



“SUBJECT TO INVENT”: ADAPTATIONS OF SHAKESPEARE’S SONNETS INTO OTHER MEDIA

ALAN FORREST HICKMAN*

American University in Dubai

*“How can my Muse want subject to invent
While thou dost breathe . . . ?”¹*

(Sonnet 38, lines 1-2)

Abstract

Adaptation of Shakespeare’s plays has been part of his legacy from the beginning, as works by artists such as Nahum Tate, Henry Purcell, and John Dryden can attest. Shakespeare’s Sonnets, too, have been put to many uses over the years. They have been set to music, they have been quoted by politicians, they have been used as wedding vows, and they have appeared on greeting cards. For many, they represent the ultimate statement on love. In the four hundred years since Shakespeare’s death, they have found their way into a variety of media, including music, drama, books, television, and film. Whereas the plays have long been acknowledged as a rich source of inspiration—both serious and parodic—by artists and auteurs, ranging in kind from novelist James Joyce to dramatist Tom Stoppard to comedian Ben Elton, the poems have received less scrutiny in this regard. However, they represent a gold mine of untold riches, especially in terms of biography, which has yet to be sufficiently tapped. In this paper I take a look at the various uses the sonnets have been put to, primarily in books, television, and film, and come to some conclusions regarding their success in remediation.

Keywords: Shakespeare; Shakespeare’s Sonnets; remediation; appropriation; cinema; film; television; theatre; books; biography; love.

* ahickman@aud.edu

¹ All quotations from Shakespeare’s poems are taken from *Shakespeare’s Sonnets*, ed. Katherine Duncan-Jones (Arden, 2007).

Cinema, books, television, theatre—the various media have struck the mother lode when it comes to adaptations and appropriations of the works of William Shakespeare. In addition to direct transfers, the plays have provided the basis for cinematic excursions as diverse as Kurosawa's *Throne of Blood* and *Ran*, Welles' *Chimes at Midnight*, Bergman's *Smiles of a Summer's Night* (not to mention Woody Allen's *A Midsummer Night's Sex Comedy* and Stephen Sondheim's *A Little Night Music*), and Gil Junger's *Ten Things I Hate about You*. The plays have been turned into books as well, as witness Robert Nye's *Falstaff* and John Updike's *Gertrude and Claudius*, along with the recent Hogarth Shakespeare series, which has enlisted the likes of Margaret Atwood, Howard Jacobson, and Anne Tyler, among others, to write novels based, presumably, on the entire cycle of plays, with Atwood's *Hag-seed* (a re-telling of *The Tempest*) a critical stand-out in the series. Practically from the beginning, the plays have been appropriated for the stage, with adaptations by John Dryden, Nahum Tate, and Henry Purcell, among others, who found, like Dryden, Shakespeare's language "a little obsolete" or, with Dr. Johnson, his tragedies a little shocking. The operatic stage has produced masterpieces such as Verdi's *Othello* and *Falstaff*, and there have been musical re-versions of *Romeo and Juliet* (*West Side Story* being the most celebrated) and *The Taming of the Shrew* (Cole Porter's *Kiss Me Kate*), among countless others. In the modern theatre, George Bernard Shaw and Tom Stoppard have turned their hands at one-upping the Bard, and sci-fi cinema has given us *Forbidden Planet* and *Star Trek VI: The Undiscovered Country* (with its classic line, "You have not experienced Shakespeare until you have read him in the original Klingon"). It may not be immediately obvious, but the Sonnets too have inspired appropriations, both in print and on film, from Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin* and Oscar Wilde's *Portrait of Mr. W. H.* to John Schlesinger's *Sunday Bloody Sunday* and Christopher Munch's *Hours and Times*. It is on these and other such works that I write my paper. It hardly matters that these re-mediations do not always follow the letter of Shakespeare's text—after all, what would be the point of an exact retelling of *Hamlet* or the poems, given that Shakespeare himself transmuted his source material, into works (mostly) superior to the originals? What would it profit anyone if an avatar of Borges' Pierre Menard, author of the *Quixote*, were to reproduce, "word for word and line for line," an already familiar Shakespearean text?

In analyzing appropriations of the sonnets, I hope to lend credence to three truisms: 1) that there is indeed a story at the heart of the poems, and that most readers agree (assuming, of course, that they read the poems as a sequence) on what that story is; 2) that readers routinely apply said story to the poet's own life as autobiography; and 3) that the poems retain their currency for modern audiences, whose lives are entangled in the same concerns and obsessions that beset the Bard when first he put pen to paper. There is probably nothing new

here, except to say that, when taken together, these three points amount to a powerful case for Shakespeare, not only as the author of the sonnets, but as the driving force behind their publication and arrangement in the 1609 Quarto. For the purposes of this paper, works appropriated from the sonnets will be organized into three categories: 1) those that “borrow” the essential story from the poems, usually in order to speculate on historical models for such characters as the Dark Lady and the Fair Youth (for this category, I shall be focusing on Oscar Wilde’s *The Portrait of Mr. W. H.* and Sally O’Reilly’s *Dark Aemilia*); 2) those that use the sonnets to fill in missing particulars from Shakespeare’s biography (Anthony Burgess’s *Nothing Like the Sun* and William Boyd’s *A Waste of Shame*); and 3) those that use the story of the sonnets to comment on external plots and characters (Christopher Munch’s *The Hours and Times* and Samuel Park’s *Shakespeare’s Sonnets: A Novel*).

To begin, Oscar Wilde’s novella is an ingenious amalgam of fiction and literary detective work. In the years since its first appearance, in *Blackwood’s*, in 1889 (it was subsequently enlarged by Wilde but that edition did not see the light of day until after the author’s death, in 1921), readers have questioned whether the author was entirely serious when he proposed that the dedicatee of the 1609 Quarto, Mr. W. H., was a boy player named Willie Hughes (there are possible puns on both “will and “hues” in the poems), “for whom [Shakespeare] created Viola and Imogen, Juliet and Rosalind, Portia and Desdemona, and Cleopatra herself” (Wilde 13). After all, Wilde had famously declared that “seriousness is the last refuge of the shallow.” Regarding Shakespeare’s most-performed play, he once asked “whether the commentators on *Hamlet* were really mad or just pretending to be?” And what are we to make of his insistence on a commoner as the Fair Youth? What a falling off is here, from the more glamorous identifications of Mr. W. H. as an Earl, whether of Pembroke or Southampton. As for critics who attach no merit to Wilde’s speculations, might not a bit of the same snobbery that has led skeptics, from Mark Twain to Mark Rylance, to dismiss a mere glove-maker’s son as the writer of the greatest plays and poems in the English language have prejudiced them against a lowly player? Of course, the moral of the story—and in this regard the unnamed narrator of *Mr. W. H.* is more akin to another Wilde creation, Dorian Gray, than to Wilde himself—may be to moderate one’s love of art. For Wilde’s hero obsesses over the identity of Mr. W. H. to the point that he risks going the way of his fictive forerunners in this enterprise, Gibson and Erskine, both of whom die, one by suicide, the other from a species of those wasting diseases that so bedeviled 19th century heroes and heroines of the novel.

While there is plenty of drama and romance in the Sonnets, there are few characters. The most important, after the poet/narrator himself, are the Fair Youth and the Dark Lady, although a fourth, more shadowy, character emerges in the person of the Rival Poet, who figures, roughly, in Sonnets 78-86. Not

much adaptive material there, you might think, but I recently stumbled across a Kindle book by Ingela Bohm, *The Rival Poet*, that identifies its eponymous protagonist (Marlowe, as it turns out), not only as Shakespeare's rival, but as his soulmate and lover. In an interesting sidebar, novelist John Mortimer, who wrote the 1978 series of *Will Shakespeare*, imagined the poet, played by Tim Curry, as an apprentice to Ian McShane's Marlowe, a situation rife with romantic possibilities that are, alas, never realized in the teleplay. Identifications of the Fair Youth, Wilde's excepted, generally fall into one of the two armorial camps mentioned above, but by far the sonnet character whose identification has given rise to the most hotly contested and excitable speculation is the Dark Lady.

As a character in fiction, and for such an elusive one historically, the Dark Lady has had a long innings. One of her earliest appearances, outside of the poems, is in George Bernard Shaw's one-act play, "The Dark Lady of the Sonnets," from 1910. Here, Shaw is not so much interested in identifying the lady as in advocating for a Shakespeare National Theatre (he didn't get it). Shaw was apparently responding to popular theories of the day when he named his Dark Lady Mary, after Mary Fitton, who was once royal maid of honor to Queen Elizabeth. Indeed, he is said to have personally believed her to have been Jane Davenant, although he is also quoted as saying "she might as well have been Maria Tompkins" for all he cared (Burl 11). Aubrey Burl has written a book in which he identifies eight likely candidates—the list includes Fitton, Lucy Morgan, Jane Davenant, Penelope Devereux (later Lady Rich), Jacqueline Field, Mrs. Florio (wife of John), Marie Mountjoy, and Emilia Lanyer. His money is on Mrs. Florio. All of these ladies are Caucasian, as far as we know, but several were either dark-complected, dark-headed, or both. The darkest of these was probably Lucy (Lucilla) Morgan, aka Lucy Negro, who, like Fitton, was once a royal maid of honor but who was dismissed from the court and became a prostitute. Yet other candidates for the Dark Lady are, presumably, women of color; these include the half-cast Lucie in Boyd's *A Waste of Shame*, and Burgesses' Fatima, in *Nothing Like the Sun*, who has no historical counterpart, but whose initials are (almost) formed in Sonnet 147 as an acrostic: F T M A H. Fatimah resurfaces as popstar April Elgar (Enderby calls her "Ape," for short) in Burgess's amusing updating of the sonnet story in *Enderby's Dark Lady, or No End to Enderby* (1984). In this final volume of a tetralogy, Enderby is asked to write a musical based on Shakespeare's life, with the primary source being—you guessed it—the sonnets. Doctor Who has been known to cross paths with Shakespeare, most recently in 2007 ("The Shakespeare Code"), wherein the poet develops a crush on Who's companion, Martha Jones, played by Freema Agyeman. John Mortimer's take on the Dark Lady, however, is a European woman, the wife of a judge, no less. Her name is Mary Fleming, but it might as well be Hilda Rumpole.

Sally O'Reilly's heroine, the eponymous *Dark Aemilia*, is the above-mentioned poet, Aemilia Bassano, or, as she became known once married to a minor court musician, Aemilia Lanyer. Lanyer (or Lanier) is an historical personage, connected to Shakespeare both as the long-time mistress of Henry Carey (First Baron Hunsdon), who was later patron of the Lord Chamberlin's men, and as the unwilling object of Simon Forman's lust (Forman is the occultist whose impressions of four Shakespeare plays are famously recorded in his *Book of Plays*), according to his own papers. There is no reason to believe Shakespeare and Lanyer knew each other, but there is no reason to believe they did not. The important thing is that, according to O'Reilly, Aemilia is an aspiring poet and playwright, who can't seem to catch a publishing break in the male-dominated Elizabethan literary world. As a result, she is reduced to hawking her wares to a publisher who convinces her to write a pamphlet on "cunning ways with cross-gartering" (166). This is just one such suggestion that Aemilia may have played a role in Shakespeare's career as a dramatist (see *Twelfth Night*), although at this point in the book, the pair have been estranged for ten years, since that fateful day when Will bore witness to Southampton's rape of Aemilia and misconstrued what he saw, leaving Aemilia alone to raise their illegitimate child. In fact, throughout the novel, Aemilia receives a series of unwelcome visits from three witch-like sisters, who warn her that "the plague is coming"—a pretty safe bet in those days—perhaps in anticipation of the novel's most audacious claim, that it was actually Aemilia Lanyer who wrote *Macbeth*.

O'Reilly does not go so far as her fellow fabulist, John Hudson, in his claim that Lanyer/Bassano wrote *all* the plays (because, well, she was part Jewish, and her family was from Italy, and so many of the plays are set in Italy), but she gives her the lion's share of credit for the Scottish Play, which is cursed when Aemilia calls upon the three sisters to get revenge on Shakespeare for the theft of her manuscript, which she has titled *Lady Macbeth*. According to O'Reilly, the historical Lanyer was a "proto-feminist" who wrote poems "championing the cause of Eve, and drawing attention to the role of women in the Passion of Christ" (419). The idea that a woman, once given the opportunity to write and publish, might have produced a corpus equal to that of Shakespeare is not a new one. Virginia Woolf speculated that "Shakespeare's sister," let's call her Judith, might have produced work of like quality, were she only a man; Robert Nye wrote a novel entitled *Mrs. Shakespeare: The Complete Works*, in which he posits that the Mrs. may have kept a journal of her own; and Germaine Greer (in *Shakespeare's Wife*) wrote with an aim to rehabilitate Anne Hathaway's image as an illiterate drudge and a shrew.

Now that we know, courtesy of Oscar Wilde, that Shakespeare did *not* intend to insult a member of the peerage when he addressed the sonnets to Mr. (or is it Master?) W. H. and that the Dark Lady, as imagined by Sally O'Reilly, is at the heart of the curse that has claimed the lives of so many who have

performed in or worked on the Scottish play, we are ready to ask what the sonnets might possibly have to say about the poet himself. Anthony Burgess took the most obvious route, in *Nothing Like, the Sun*, beginning with the familiar story (based on folklore and apocrypha, courtesy of Nicholas Rowe and others) of how Will fell into a loveless marriage with a woman eight years his senior, whom he then sought to escape when he first fled to London to make his fortune; this is the story that the sonnets take up, presumably at some point after “Will” has attained some success as a playwright. We learn that Southampton was the Fair Youth and that he had “loaned” Shakespeare the thousand pounds it took to buy a share in Burbage’s acting company. We learn, anticlimactically, that George Chapman was the rival poet, and that Mrs. Florio’s husband John was a former amanuensis to Henry Wriothesley—3rd Earl of Southampton and more-than-patron to Will Shakespeare. We learn that the Dark Lady was also a dark horse: a dark-skinned beauty called Fatimah, whose name can *almost* (and it probably helps to squint) be read in Sonnet 147. We learn that Anne Hathaway put the horns on Will with his younger brother, whom he discovers in flagrante with Anne in their second-best bed. Furthermore, we learn that Southampton didn’t age well and had a nasty disposition, that Fatimah deserted Will when she found out he had syphilis, and that each man dies alone, with only regret as company.

All of this is contagious fun in the hands of a master storyteller like Burgess, who went on to write a biography of the Bard and to incorporate his story into yet another novel, one of a series featuring his poet/hero, Enderby. Meanwhile, *Nothing Like the Sun* turns out to be a *Künstlerroman* that revels in Will’s personal life but does little to examine the origins of his creative genius. There are gaps in the story as well: one minute Will-the-tutor is galloping back to Stratford to escape the wrath of a father whose son he has compromised, the next he’s an established playwright in London. Even John Mortimer filled the gap with a fantasy about Christopher Marlowe. But, as far as I know, Burgess’s novelization represents the first sustained attempt to extrapolate a coherent text from the, admittedly, sketchy clues served up in the sonnet sequence itself. Now that I have revisited Burgess’ book, I will allow that it probably had a greater effect on my subsequent readings of the sequence than I was aware of at the time. Yet Burgess tells us nothing that we didn’t already know, from the poems, the legends, and the surviving documents. He simply manages to tie the various threads together in a rather neat bow. If he goes out on a limb anywhere, it is in his identification of the principals. There will always be disagreement as to who the Fair Youth, the Dark Lady, and the Rival Poet truly were—else what’s a cottage industry for? Even Burgess’s plumbing of the Bard’s subconscious is anticipated by the poems themselves. The kind of self-analysis (which is not to say self-pity) that Shakespeare (or his persona, the narrator of the poems) is willing to subject himself to is unprecedented in literature before the Romantic

Period. Burgess does go a step further by entering into the poet's dreams, but I submit that these are the least effective passages in the book and that they bring us no closer, really, to understanding how the creative imagination works. The trope that Shakespeare was just a bloke, like you and me, is hardly unprecedented. He is a conceited ass in Shaw's one-act play, a connoisseur of farts in Twain's semi-pornographic *1601*, a closet Catholic in Jess Winfield's *My Name is Will*, and a sitcom dad with commuter blues in Ben Elton's likeable BBC mini-series, *Upstart Crow*.

Little, if anything, is made of Will-the-Sodomite in these appropriations. Perhaps the times aren't so quick to change, after all. An early annotator of the Rosenbach Quarto called the *Sonnets* "a heap of wretched Infidel Stuff" (Duncan-Jones 69), and there is no doubt but that the sentiment obtains in certain quarters yet today. The theme is present in Burgess, but muted. Elton's Bard is distinctly closeted, a fact that has not escaped notice of his bondsman, Nick Bottom. In *A Waste of Shame*, William Boyd takes the trend a step further, when he paints Will as a confirmed heterosexual, whose only interest in the Fair Youth (William Herbert, played by a pouty Tom Sturridge) is as the embodiment of youth and beauty that recently was his only son, Hamnet, Judith's twin, whose passing, at eleven years of age, is chronicled in the first "act" of the screenplay. All of those wistful looks directed at the Earl by Will, played here by Rupert Graves, are thus aimed at underscoring the comparison. So are we to believe that Shakespeare penned 126 love sonnets to a youth who was a stand-in for his own son? In the process of pursuing an acquaintance with the young earl, Shakespeare acquires a rich patron, in the person of the Countess of Pembroke (played by Zoë Wanamaker, the daughter of the blacklisted American actor and director who fought to rebuild the Globe Theatre on the South Bank and for whom the Sam Wanamaker Playhouse is named), and this time it's Ben Johnson's turn to be the Rival Poet. So what happens when father and son-surrogate go to a brothel, and both take a shine to the same prostitute (here identified simply as Lucie)? Or is that exigency not otherwise covered by James Joyce in *Ulysses*?

The upshot is that youth, wealth, and beauty inevitably win the day, with Shakespeare losing Lucie to Mr. W. H. and the two men no longer bromantically inclined. To make things worse, what Will thinks is a mere case of the plague turns out to be the parting gift, presumably from Lucie, of a dose of syphilis. What we learn from all this is that we have been reading the sonnets all wrong, and that Burgess need not have pussyfooted around the whole sodomy thing because, bottom line, it didn't happen. I'm pretty sure Mark Twain would have approved; I'm not so sure about that cross-dressing Huck Finn.

When there are so many gaps in a story, it comes as no surprise when someone tries to fill them in, all the while ensuring they fit into some preordained theory. Wiser, perhaps, to use the basic frame of the sonnets and

build a better mousetrap—more contemporary and with no real need to adhere to a source. Among the films that do are John Schlesinger's *Sunday Bloody Sunday* and, well, just about every Hollywood film noir ever produced. Penelope Gilliatt's screenplay to *Sunday* keeps the basic outline of the story. Glenda Jackson and Peter Finch are both in love with the same young man, Bob, played by Murray Head. In the words of Julia Prewitt Brown,

The film's recollection of Shakespeare's love sonnets, in which the poet's young friend and his mistress betray him by having an affair together, is not simply a matter of subject (the insoluble truths of desire) and point-of-view (that of the older man), but of Schlesinger's artistic method of dividing the film into increments of time, marked by days of the week, temporal and emotional units that resemble the discreet lyrics within a sonnet sequence or the chapters of a novel.

Eventually Bob leaves them both, but the British have learned a lot about reserve in the years since the *Quarto* was published and no one has a meltdown. Film noir, on the other hand, is all about (again) the bromance, until a femme fatale comes along and messes everything up for the boys. A prime example is *Gilda*—you know, the one where Rita Hayworth sings “Put the Blame on Mame,” all the while she strips off her opera gloves—one of the classics of the genre. In the film, George Macready rescues Glenn Ford from a beating (Macready just happens to be cruising the docks) and ends up hiring him as chief goon at his casino. All is bliss until Macready brings home bride Gilda. When Johnny (the Glenn Ford character) accuses Gilda of marrying Macready (his name is Ballin Mundson) for his money, Gilda (Hayworth) replies: “Isn't that the big pot calling the little kettle black?” The same triangular configuration emerges time and time again in film noirs of Hollywood's Golden Age.

In Christopher Münch's *The Hours and Times* (1991), the screenplay substitutes Brian Epstein (played by David Angus) and John Lennon (Ian Hart) for the narrator/poet and the Fair Youth of the Sonnets. Meanwhile, the Dark Lady morphs into a blonde flight attendant (played by Stephanie Pack). As in *Sunday Bloody Sunday*, the story revolves around a triangle, only this time the female character gets short shrift. The screenplay is based on an historical event, as Epstein and Lennon did indeed vacation in Barcelona in the weeks before the Beatles broke big in 1963. The film's title is lifted from Sonnet 57: “Being your slave, what should I do but tend / Upon the hours and times of your desire?” (1-2). The film itself is low key, only sixty minutes long, and limned in black and white. Apart from its exploitation of the notoriety of the Beatles, the film is notable for the first appearance of Hart in the role of Lennon; he would also play him several years later in Iain Softley's *Backbeat* (1994). For those who do not know, Brian Epstein was the Beatles' manager from 1961-1967, when they rose to the height of their fame. Epstein was a posh-spoken gay man from a well-to-

do Jewish family who was not comfortable in his own skin. In 1967, he died, aged 32, of an overdose of barbiturates and alcohol; the death was ruled an accident. It has been rumored that he had a crush on Lennon because he thought of him as “rough trade.” In the film, Lennon taunts Epstein for being a homosexual, all the while he flirts with him as well. Lennon was married to Cynthia Lennon at the time, and she had just given birth to their son, Julian. John was 22 years old; Brian was 28. The film suggests, without spelling it out, that the pair had a sexual liaison, while in Barcelona, and that it was not satisfying for either of them. The parallel to the sonnets is only taken so far. Epstein and Lennon make suitable stand-ins for Shakespeare and the Fair Youth, only their social positions are reversed. Plus, Lennon is the creative one, with Epstein having dropped out of the Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts in London in favor of a career in the family business (the Epsteins ran a lucrative music retail outlet in London). Perhaps the most interesting scene in the film has Lennon defending his treatment of Epstein to Stephanie Pack’s character, Marianne, who seems to know exactly what is going on between the two men. He threatens to punch her in the mouth (Lennon would later punch out a man at a club in Hamburg for suggesting he had been on “honeymoon” with Brian in Spain), but the two end the scene by dancing to a Little Richard ‘45. Whether Marianne sleeps with either man is left moot; meanwhile, the boys take a bath together and kiss. The upshot is that Epstein is besotted, if not an actual slave to Lennon’s desires. Like the narrator of Sonnet 57, for him “So true a fool is love, that in your will, / Though you do anything, he thinks no ill” (13-14).

Meanwhile, Samuel Park’s freshman novel, *Shakespeare’s Sonnets* (which he later made into a short film in 2005) is an attempt to capture a moment in the history of LGBT people at the end of World War II, when decommissioned young soldiers were flocking to universities on the G.I. Bill, campuses were rife with illicit sex, and works by writers such as Oscar Wilde were housed in the forbidden books section of college libraries. Jean Hayman—“man of many faces, jack of all trades, friend to many but lover to none” (10)—refers to himself as a Uranian (a nod to the third sex movement of the 19th century in Europe), and he is desperate to get into a class on Renaissance Drama so he can make up a failed grade at the same time he makes up to Adam Standridge, a fellow traveler who leads a closeted existence by day (he has a girlfriend, Clare) and trolls the “tearooms” at night. The young men eventually bond over the sonnets, and they go off in search of the portrait that is the stepping off point for Wilde’s novella on Mr. W.H. The fact that they actually *find* the portrait, or a copy of the same, is a weak plot point in the novel, which is better when it is exploring the love affair between the young men. The surprise is that their story ends (wait for it) happily, as they resolve to “[look] ahead, beyond the Yard, to their future”:

“It’s not going to be easy,” said Adam.
 “I know, but eventually everyone will catch up to us,” said Jean.
 They stepped ahead, without fear. (Park 232)

Not quite as deftly handled as the expulsion scene in *Paradise Lost*, perhaps, but it is interesting to think that the first 126 of Shakespeare’s Sonnets, when published as a *sequence*, have in the years since come to serve, at least for some, as a kind of marker for the gay “awakening.” Bruce R. Smith is no doubt correct when he surmises that “sexuality is a culturally contingent concept” (24), with today’s more accepting society leading the way for even the stodgiest of literary critics to take the sonnets’ homosexuality in stride. And while the “Uranian” world remains *terra incognita* to many, those same sonnets are now routinely taught in high school classrooms, whereas, in Jean Hayman’s day, they were the equivalent of a “dirty book” (Park 41).

Thus, Shakespeare’s sonnets, like the plays, are undergoing a process of remediation, and are inching their way into the mainstream. The Sonnet Project, for example, sponsored by the New York Shakespeare Exchange, is an attempt to “re-vision” each of the sonnets as a mini-film. The original series of 154 short films was set in New York City and “had to be PG so it could be used in high schools” (Miller 55). Director Ross Williams now proposes to film the poems twice more, once in various U.S. locations and again in “the rest of the globe.” His target audience will be college, as well as high school, students. It will be interesting to see where the next appropriation/remediation comes from, and to what purpose it is put. The “story” of the sonnets is clearly stepping out of the shadows, and students of the poems are eager to apply what they have learned to Shakespeare’s biography and to explore its relevance to their own lives, without overdosing on “creative scholarship” (Booth 546). Who knows? Perhaps the next time a Tom Stoppard re-visions *Shakespeare in Love*, it will be Willie Hughes’ turn to play Juliet.

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