceptualizing of his plays are, of course, theatrical reworkings. *The Taming of the Shrew* has received ample attention for its theatrical and cinematic adaptations, many of which make Shakespeare accessible to modern audiences. But what this play has received less attention to is its refiguring as a novelistic adaptation, or to the connected pedagogical opportunities presented by such reworkings. This paper will explore *Vinegar Girl* (2016), the Hogarth Shakespeare Series adaptation of *The Taming of the Shrew* and will consider the implications of the novelistic mode as this format conceptualizes Shakespeare's ideas about gender, domestic violence, and female agency in a classroom setting.

I argue that the Shrew Hogarth adaptation modernizes the important above-noted themes, and does so in ways that refigure Katherine (the shrew) as a modern-day woman who struggles with her own version of the problems Shakespeare presents. More broadly, this paper advocates for the ways in which this novelistic adaptation of Shrew attempts (by authorly admission) to be refigured as empowering for modern readers.

I further suggest that *Vinegar Girl* is an ideal text to be brought into the college classroom: introducing a novel such as *Vinegar Girl* into the English classroom not only makes Shakespeare accessible to this generation of students, but this novel's representation of immigrants and immigration-related issues also accomplishes two things: it serves firstly as a means of bridging the gap between formal and colloquial (read 'accessible') English, and secondly, offers an opportunity to decolonize the curriculum when it comes to Shakespeare pedagogy by breaking down barriers to what 'Shakespeare' can look like.