

Del Col and McCreery's Kill Shakespeare: A Reading of Shakespeare through Critical Pedagogy

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Abstract

Objectives: This paper aims to investigate how the inherent taste in Shakespeare can change through the teaching of the very core of English heritage; Shakespeare, by applying critical pedagogy as a method which in its turn diminishes superiority of the value and taste that is given to his name.

Methods: It argues that teaching through the usage of critical pedagogy is a way to tame the idea, the name, and the obsession of and with Shakespeare by answering the question: How could critical pedagogy be a way for educators to specialize in and inform students of Shakespeare without becoming part of the Western Metaphysical bandwagon that idealizes cover-ups which market preach-hood and forms?

Results: The results indicate that there is a need to a reading of the word 'Shakespeare' through critical pedagogy. This would make space for the death of the author and the authority that is associated to the word 'Shakespeare.'

Conclusion: Finally, the paper will conclude with how Anthony Del Col and Conor McCreery's comic book series, *Kill Shakespeare* (2010-2014), as well as other literary texts, have brought to light ways in which the authority of Shakespeare's dominion over the English literary canon and the pressure of approaching Shakespeare is a window to reading Shakespeare under the scope of critical pedagogy.

Keywords: Shakespeare, Critical Pedagogy, Kill Shakespeare, Del Col, McCreery.

ديل كول ومكريري قتل شكسبير: قراءة شكسبير من خلال علم أصول التدريس النقدي

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ملخص

الأهداف: تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى الكشف عن كيفية تغيير الذوق المتأصل في شكسبير من خلال تدريس جوهر التراث الإنجليزي - شكسبير - بتطبيق أصول التدريس النقدية التي بدورها تقلل من التعامل مع كتابته تحت مظلة قيم التعظيم الأدبي وتحويله محورا للذوق الأدبي بسبب شهرته العالمية واسم شكسبير المعروف قبل ملامسة نصوصه الأدبية.

المنهجية: المنهجية المتبعة هي القراءة الدقيقة ونظرية علم أصول التدريس النقدي، بحيث تم مناقشة أن التدريس من خلال استخدام علم أصول التدريس النقدي هو وسيلة لترويض فكرة شكسبير واسمه من خلال الإجابة على السؤال: كيف يمكن أن تكون التربية النقدية وسيلة لدراسة وتدريس شكسبير دون أن يؤدي تدريسه إلى جعل اسمه جزءاً من التمجيد الميتافيزيقي الغربي الذي جسد شكسبير كنقطة مركزية في الأدب؟
النتائج: توصلت الدراسة إلى أن تدريس الكاتب شكسبير مرتبط بشهرته أكثر من كتاباته، لذلك قراءة لكلمة "شكسبير" من خلال طرق التدريس النقدية يمكن إفساح المجال لموت المؤلف والسلطة المرتبطة بكلمة "شكسبير". وقدمت الدراسة أمثلة على كيفية تطبيق قراءة شكسبير من غير تحديده بقيمة معينة.

التوصيات: أكدت الدراسة كيفية قيام أنطوني ديل كول وكونار مكيري في سلسلة الكتب المصورة "قتل شكسبير" (2010-2014)، بالإضافة إلى نصوص أدبية أخرى، بتسليط الضوء على تأثير سلطة وهيمنة شكسبير على التراث الأدبي الإنجليزي وتوضيح الضغوطات التي ترافق الإقتراب من شكسبير ونقده من خلال استخدام نظرية التفكير الناقد وعلم أصول التدريس النقدي.
الكلمات الدالة: شكسبير، علم أصول التدريس النقدي، قتل شكسبير، ديل كول، مكيري.



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Introduction

"To be or not to be;" Shakespeare has lived through both. He has experienced fame throughout his lifetime and after his death. He has experienced fame during his lifetime as a dramatist (i.e., physical life) and more after his death (i.e., metaphysical life). Shakespeare is the English legacy that was known in his physical life and is well-known through his metaphysical existence in the English literature heritage. The power that is associated with his name has varied from one age to another. His existence has influenced, and still does, English studies all over the world. Shakespeare survived the age of reason as a figure full of reason, survived the romantic age through being the ultimate romantic and survived the wasteland through being the longed classic glory. In an age where Truth is exposed as a truth that suppressed the 'other,' the end of the twentieth century and the beginning of twenty first century uncover the oppressors of the past ages; these centuries translate the godlike canonized heritage into a Western Metaphysical investment that has been empowering by Plato's 'sun,' Aristotle's 'species,' Darwin's 'natural selection,' and Samuel Johnson's 'Shakespeare.'

In Plato's *Republic*, "Book VII: The Allegory of the Cave", Plato uses a metaphor to explain the status of elite, intellectual philosophers who manage to escape the fire in the cave that presents fake shadows rather than Truth. Plato demonstrates how a philosopher should escape the chains of the cave and elevate to a higher status where knowledge becomes Truth because of the sun's light. Western Metaphysical formalism has manipulated this metaphor and set it as the hypothesis that all seekers of education should reach. Western metaphysical formalism has arranged hierarchies based on this metaphor; where the sun becomes the light, knowledge, the Truth, the Meaning to life; and the cave as darkness, ignorance, and falsehood. Aristotle in his *Rhetoric* and *Poetics* has defined and limited forms where texts are conformed to when writing in the elite way he illustrates. Aristotle uses the word species to show that there is an essence to whatever looks at first sight as chaos. Aristotle calls for those who see the sun of Plato to assign species in order for form to find the Truth. Darwin's natural selection justifies the hierarchal divisions that are imposed by Plato and fixed by Aristotle. He explains that hierarchy is not man-made, but rather it is *naturally* selected; and thus, he builds upon western metaphysical thoughts to establish a metaphysical reason behind the selection of the sun, the species, the elite, and the truth associates to them. In Smallwood's book Johnson's *Preface to Shakespeare*, Samuel Johnson's magnificent "Preface to Shakespeare" is re-published. Johnson provides the basis of reading Shakespeare through the eyes of western metaphysical formalists. Johnson's preface is filled with words that classify Shakespeare as the highest in the English literary heritage; he says: "Shakespeare is above all writers" (Smallwood, 4). Johnson sells Shakespeare's drama as "the mirror of life" (Smallwood, 7); he emphasizes that true power and method in knowing is through mimicking life. According to Johnson, Shakespeare represents both universality and unity; Shakespeare depicts humanity and nature, and "unites the powers of exciting laughter and sorrow" (Smallwood, 9). His language is "smooth and clear" and his characters are "whole" (Smallwood, 14).

Shakespeare's metaphysical fame has led to incorporating his texts and influence in English Studies all over the world. English Studies field has explored Shakespeare as an inseparable part of it; his name and works are mandatory for undergraduate and sometimes graduate students. The paper will use critical pedagogy as a theoretical framework; where scholars are encouraged to question and challenge the domination of a valued text while being conscious about the authoritarian tendencies to connect their reading of the text to its value in the canon. This paper intends to investigate whether the inherent taste in Shakespeare can change through the teaching of the maintained core of English heritage; Shakespeare, by applying critical pedagogy which in its turn diminishes superiority of the value and taste that is given to his name. The paper argues that teaching through the usage of critical pedagogy is a way to tame the idea, the name, and the obsession of and with Shakespeare by answering the question: How could critical pedagogy be a way for educators to specialize in and inform students of Shakespeare without becoming part of the Western Metaphysical bandwagon that idealizes cover-ups which market preach-hood and forms? This paper also aims at providing a reading to the name 'Shakespeare' through critical pedagogy to make space for the death of the author and the authority that is associated to the word 'Shakespeare.' It will also argue that, through the use of critical pedagogy, Anthony Del Col and Conor McCreery's comic book series, *Kill Shakespeare* (2010-2014), has managed to stress and question the authority of Shakespeare's dominion over the English literary canon and the pressure to include Shakespeare in English departments and their curricula.

Shakespeare and Critical Pedagogy

The word “Shakespeare” prevails over the English departments and English studies. It is no longer just a name that belongs to an author. Benedicks, in her *Reclaiming the Public University* (2007), declares: “Saying ‘Shakespeare’ is saying a lot. He is so iconic that the word ‘Shakespeare’ comes to mean both the man and the writing” (Benedicks, 178). Benedicks’s affirmation speaks of Shakespeare as iconic: “Shakespeare is a cultural icon everywhere ... Shakespeare is perhaps the only standard western classic they [students] are all bound to have heard of” (Benedicks, 179). What made Shakespeare come to be classified as ‘high’ in a hierarchy that defines him as ‘classic’ is his works, and thus his name, being “widely available” (Benedicks, 180). This has led to his universal status in literary canons.

In “The Decline of the English Department” (2012), Chace demonstrates how the English Department in Harvard University is facing the challenge that most English departments are facing around the world: English is no longer a popular major among students; students are now heading towards business and technology. This is despite the efforts of the semi-distorted English Department which resorted to change the methodological approaches and maintain the “make it new” mode. Remarkably, with all the changes to try and restructure the department to draw students back into the English literary field, Shakespeare, in all his glory including the name and works, remains unscathed as he maintains his ‘high’ hierarchal status in the English Department.

Consider the English department at Harvard University. It has now agreed to remove its survey of English literature for undergraduates, replacing it and much else with four new “affinity groups”—“Arrivals,” “Poets,” “Diffusions,” and “Shakespeares.” The first would examine outside influences on English literature; the second would look at whatever poets the given instructor would select; the third would study various writings (again, picked by the given instructor) resulting from the spread of English around the globe; and the final grouping would direct attention to Shakespeare and his contemporaries. (Chace, 26)

Harvard University, as Chace demonstrates, has diminished the labels and classifications which limit educators and students and replaced those arrangements with loose ended ‘surveys.’ However, the word Shakespeare is glorified and even pluralized; the word Shakespeare stands for an age, a person, and a text. ‘Shakespeare’ has become its own category, becoming more important than other English author to the point that Harvard gives him and his influence a whole *affinity group*. Unlike postmodern authors (i.e., *arrivals*); early modern and modern authors (i.e., *poets*); and canonized authors (i.e., *diffusions*), Shakespeare could just be part of any curricula in any of the first three *affinity groups*. Yet, Shakespeare is given an affinity group of his own (i.e., *Shakespeares*) that inflates his influence and allows him to overcome being a facet of English literature.

Knowing Shakespeare has become a must, Benedicks states that “Shakespeare sits at the top of the English curriculum” (Benedicks, 181). Shakespeare’s status in English literary curriculum is always present. The debates on what should be taught in the curricula almost never hesitate when it comes to the teaching of Shakespeare. Graduating from the English Department and studying and knowing Shakespeare is equal in importance to having the knowledge and skills of writing a paper. He is called “the most canonical of the canonical” (Benedicks, 183). Levine writes: “Shakespeare had been converted from popular playwright whose dramas were the property of those that flocked to see them, into a sacred author who had to be protected from ignorant audiences and overbearing actors threatening the integrity of his creations” (Levine, 72). Levine depicts how the canonization of Shakespeare is unquestionable; his inclusion in any curricula related to English literature is a must.

Orgel offers a reading on how Shakespeare the author, or the writer, or the actor has become the single word icon “Shakespeare.” In his *Postmodern Shakespeare*, Orgel views the Victorian age as the marketers of the word Shakespeare; he reveals that “the Victorians ... were less concerned with situating Shakespeare in a non-Western context than with establishing his racial pedigree within the European family” (Orgel, 2). He sees that the word Shakespeare is a “radical makeup” (Orgel, 3), and this radicality and cover up has secured a position for Shakespeare at the heart of the “cultural universality” (Orgel, 3) that Western Metaphysical Formalism is built on. Orgel, outstandingly, remarks: “Shakespeare’s ‘universal’ quality, his presumed ability to embody world culture, has become implicitly tied to the empire on which the

sun never sets" (Orgel, 3-4). Orgel's Shakespeare becomes a method through which the British empires' dominance still residues through the post-independent-once-British world.

Orgel's reference to Shakespeare's connection to British empire's *sun* that *never sets* reflects on the view of Shakespeare's universality. Shakespeare is part of this ever-present, ever-shining sun of knowledge that lights through literary canons and allows his inevitable presence in English curricula. And wherever exists a metaphysical sun, there are Western Metaphysical traces. The sun represents light, knowledge, and the ultimate truth that Plato articulated in the "Allegory of the Cave", "Book VII" of the *Republic*. Shakespeare's universality comes as an equal to the ultimate truth which Western Metaphysical Formalism builds the empire on and spreads the empire through; Shakespeare draws a parallel between man, nature, and others. He is viewed as a heritage that represents and secures both humanity and nature; he is fetishized and has anchored a position in English departments. "He is – whoever he is, or was – the fantasy of original cultural wholeness, the last vestige of universalism: *unser* [i.e. our] *Shakespeare*" (Orgel, 67); as Orgel locates Shakespeare.

To believe in Shakespeare according to Orgel is "[t]o believe in something, in someone, all-knowing and immutable. If not God, then Shakespeare, who amounts to a version of the same thing" (Orgel, 67). The Godlike image of Shakespeare exists to safeguard a taste that upholds the heritage of Western Metaphysics. Greenblatt, in his *Shakespearean Negotiations*, speaks of the name that outlived its corpus:

I began with the desire to speak with the dead. ... If I never believe that the dead could hear me, and if I knew that the dead could not speak, I was nonetheless certain that I could re-create a conversation with them ... Conventional in my tastes, I found the most satisfying intensity of all in Shakespeare. ... I want to know how Shakespeare managed to achieve such intensity, for I thought that the more I understood this achievement, the more I could hear and understand the speech of the dead. (Greenblatt, 1-2)

Greenblatt, here, has stumbled upon the Shakespearean commodification rather than the actual person and works. Greenblatt encounters the word Shakespeare. Experiencing the death of the author, which is demonstrated by Roland Barthes's declaration of "The Death of the Author" in 1968, is the theory that Shakespeare never fully faced. Shakespeare's remains have affected education and still do; "the remains we are bequeathed are comprised not of bodily but of textual matter" (Lehmann, 2).

Kastan, in his *Shakespeare After Theory*, states: "Shakespeare has emerged in the English literary tradition virtually as the iconic name for authorship itself" (Kastan, 33). Therefore, why do we put so much emphasis on Shakespeare? We are not suggesting abandoning the teaching of Shakespeare the author and/or the Shakespearean texts, what is strongly rejected here is the banking method in teaching the name and word *Shakespeare*. Duncan-Andrade endorses this idea by stating that "[s]tudying canonical texts is an important strategy for understanding the values and ideologies of dominant groups at various points in history." (Duncan-Andrade, 50). Critical pedagogy's mission is "to disclose and challenge the reproductive role schools play in political and cultural life" (Duncan-Andrade, 23). Without critical pedagogy, the institution becomes a link that confines students to textbooks. Critical pedagogy highlights parts of the world knowledge in the name of greater truth and universality. It makes teachers and students alike question the linkage that institutions, such as schools, universities ... etc, claim.

In addition, critical pedagogy addresses the unquestionable certainty that leads most parents to send their children to an institution that defines and limits knowledge, rather than examining and understanding knowledge. Educational institutions, that require that students memorize information rather than analyze it, confine their students to a preset value of canonized figures. Teachers are thought of as the ones with the knowledge while students, are, in turn, educated only to know what they are taught; not to analyze texts or think critically of them. Critical pedagogy is an alternative to this transference of knowledge or the banking method, as Freire calls it.

"[W]e were very much influenced by Paulo Freire's (1970) critiques of the banking metaphor for education, where teachers treat students as passive, empty receptacles and schooling becomes a process whereby knowledgeable experts "deposit" bits of information into the impoverished minds of students... Freire advocated pedagogical practice centered upon dialogue, inquiry and the real exchange of ideas between teachers and students, who, he felt, had a great deal to offer one another." (Duncan-Andrade, 55)

One is left here with a question of whether this is the reason why students and teachers feel so pressured to educate and lecture on Shakespeare. With institutions requiring certain curricula, imposing on the students “knowing” Shakespeare without actually knowing, analyzing or critiquing Shakespearean works or Shakespeare himself becomes a common dilemma that students and instructors face.

Freire using critical pedagogy “juxtaposes the banking metaphor” for two main reasons (Duncan-Andrade, 24). The first reason is to show how the method has managed to bank and reserve education and made the creation of a hierarchal system possible; and secondly to make space for capitalist investments where the main focus is on creating oppressor and oppressed in order for a heritage of binary oppositions and hierarchal leveling to occur in the name of nature and natural selection. Freire explains that education using the banking method is “an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor. Instead of communicating, the teacher issues communiqués and makes deposits that the students patiently receive, memorize, and repeat.” (Duncan-Andrade, 24)

Freire notes that one of the main flaws which the banking method feeds is the issue with traditional curriculum because it is set as stationary and this curriculum has become the standard in education. Thus, one cannot learn beyond what they are taught even if he/she is more innovated and is smarter than what is being taught. The official curriculum makes it hard for professors to integrate a critical thinking curriculum because that is what students are too used to. There is a fear of students losing “faith” or “respect” in teachers who ask them to express themselves. Freire says that “students might think that you [teachers] are not rigorous because you asked them to critically read and re-write a single text instead of imposing on them the obligation of reading 300 books a semester!” (Freire 1987, 11). The problem is the transfer-of-knowledge standard. “The students do not believe the liberating teacher who does not shove information down their throats” (Freire, 10). This causes an educational conflict for the student, whether he/she knows it or not because the teacher is merely assigning a reading or text and requiring specific response instead of an open understanding. The response would be a teacher’s regurgitation and not the students’ understanding because the students are only looking for the teacher’s needs instead of recognizing their own.

In the classroom setting, students cannot truly understand Shakespeare, the man or his works, without critical pedagogy. They are merely instructed on what to know about Shakespeare through the teacher’s eyes, they will not know Shakespeare for themselves. “Students are long-habituated to passive schooling ... [they] can’t overcome their learned disgust with intellectual work in school,” (Freire, 25). The active participation that pedagogy calls for would engage the student (and the teacher) to actually think, critically think, about the knowledge they are consuming from the teacher, the students and Shakespeare. Instead of just reading and reciting, they would have the need to explore and dissect. This would call for “students to take ownership of the knowledge production process” (Duncan-Andrade, 55).

The task of liberating classrooms, critical pedagogy calls for, is what Freire aims at achieving. “A dialogical experience which is not based in seriousness, in competency, is much worse than a ‘banking’ experience where the teacher merely transfers knowledge.” At least with the “transfer-knowledge” one is learning something, not just listening to empty thoughts and ideas. A non-serious dialogical teacher would reinforce the need for standard-traditional curricula. He/she would make education seem “aimless” or “that learning is impulsive and disorganized” (Freire, 80). This point is to be stressed for any instructor who wants to encourage his/her students to think critically. No instructor just becomes a pedagogical instructor because he says he is so. They (teachers/instructors) have to overcome their learned standard way of teaching in order to exercise and teach, successfully, critical pedagogy. Duncan-Andrade reports that:

In the early 1900s, Dewey suggested that educational theory had trapped teachers in a false binary when it came to pedagogy (Dewey, 1938). That is, Dewey believed that teachers were asked to choose between classical curriculum and a curriculum that focused on the lived experiences of their students. More often than not, teachers selected the former as it was traditional and ergo, professionally more acceptable. Dewey’s work argued that, rather than think of curriculum as an either/or proposition, we should always see it as both/and endeavor. Dewey believed that the child should be at the center of the curriculum, such that the school curriculum draws from the lived experiences of the child to expand into broader horizons. This approach does not attempt to replace the knowledge that children bring with them to school; it builds on it. (Duncan-Andrade, 66)

Institutions implementing the banking method to enforce authority on teachers and students, this would limit their freedom and oppress their thoughts.

Freire has taken and implemented the method from Pound's "make it new", which is taken from the title of his book *Make It New: Essays* (1935) that has highly influenced the modern world; and thus, it calls educators to approach reading literary works in a new scope that allows scholars to evolve and produce new methods of reading the text rather than regenerating sameness of values, tastes, and views of literary canonized works. Through re-informing students through the usage of the problem-posing method in education, Freire manages to revive education. "In problem-posing education, people develop their power to perceive critically *the way they exist* in the world *with which* and *in which* they find themselves; they come to see the world not as a static reality, but as a reality in process, in transformation" (Freire 1970, 83). The problem-posing method allows the critic in both the student and educator to examine a text without valuing its literary heritage. Duncan-Andrade refers to problem-posing education as the method that encourages "learning for freedom rather than leaning to earn (to enter the economy)" (Duncan-Andrade, 24). Critical pedagogy is the pedagogy of the oppressed, as Freire puts it. It is destined to engage people and lead them to "liberation" from the oppressor's commodification (Duncan-Andrade, 24). In consequence, how does teaching Shakespeare through critical pedagogy bring social justice to the reading of Shakespeare? Here we propose three methods for approaching Shakespearean texts. The first goes hand in hand with the reader response theory, the second with close reading, and the final reading tackles the new historical draw to Shakespeare. Without digging out the differences that each method rationalizes, the manner in which all three address Shakespeare is the main focus. All three jointly use the problem-posing method in one way or another.

Applying Critical Pedagogy To Shakespeare

Engaging students comes as the first step in applying critical pedagogy on Shakespeare. To engage the student is to suppress the canonical value of the text through reading, for instance, the text within its historical, social, or immediate context. This goes hand in hand with the second step which is to include literary theories and multicultural readings of Shakespeare that will empower the readings of students and will not tear the text apart to construct a form and a reading that would take away the power of the text. This is achieved through imposing oneness and objectivity in the reading of the text. It will give the text and the student freedom to embody interpretations of many truths rather than one final critically accepted truth. With this kind of critical reading of Shakespeare, students will be able to interpret and recognize the kind of universal issues that Shakespearean texts could involve. This will help the student not feel far removed from the text and context, and be more willing to open himself/herself up to them (i.e., the text and context). This is achieved through creating a personal link between themselves and the text, and not solely between the student and the teacher; where the teachers just serve as a link or as the ultimate translator of words.

When using the problem-posing method in reading Shakespeare, the process of learning develops into a process of ongoing interpretations of reading Shakespeare. "Problem-posing education is education for freedom and emphasizes that teachers must see themselves in a partnership with their students... the teachers must see themselves as teacher-student, ready to accept that their students possess knowledge and solutions" (Duncan-Andrade, 24). Reading Shakespeare and letting the students do the job of interpretation brings Shakespearean texts to students' everyday experiences. This is not to say that the teacher is completely "away" from the reading, or acting only as a guide to the understandings of the text. Instead of focusing on the word Shakespeare and the mightiness of the works and scholars associated to this word, teachers and students focus on the texts and the context that led to the writing of those texts. "Critical education has to integrate the students and the teachers into a mutual creation and re-creation of knowledge" (Freire 1987, 8).

The goal of critical pedagogy is to draw the focus away from the words and to the context and to make the reader (teacher or student) continuously ask the question 'why?' while reading the text. Students should try to trace the production of a Shakespearean text. Students should learn the historical and social life of the text. This will widen the scope for students and make them percept and understand the racial, sexual, and religious as well as the terror, and violence that led Shakespeare to write a play such as *Titus Andronicus*. Knowing and understanding the history of when a play was written,

what was going on at the time can give extra insight to a text. Shakespearean texts are still awaiting exploration.

There are various other ways where readers would try to bring Shakespeare to the forefront, to try and interpret him in modern contemporary times in modern contemporary ways. For example, from Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*, we get the movie *Titus* directed by Julie Taymor. The *New York Times* give it mixed reviews based on how it is presented but ultimately say that the play, which T.S. Eliot says is "one of the stupidest and most uninspired plays ever written," (Jovanovich, 2000), is "impossible to watch ... without considering the mass slaughters in the Balkans and Rwanda, and even the Columbine High School killings. What was then, she forcefully reminds us, is also now. In connecting these recent horrors to the characters[,] ... 'Titus' makes the best possible argument for a cautionary drama that contemplates the absolute worst in us" (New York Times 2002).

Another example on the reading of Shakespeare through critical pedagogy is the Hip-Hop Shakespeare Company where readers are able to blend the study of Shakespeare with music; essentially hip-hop music. Heres, Shakespearean plays and poems are adapted to fit current generations. In addition, readers from around the world are combining Shakespearean sonnets and plays with rap. The teaching of the form that is used in his writing is given a new touch; form is no longer sought as the ultimate truth behind the text, but it becomes a way of reading, translating, and performing a Shakespearean text. Blending Shakespeare with music becomes a form through which Shakespeare's literary heritage is newly read and preformed. It is a method that uses Shakespeare's literature as Critical Pedagogy calls. With these various ways to interpret Shakespeare through the study of the different readings of directors of movies and that have presented the scripts of Shakespeare's plays in a way to pose the issue of translating the texts into different visions and interpretations. It is not impossible to apply critical pedagogy to William Shakespeare or to Shakespearean texts.

Another way that critical pedagogy is incorporated into the reading of Shakespeare, is Anthony Del Col and Conor McCreery's comic book series, *Kill Shakespeare*. This series is composed of four volumes: *A Sea of Troubles* (2010), *The Blast of War* (2011), *The Tide of Blood* (2013), and *The Mask of Night* (2014). Shakespeare's characters and lands collide to try to either conspire against Shakespeare (their father) or to fight for him (their Creator and God). While the characters grow to either love or hate Shakespeare, the quill that Shakespeare uses to write their world becomes the most precious prize that all the characters fear or fancy. They are all trying to get hold of him either to justly rule over them and save their world, or to over-rule him and take hold of the creation tool that created their world, "The Quill;" and by default, kill Shakespeare to take it.

In *Kill Shakespeare*, the authors' use of critical pedagogy as a theory to approach Shakespeare and his fame is evident in the way Shakespeare not only gets to be the father, the savior, the creator, the God; but the anxious, the wrecked, the drunk, the villain, the human. His female characters; such as Lady Macbeth and Juliet, step out of the shadows of their father, Shakespeare. Both female characters are recreated to rule over the male characters and lead them to war. Fantasizing over Shakespeare's tool of creation becomes the overarching meta-plot in the series. On the one hand, wars break with Lady Macbeth, Richard III, and Iago, leading the liberal oppositional party. They seek the end of the terror-monger's control (i.e., Shakespeare). On the other hand, Juliet, Hamlet, and Falstaff lead the republican supporting party that calls for the finding their awaiting father (i.e., Shakespeare). The question of loyalty to one's creator and free-will in choosing which party to follow is given to the characters. Shakespeare himself aspires for a mundane life that would allow him to wonder and ponder in this world without his characters recognizing him.

In the series, "Sonnet 71: No Longer Mourn for Me When I am Dead" becomes the central legacy that Shakespeare leaves his characters. The sonnet is recited to reflect on how Shakespeare wants to escape the worlds and characters he created. He also calls for escaping the legacy that is attached to his name; the legacy that led to his fame; the legacy that led to worshiping his worlds. Through the series' stressing of the idea that Shakespeare wants to be left alone, the characters dwell on whether they should find him or allow him to roam freely in their/his world.

The comic book series, *Kill Shakespeare*, starts with the Shakespearean characters feeling lost and abandoned awaiting a "Godot" that would save them from their alienation. Hamlet, for example, is said to be the only one who can find Shakespeare and thus is asked by Richard the Third if he would steal Shakespeare's quill. The quill being the tool though

which creation of characters, control over characters, and destruction of the characters and their worlds is feasible, is romanticized as the source through which the characters can find salvation. With Iago as a recruit to the quest of finding Shakespeare, Hamlet is convinced by Richard to find the quill. With his power lust, Richard is defied by the Prodigals; a group led by Juliet. The characters are divided into two armies: one that freely follows Juliet and another that forcefully belong to Richard. The series, in its attempt to capture the struggle for power, depicts how the authors of the series are channeling the methods through which Shakespeare should lose his quill. Yet, no one can escape him. Here, female characters are accepted as equals and are capable of being leaders, fighters, preachers, ... etc. and males are no longer associated with only masculinity, but are free to channel their femininity. However, even with the modernization of the characters and equal stands that both genders present, the fate of the characters and their growth is linked to and centered around Shakespeare's fame.

By the third comic book of this series, Shakespeare is presented as a selfish, self-loathing, scared drunkard who loses control over the worlds he created. His encounter with his creations adds to the loss of the characters. Juliet, a defender of her god (i.e., Shakespeare), no longer values him and only wants the quill. Hamlet, a searcher for truth and reconciliation, ends up as an eloping criminal. Finally, Shakespeare, the creator and god, want to end this world he had created to start a new one that satisfies him more.

In presenting a new reading of Shakespeare's literary heritage as a whole, the comic series employs critical pedagogy as a tool that allows them to freely adapt Shakespearean characters and settings. The series highlights the necessity to avoid idealizing Shakespeare's name and to view him as a man who just wants to release the built up plots and creations of his mind on paper. Shakespeare, in *Kill Shakespeare*, is an outlaw, a god, a priest, a leader, a father, a patriarchal suppressive figure that all the series' characters are trying to escape. The series emphasis on creating one world that has all of Shakespeare's characters fighting for the spotlight reflects on McCreery and Del Col's adoption of critical pedagogy to allow questioning the restraints that centralize Shakespeare. The object out of which this series is made is to seek change in the reading of Shakespearean characters. The action that the majority of characters desire is the killing of Shakespeare and his dominance, and to sanction the existence of a modern version of his characters. The series present a masculine Juliet, a feminine Hamlet, a respected Othello, a valued Iago, and a human Shakespeare.

Kill Shakespeare has concentrated on the physical and metaphorical death of Shakespeare. The creators of this series managed to structure a world that is built on, for, and against Shakespeare. They have created a universe where Shakespeare is centered, fixated on, obsessed over, examined, and decentered, demolished, reshaped. While the death of Shakespeare is emphasized in the title and through the scepticism of the characters, Shakespeare's death never happens in the series. Rather, Shakespeare, the character, just disappears from the plot of the series. As his couplet in "Sonnet 18" confirms "So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,/ So long lives this, and this gives life to thee." (Sonnet XVIII, L. 13-14) In this context a reading of this couplet could be that Shakespeare's death will never happen; unlike a God-made "summer's day," and he will eternally grow. So long as literary canons and literary curriculums exist, Shakespeare's summer "shall not fade."

Conclusion

In conclusion, experiencing the death of the author, which is established by Roland Barthes's declaration of "The Death of the Author" in 1968, is the theory that Shakespeare never fully encountered. Shakespeare has lived in universities for ages, and he has established a status that made him a required stage which most English majored students have to pass. In a world where deconstruction has occurred, and in a world where universalism is redefined to include everyone, where does a man-made English representative author stand? Shakespeare's "ghost" has affected education and still does; "the remains we are bequeathed are comprised not of bodily but of textual matter" (Lehmann, 2). Lehmann motions that "Roland Barthes (among others), announced the death of both authorial bodies in a polemic directed against the historical romance between literary theory and the sovereign Author" (Lehmann, 3). Shakespeare's authorial voice and the authorial associations that are attached to his name diminish through critical pedagogy.

It is amazing how Shakespeare's fame has managed to survive the death of the author. The power that made Shakespeare

survive these theories, and the power which is associated to his name has turned into a power that universalizes his texts. Lehmann says that “it is necessary to establish why the move from Author-focused criticism to Text-centered theory proves to be an inadequate representation of all the ‘things’ that constitute the Shakespearean corpus. If there is one prevailing link among post-structuralist critiques of Shakespearean authorship, then it is their persistent projection of human attributes onto the text” (Lehmann, 8).

Critical pedagogy found a way to overtake the author- and authorial-based readings and replace them with text-centered interpretations. In *Shakespeare Remains*, Lehmann articulates that:

The crumbling of critical consensus about Shakespeare’s authority began in the 1980s, the decade that marked, in Edward Pechter’s terms, the “death” of the “one volume anthology” – collections ... Consequently, since 1985, the year that Alternative Shakespeares, Political Shakespeare, and Shakespeare and the Question of Theory emerged, respectively, in the spirit of contestation innovation, and interrogation ... the question of who Shakespeare really was – imposter, poetic genius, glover’s son – had been replaced with inquiries into what constituted “Shakespeare” in material practice. (Lehmann, 6)

Using critical pedagogy, we must understand that Shakespeare, with all his great works, is still just an author and attempt to devolve his fanaticized centralization over English departments and studies.

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