

# ***Shakespeare's Romances and YouTube: The Art of Synecdoche***

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### ***Shakespeare on Screen: The Tempest and Late Romances***

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## ***Shakespeare's Romances and YouTube: The Art of Synecdoche***

*Christy Desmet*

YouTube – the amorphous, always shifting archive of user-uploaded videos – has changed a good bit since one of the site's co-founders, Jawed Karim, uploaded his nineteen-second video 'Me at the Zoo,' which disarmingly announced that the elephants were 'cool' because of their extraordinarily long trunks, 'and that's pretty much all there is to say'.<sup>1</sup> While YouTube has lost some momentum as a venue for this kind of amateur video art, there is still much to be gained from mining the application as a crowd-sourced archive through which we can trace an emerging canon of Shakespeare performance, educational supplements, and scholarly commentary, with a small number of original pieces. The YouTube Shakespeare terrain has shifted in recent years, in part due to aggressive action by large studios such as Warner Brothers to clear the platform of pirated films and a subsequent struggle between the studios and purveyors of off-brand sites that offer complete films for free. Popular films that in the previous decade were readily available for borrowing and mashup are much sparser now on YouTube. What has filled their place are trailers and brief videos from a variety of professional, semi-professional, amateur, and college or school-based repertory companies that are motivated by a mixture of self-promotion, celebration, preservation of the historical record, and advertisement for live theatre. Educational materials and some school projects can also be found. The result is a mutable archive of artifacts that, collectively, provide a snapshot of Shakespeare's romances within a broader cultural imaginary.

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<sup>1</sup> J. Karim, 'Me at the Zoo', YouTube, 23 April 2005.

On YouTube, not surprisingly, Shakespearean romances pale in popularity compared to selected comedies and tragedies that enjoy a privileged position in the secondary school and university curriculum and, as a corollary, a prominent place in performance rotations. People are much more likely to read, study and see *Romeo and Juliet* – either on stage or through film – than they are *The Winter's Tale*, *Pericles* or *Cymbeline*. Consequently, we are more likely to find on YouTube greater numbers of videos related to those plays that dominate the classroom and theatre. Running the numbers on different play titles confirms the point. On 2 June 2016, a simple search on YouTube by play name for the popular tragedies and comedies yielded the following numbers of hits:

'Hamlet'	1,020,000
'Romeo and Juliet'	890,000
'Macbeth'	655,000
'Othello'	265,000
'A Midsummer Night's Dream'	329,000
'Twelfth Night'	110,000
'Much Ado about Nothing'	83,600

Here are the results for a comparable search on the Shakespearean romances:

'The Tempest'	298,000
'Pericles'	121,000
'The Winter's Tale'	54,600
'Cymbeline'	26,600
'Two Noble Kinsmen'	1,510

These numbers can be distorted by interference from coincidental names: *Pericles*, for instance, is moved misleadingly up the charts by a popular Portuguese samba performer, whose live performance at a club in Rio had earned 1,664,503 views on the date of the search. Nevertheless, what happens on YouTube clearly mirrors what happens in other venues. *Hamlet* always gets more ‘buzz’ than *Cymbeline*.<sup>2</sup>

YouTube Shakespeare is a niche genre within the larger world of YouTube and, within that niche, the romances are an even smaller subset. For this reason, the social ecology for YouTube romances often does not behave in expected ways. A romance on YouTube never goes truly viral; as a result, discernible memes – repeated, readily recognizable visual and verbal tropes – do not develop. And finally, there is not the kind of interactive community that would allow the development of what Patricia Lange has termed ‘videos of affinity,’ in which postings respond directly to one another in cultural conversation.<sup>3</sup> The mechanics of YouTube, furthermore, mitigate against niche videos gaining much traction in the site as a whole. First, there is what Eli Pariser has called the ‘filter-bubble effect,’ in which

<sup>2</sup> To a large extent, the same hierarchy holds in the scholarly world. A search on the following play titles, conducted in the World Shakespeare Bibliography Online (<http://www.worldshakesbib.org/index.html>) on 2 June 2016 showed the following results:

<i>Hamlet</i>	14,753
<i>Macbeth</i>	7870
<i>Othello</i>	6034
<i>Romeo and Juliet</i>	5637
<i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i>	4393
<i>Twelfth Night</i>	4087
<i>Much Ado about Nothing</i>	2101
<i>The Tempest</i>	5625
<i>The Winter's Tale</i>	2533
<i>Pericles</i>	1105
<i>Two Noble Kinsmen</i>	353

Within the scholarly archive there is more activity for the romances than there is on YouTube – the number of articles is roughly comparable to that of the comedies – but relative rankings still hold.

<sup>3</sup> P. Lange, ‘Videos of Affinity on YouTube’, in P. Snickars and P. Vonderau (eds.), *The YouTube Reader* (Stockholm: National Library of Sweden, 2009), 70–88.

YouTube's famed algorithm shapes and sometimes inhibits a video's effort to gain views.<sup>4</sup> There are other limiting technical factors, such as the site's favoring of subscription channels and the efforts of businesses to promote themselves by various means. User behavior also plays a part. What Bernardo Huberman calls the 'law of surfing,'<sup>5</sup> the short attention span that causes most viewers to never go beyond the first page of hits on any given subject, means that many videos garner few hits, which pushes them further out along what Chris Anderson has called the 'long tail' of YouTube.<sup>6</sup>

The most vital pockets of Shakespeare video, such as the amateur Lego *Macbeths* popular around 2006–2009 or the professionally produced *Sassy Gay Friend* series (beginning 2010), meet specific criteria that allow them collectively to thrive within the NicheTube (Alexandra Juhasz's term).<sup>7</sup> Through a combination of appropriated materials (in particular, purloined clips), imitation and self-conscious citation of one another, these

<sup>4</sup> E. Pariser, *The Filter Bubble: How the New Personalized Web Is Changing What We Read and How We Think* (New York: Penguin, 2011).

<sup>5</sup> B. A. Huberman, 'Social Attention in the Age of the Web', in *Working Together or Apart: Promoting the Next Generation of Digital Scholarship*. Report of a Workshop Cosponsored by the Council on Library and Information Resources and the National Endowment for the Humanities Council on Library and Information Resources, Washington, D.C. March 2009, available online at: <http://www.clir.org/pubs/reports/pub145/pub145.pdf> [accessed 21 April 2016].

<sup>6</sup> C. Anderson, *The Long Tail, Revised and Updated Edition: Why the Future of Business is Selling Less of More* (New York: Hyperion, 2008). In 2011, Ben Whitelaw wrote that 'James Zern, a YouTube software engineer, revealed in an official blog post that just 30 per cent of uploaded videos made up 99 per cent of the views on the site', in 'Almost all YouTube views come from just 30% of films', *The Daily Telegraph*, London, 21 April 2011 [accessed 28 September 2016]. For the opposing view, that 'more than 47% of uploaders attract more than 1,000 uploader views, implying that YouTube uploaders enjoy good visibility, for those who upload a very small number of videos,' see Ding et al., 'Broadcast Yourself: Understanding YouTube Uploaders', IMC 11 Proceedings of the 2011 ACM SIGCOMM conference on Internet measurement (New York: ACM, 2011), 363. I discuss these issues in 'The Economics of (In)Attention in YouTube Shakespeare', in M. Calbi and S. O'Neill (eds.), 'Shakespeare and Social Media', *Borrowers and Lenders: The Journal of Shakespeare and Appropriation* 10.1 (Spring/Summer 2016).

<sup>7</sup> A. Juhasz, *Learning from YouTube* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2011), available online at: <http://vectors.usc.edu/projects/learningfromyoutube/> [accessed 30 April 2016].

videos can be recognized as belonging to a particular genre.<sup>8</sup> At the present time, YouTube is not an incubator for widespread amateur innovation, the necessary condition for meme production. The reasons are various. First there is a general suspicion, articulated most recently by Stephen O'Neill,<sup>9</sup> that YouTube's glory days as a site for creativity may have passed. Second, professional companies, large and small, are using YouTube as a vehicle for advertisement and promotion. The larger organizations, at least, know how to promote their videos; and so the first and even second page of a general YouTube search for a particular play may contain mostly or even exclusively trailers for professional productions. Finally, there is a rhetorical tension between the sprawling plots of Shakespeare's romances and the time constraints imposed by YouTube.<sup>10</sup> The dominant trope of YouTube Shakespeare, based as it is on purloined film clips and length constraints, is synecdoche, the substitution of a small part for the whole. The short scene, reinforced as YouTube's basic artistic unit, becomes the foundation for new combinations conveying different narratives as mashups or remixes. As I will suggest, Shakespeare's romances on YouTube do not rise to the status of remix, but do show signs of synecdochic sampling – that is, allowing characters and scenes to stand for an entire play in shorthand. In this way, we can see possibilities for new romance genres in the YouTube of the future.

<sup>8</sup> I have discussed the emergence of YouTube genres in 'YouTube Shakespeare, Appropriation, and Rhetorics of Invention', in D. Fischlin (ed.), *Outerspeares: Shakespeare, Intermedia, and the Limits of Appropriation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014), especially 54–5.

<sup>9</sup> S. O'Neill, *Shakespeare and YouTube: New Media Forms of the Bard* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 42.

<sup>10</sup> At the site's inception in 2006, there were no restrictions on the length of videos uploaded, but soon, to discourage copyright infringement the company began limiting uploads to ten minutes (K. Fisher, 'YouTube caps video lengths to reduce infringement', *Ars Technica*, 4 December 2008). That limit was increased to fifteen minutes for ordinary users in 2010 (J. Lowensohn, 'YouTube bumps video limit to 15 minutes', *CNET*, 29 July 2010; Wikipedia offers a good summary of the subject on its 'YouTube' page, under the heading of 'Uploads').

*THE TEMPEST: ARIEL RISING*

*The Tempest*, with the largest archive and greatest number of views among the four plays, disappointingly shows the least evidence of grass roots creativity. One factor may be the relative prominence of educational businesses providing resources for teachers and students. For instance, Australia-based Total Education Media offers a series of lectures on *The Tempest*, delivered informally by Bruce Pattinson, that apparently are part of a larger program aimed at Australian secondary school students who are preparing for exams. The lecture on Caliban, unfortunately, is ideologically retrograde. We are told, with reference to textual support, that Caliban 'is portrayed immediately as different and evil' and 'comes across as malformed.' Later, the lecturer argues that, although evil, Caliban is complex in the manner of Montaigne's noble savage. He is, in the end, that angry part of human nature that we try to suppress or hide.<sup>11</sup> More banal are the series of brief eNotes videos on *The Tempest*. The video on *Tempest's* famous quotations opens with Gonzalo's 'Now would I give a thousand furlongs of sea for a barren acre of ground' (1.1.56–57), enunciated and then given a plain-language translation, and concludes: 'If you have ever been seasick, you have a hint of how true this is.' The narrator's rehearsal of 'Our revels now are ended' (4.1.148) points out that Prospero's long speech celebrates Ferdinand and Miranda's marriage but then continues at length, concluding that this is 'why people think Prospero is speaking for Shakespeare'.<sup>12</sup> The dominance of such material may predispose YouTube users to see the site as primarily a source of 'official discourse' about Shakespeare being pushed to consumers, 'dumbed down' for schoolkids and requiring only passive reception.

<sup>11</sup> B. Pattinson, 'The Tempest- Discovering Caliban', Total Education Media, YouTube, 17 December 2014.

<sup>12</sup> 'The Tempest - Famous Quotations', YouTube, 14 October 2008.

There is also a healthy stream of academic lectures on *The Tempest* from university sources that thread together nicely but also take viewers away from *The Tempest* to the wider genre of academic lectures. Beginning with a class on *The Tempest* from Marjorie Garber's 'Shakespeare After All' series at Harvard University and Emma Smith's 'Is Prospero Shakespeare?' from her 'Approaching Shakespeare' lectures at Oxford, these university offerings have all the advantages and drawbacks of their kind.<sup>13</sup> The first two minutes of Garber's two-hour talk, for instance, are dedicated to cajoling students to move further down front in the lecture hall, delivering announcements and conducting sidebar exchanges with the course teaching assistants. We also find recordings of invited lectures from scholars such as David Bevington and William Carroll that preserve the scholarly record but also take advantage of opportunities for institutional advertisement or branding. These videos create a standalone series of one to two-hour offerings that thread nicely but have little to do with one another, so that they do not cohere as a unified genre with a common purpose and certainly do not contribute to an underlying educational program. On the other hand, the presence of university lectures from Turkey<sup>14</sup> and other places suggests that some lecture videos are intended for a more local audience and so stand outside Anglo-American academic politics. For the college lectures, even more so than the school-oriented videos, however, each video remains a critical island unto itself, agglomerating as a loose collection of synecdoches in a larger conversation about Shakespeare that is still in search of a master narrative.

<sup>13</sup> M. Garber, 'Harvard ENGL E-129 - Lecture 12: The Tempest', Cosmo Learning, YouTube, recorded 19 December 2007, published 18 January 2015; E. Smith, 'Is Prospero Shakespeare?' *Tempest* Lecture, Approaching Shakespeare, Oxford University, YouTube, 22 January 2013.

<sup>14</sup> C. Sevgen, 'Shakespeare's Plays', Bogazici University, Istanbul, Turkey, YouTube, 12 August 2014.

Apart from educational materials, *The Tempest* YouTube archive features trailers for theatrical organizations of all kinds and levels of prestige. Most prevalent are trailers advertising upcoming performances and, after the fact, chronicling past productions, for large organizations such as the Royal Shakespeare Company and Shakespeare's Globe. The Royal Shakespeare Company, for instance, has released several videos hyping but also exploring the development of the company's upcoming 2016–17 high-tech production of *The Tempest*, in collaboration with Intel and Imaginarium. Among the most interesting of these brief videos is one featuring Mark Quartley, who plays Ariel, talking to viewers about the day when all the actors and technology came together for a first run-through, and especially how he and John Russell Beale, who is Prospero, interacted with one another and with Quartley's virtual avatar in a 'ménage-à-trois'.<sup>15</sup> Quartley emerges, from the day, confident that he 'can have a relationship with Prospero' at the same time as the avatar can. This is an informative four-minute sequence that will certainly be of interest to people already cued in to RSC productions (on 28 September 2016, within about two months of its posting, the video already had 6,030 views). But, as an infomercial, the video pushes content to viewers, as the original Web 1.0 was intended to do, rather than inviting creative participation from viewers, the goal of Web 2.0. The same could be said about a video from David Farr's 2012 production, where the director and actors talk about the play and their characters.<sup>16</sup> In its time, the video was an attempt to lure paying customers but later became the unmoored remnant of a production long past. A further factor that frustrates the development of amateur genres of YouTube *Tempest* is the careful self-referentiality of well-managed professional channels using proper metadata; any Royal Shakespeare

<sup>15</sup> 'Prospero meets Ariel | The Tempest | Royal Shakespeare Company', YouTube, 4 July 2016.

<sup>16</sup> 'The Tempest | Royal Shakespeare Company', YouTube, 6 July 2012.

Company video, for instance, refers most immediately to other videos from the company, quickly leading the viewer away from accumulating a mass of material about *The Tempest* as a particular play to the larger cache of 'Royal Shakespeare Company' videos.

The videos from Shakespeare's Globe operate in a similar way, although they focus on representing the 'Globe experience' as well as advertising or chronicling productions. At the top of the list is a clip from 5.1 of *The Tempest* that begins with Roger Allam as Prospero remembering, suddenly and explosively, the Caliban plot. In this case, the 2014 video of a 2013 production is advertising the subsequent DVD rather than a live performance and so looks forward as well as backward.<sup>17</sup> One can find as well YouTube trailers for live performances from smaller, more local, theatres which, like those from the more internationally recognized companies, are outward-facing, either advertising or, after the fact, providing evidential traces of a time-and-space bounded live production.<sup>18</sup>

For *The Tempest*, as for many other Shakespeare plays, there are some complete films of live performances. Some of these are more-or-less professional recordings and films provided by smaller companies, such as Louisville, Kentucky's Savage Rose Theatre,<sup>19</sup> the grant-funded prison project of the Marin Shakespeare Company<sup>20</sup> and a Civil War adaptation of the play set in Mississippi.<sup>21</sup> More surprisingly, there are uploads of the complete 2010 Julie Taymor film, starring Helen Mirren as Prospera. At the time of writing, there are still quite a few examples of the entire film, a situation that probably will not last,

<sup>17</sup> 'Shakespeare: THE TEMPEST (Shakespeare's Globe)', YouTube, 7 August 2014.

<sup>18</sup> See, for instance, 'BLC [Bethany Lutheran College] Theatre presents THE TEMPEST by William Shakespeare', YouTube, 20 August 2013; 'Discovering The Tempest - Shakespeare and The Tempest', Tennessee Shakespeare Company, YouTube, 2 April 2012; and 'Trailer: The Tempest', Oregon Shakespeare Festival, YouTube, 17 March 2014, advertising a production at the venerable Oregon Shakespeare Festival.

<sup>19</sup> 'The Tempest - Full Play', Savage Rose Theatre, YouTube, 10 July 2014.

<sup>20</sup> 'Shakespeare at Solano Prison Presents "The Tempest"', Marin Shakespeare Company. YouTube, 20 May 2016.

<sup>21</sup> 'The Tempest (1998)', YouTube, 9 December 2015.

as copyright policing catches up with user activity (and when that happens, the virtual ecology will change once again).

More frequent, however, are examples of the official trailer or small excerpts carved out from the film. Many of these excerpts feature Ariel: he seems to have a YouTube following, as does actor Ben Whishaw, who played the character for Taymor's production and is known for other roles, both Shakespearean and non-Shakespearean. (He was *Richard II* in *The Hollow Crown*, Lord Sebastian Flyte in *Brideshead Revisited* and Q in the James Bond film *Skyfall*.) As happens with other actors with Shakespeare credits (e.g., Leonardo DiCaprio), Whishaw's general star power may reinforce the popularity of Shakespeare films in which he appears.

What might be considered the 'amateur' sector of YouTube *Tempests* is small but offers some interesting examples that might also suggest a rise in Ariel's fortunes. The Taymor film has become the standard for ripped clips in student projects. For instance, 'Shakespeare Summarized: The Tempest' from Overly Sarcastic Productions (5 May 2014) draws clips from it to illustrate its summary of the play. The narrator provides side remarks on the fancy clothing sported by these supposed 'castaways' and explains knowledgeably that, in the play, Shakespeare is a 'dude' who has produced a 'nasty' son Caliban and a 'totally kickass *Dr. Who* villain', the Sycroax. There appears also on YouTube a standalone clip of Ben Whishaw playing a most intimidating harpy denouncing the court party for usurping Prospero's dukedom, which was uploaded apparently by a fan from Bulgaria; as of 28 September 2016, the video had received 8,285 views. This particular clip is lifted skillfully from the longer official film trailer, one upload of which has received

1,259,588 views.<sup>22</sup> This particular moment from Taymor's *Tempest* finds at least one possible descendant in the student project category, a creditable animation that uses Lego figures to characterize the cast and summarize the plot of *The Tempest* within ten minutes. Tellingly, the harpy banquet features a larger-than-usual, hulking Lego Ariel – technically, a Bionicle – who looms over the scene in the role of harpy.<sup>23</sup> Of course, there is no direct citation of Whishaw's dark, threatening bird, but the relationship is evocative. Even videos that have no discernible connection to the Taymor film, such as the edubiz summary offered by eNotes, now seem to be emphasizing Ariel's role.<sup>24</sup>

There is yet one more sub-genre of *Tempest* video on YouTube, one that is poised between the amateur and professional worlds: individual creations that are sponsored by major organizations. One example is 'Miranda's Letter,' featuring Raffey Cassidy of *Tomorrowland* and filmed on the South Devon coast.<sup>25</sup> The video narrates, in voiceover, a somewhat maudlin letter to Miranda from her deceased mother, who tells the girl that she will be with her always and advises the daughter never to be afraid. At the end of the five-minute film, Miranda on the beach meets what undoubtedly will prove to be her Ferdinand, and fade to black. 'Miranda's Letter' is part of the Shakespeare Lives collection, which features very short films as part of the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration of Shakespeare's death (British Council). As part of such a cultural quilt, however, *The Tempest* remake does not 'talk back' to any other *Tempest* videos on YouTube. Another example of a hybrid amateur/professional video is the synopsis of *The Tempest* provided by a student collective

<sup>22</sup> 'The Tempest - Ariel (I have made you mad)', YouTube, 17 February 2014, and 'The Tempest Movie Trailer Official (HD)', YouTube, 24 November 2010.

<sup>23</sup> 'Shakespeare's The Tempest Lego Animation version 2.0', YouTube, 30 May 2015.

<sup>24</sup> 'The Tempest – Summary', eNotes, YouTube, 25 April 2008.

<sup>25</sup> 'Miranda's Letter; a story inspired by Shakespeare's The Tempest', British Council, YouTube, 20 June 2016.

from Lings Primary School in Northampton,<sup>26</sup> which, it turns out, is sponsored by the Royal Shakespeare Company. As the video's concluding minutes suggest, this gesture of outreach is actually advertisement for the upcoming Gregory Doran *Tempest*, discussed above and to be released in November 2016. The video has minimal metadata, which also discourages viewers from going further on YouTube in search of related videos. As noted previously, the RSC, like many companies with a bottom line, wants to keep viewer attention focused on its own products. Contributing to a recognizable YouTube genre is simply not a priority.

Taken together, the *Tempest* archive on YouTube remains amorphous, porous and lacking in direction. The emergence of Ariel and some Ariel-as-Taymor-harpy tropes suggests that with an external stimulus – a curricular change, perhaps, a popular comic, or a teen film – YouTube *Tempests* could follow the trajectory of plays such as *Hamlet*, *Macbeth* or *Romeo and Juliet*, where particular tropes or memes develop through appropriation and remix. Trailers and related material that exist to advertise and celebrate a particular company or Shakespearean brand work against the momentum established by amateur efforts, both by simply breaking up the chain of related videos and by consciously seeking to capture audience attention rather than refer to and link out to other creations. This tendency will be exacerbated in the less popular films, including *The Winter's Tale*, where we can see the YouTube incubator at an even earlier stage of development.

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<sup>26</sup> 'Synopsis | The Tempest | Royal Shakespeare Company', YouTube, 19 July 2016.

*THE WINTER'S TALE: 'LIKE AN OLD TALE STILL'*

For *The Winter's Tale*, as for *The Tempest*, professional trailers and educational materials dominate. A look at the first page of hits for a search on 'Shakespeare + Winter's Tale' conducted on 29 September 2016 brings up a mélange of videos. In first place, with 20,159 views, is a student effort from Salt n' Pepper Shakespeare, which summarizes the play using kitchen implements to represent different characters ('The Winter's Tale Summary Part 1 by William Shakespeare', 21 December 2011). (Perdita and Florizel, for instance, are matching coffee pots.) Next, at a creditable 46,059 views, is a user-uploaded and probably pirated copy of a BBC radio adaptation of *The Winter's Tale* from 1997.<sup>27</sup> The surprisingly copious comments for this 2:40:00 audio file suggest that the writers are knowledgeable Shakespeare aficionados, if not scholars, but that the group also considers the production ideal for student use; there is some testimony that people assigned to read the play found this to be a genuine aid to textual comprehension. Directed and produced by Eoin O' Callaghan, with Tom Courteay as Leontes and Harriet Walter as Hermione and enhanced by a sophisticated musical accompaniment, the production is indeed well-done, delivering the text with clarity and grace and suitable in tone for its medium. Finally, in third place we find the official Royal Shakespeare Company trailer for *The Winter's Tale* of 2010, directed by David Farr, which has received 62,263 views. We will return to this trailer, but for now the snapshot suggests videos of *The Winter's Tale* exist largely to educate (students) and promote (theatre companies), but do not yet cohere into a discernible archive centered around the play.

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<sup>27</sup> *The Winter's Tale*, dir. Eoin O' Callaghan, perf. Tom Courtenay, Harriet Walter, BBC Radio 3, 28 December 1997.

There are a number of professional and amateur videos representing entire performances and productions among the YouTube offerings. Independent filmmaker Chuck Bentley's 'The Winter's Tale,' filmed with a hand-held camera in abstract spaces, is stylish, with Time as a camera woman who commands the players arranged in the opening tableau into speech and comments on the action.<sup>28</sup> The statue scene is particularly interesting, with Hermione recumbent as a funerary sculpture and her awakening signaled by a subtle close-up blink of the eye. Those viewers patient enough to watch the entire video of 1:25:00 will be intrigued and edified. 'Quest's "The Winter's Tale" ACT 1,' by the non-profit troupe from Vermont, Quest Shakespearean Theatre (9 August 2015), is more traditional in its videography and *mise-en-scène*, but the production values are better than might be expected. The same can be said for the Actors Ensemble of Berkeley's *Winter's Tale*, which is filmed on a traditional stage by a single camera in the middle distance.<sup>29</sup>

One of the factors inhibiting the development of specific *Winter's Tale* genres on YouTube is the interjection of these longer videos into the thread. Long productions are simply alien to the YouTube ethos, which favors brevity and compaction – synecdoche, in rhetorical terms – and, while the two-hour productions might be attractive to teachers or readers looking for a complete text as a study aid, the law of surfing works best with short videos of established genres featuring recognizable memes. One can certainly find on YouTube synecdoches of actual performances, as in Leontes' sparring with Paulina about her role in Hermione's supposed adultery from a 2013 production ('Act 3, Scene 2 | The Winter's Tale | Royal Shakespeare Company', 15 February 2013). A smattering of class projects follows this model. One representing act 5 with an all-female cast offers a

<sup>28</sup> C. Bentley, 'The Winter's Tale', YouTube, 9 February 2015.

<sup>29</sup> 'The Winter's Tale - Directed by Jeremy Cole', Actors Ensemble of Berkeley, YouTube, 14 January 2013.

charming translation of Shakespeare's verse into strongly accented 'plain language' recalling the sexually charged exchanges of Humphrey Bogart and Lauren Bacall and accompanied by languid music from Miles Davis and George Michaels ('The Winter's Tale, Act 5 [Shakespeare, ENGL 40493]', 2 December 2012). But, in both the professional or amateur spheres on YouTube, these synecdochic 'slices' of Shakespeare's romance are currently few and far between.

There is another complicating factor. Unlike the film clips that form the foundation for remixes and mashups, trailers have particular aesthetic qualities and rhetorical aims. Speaking specifically of film trailers, Charlotte Sun Jensen argues that they stick to the original's genre (comedy, romance, etc.) and evoke the emotions appropriate to that genre, largely by 'reducing and reordering its complex narrative'.<sup>30</sup> The trailer thus gives information but also withholds it as a two-minute enticement to get viewers to watch the whole film. Trailers for professional drama troupes advertised on YouTube follow and even exacerbate the commercial film trailer's tendency to withhold information and condense plot, often to the point of reducing the narrative to a series of images sequenced through jump cuts and unified in mood only through music. This definition fits well the prominently placed trailer for the RSC's 2010 *Winter's Tale*. The 'Royal Shakespeare Company: The Winter's Tale trailer' (9 August 2010) (2:13) opens with a misty black-and-white image of Hermione's statue in an abstractly postmodern space, with Kelly Hunter as Hermione reciting in voiceover, 'For behold me/, A fellow of the royal bed . . .' (*The Winter's Tale*, 3.2.35–36), a speech that is associated not with the culminating statue scene being represented but instead with Hermione's previous self-defense at her trial in act 3. The

<sup>30</sup> C. S. Jensen, 'Reduced Narration, Intensified Emotion: The Film Trailer', *Projections: The Journal for Movies and Mind* 8.1 (Summer 2014), 106.

scene fades to brief glimpses of Leontes laughing and a close-up of Hermione's ample belly.<sup>31</sup> The remainder of Hermione's defense at her trial, which is never shown explicitly in the trailer, is spoken over a series of film noir glimpses of action accompanied by mournful music in a minor key. The second minute reproduces this visual sequence with a tragic difference. We see Hermione's statue with the roof and walls collapsing around it, then Leontes in his undershirt, with suspenders visible and obviously in distress (ending 1:09). More images are interspersed with praise from reviewers and we are left with the final image of Leontes, retreating slowly from the ruins of the palace, his heels clicking ominously on the floor. The trailer concludes with information about booking and the RSC's website. This is an evocative video; if Michael Billington's review is to be trusted, the portion of the play that he liked, the 'play's opening, tragic Sicilian half,' is played up in the trailer.<sup>32</sup> But this brief video is not designed to help a potential viewer, or even worse, a school student in search of plot information, names of the dramatis personae, or ideas for a school project. It does not encourage appropriation, imitation and replication because, as Jensen notes, the trailer works according to the loose association of metonymy rather than the firmer structural alignment of synecdoche.

*The Winter's Tale* seems less popular in secondary school and even college curricula than *The Tempest*, which has been made attractive to contemporary literature syllabi through postcolonial criticism. *The Winter's Tale*, quite simply, is at once less 'relatable' and less amenable to current theoretical practices. It is therefore not surprising to find fewer

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<sup>31</sup> According to the RSC's website, *The Winter's Tale* played at the 'Courtyard Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, from 14 July-2 September 2010 before transferring to the Theatre Royal, Newcastle and London's Roundhouse.' The production was directed by David Farr, with Greg Hicks as Leontes and Kelly Hunter as Hermione.

<sup>32</sup> M. Billington, 'The Winter's Tale, Courtyard, Stratford-upon Avon,' *The Guardian*, 9 April 2009.

professional ‘study aids’ of the eNotes type. We do find some amateur summaries. The Finger Puppet version of *The Winter’s Tale* is less fun than the one of *The Tempest*, where a volunteer pigeon saunters into the seaside backdrop, but it is a detailed and accurate summary of the play’s layered and complex plot.<sup>33</sup> In fact, skillfully exfoliating the plot of this ‘old tale’ seems to be one of the pleasures enjoyed by young YouTubers, which sets their efforts apart from the simpler Lego and cartoon summaries of *The Tempest* constructed to satisfy a school assignment.

We can see this love of a complicated narrative conveyed through synecdochic snapshots vividly in a children’s version of the play that is organized according to the metaphor of a scrapbook. Within this frame, ‘The Winter’s Tale: Shakespeare for Kids’ (15 April 2009) is a charming costume drama featuring kids around five years old. The actors, however they manage it, deliver the lines of their ‘plain English translation’ with unwavering clarity and sassy attitude, sometimes enacting the play and sometimes voicing the text over posed photographs. The video contains some delightful surprises that violate expected boundaries; for instance, the star-quality little Leontes, watching Hermione and Polixenes interact, blurts out, ‘Why is he touching her? . . . What the . . . he’s staying now?’ in a most adult diatribe. When Leontes yanks his son (a puppet) from Hermione’s hands, she looks him disapprovingly and says, ‘You’ll be sorry for this.’ Yoda is the oracle denouncing Leontes with a distorted echo; the Mamillius puppet makes a later appearance as Florizel wooing a skeptical, leaf-adorned Perdita; and Antigonus’ ‘Exit, pursued by a bear’ is effected with the help of a somewhat overweight poodle mix, whose loping tracking of his prey is filmed through a long shot, followed by a close-up of the ‘bear’ savagely ‘attacking’

<sup>33</sup> ‘Finger Puppet Shakespeare: The Tempest’, YouTube, 30 September 2015; ‘Finger Puppet Shakespeare: The Winter’s Tale’, YouTube, 14 November 2015.

Antigonus, who writhes on the ground in an unsuccessful effort to ward off the dog's kisses. (Buttercup the dog also appears dancing with the other actors in the film credits.) There are no identifying markers for either the children or the adults beyond first names and no description of the school in which these students and teachers participate. It seems to be a progressive art school with a strongly multicultural student body and, in the poster's channel, we can listen to another video of the child who played Leontes, now at the age of ten, performing a Haydn concerto. Although it has over 6,000 views, 'The Winter's Tale Shakespeare for Kids' has not become the epicenter for a YouTube genre, despite the fact that Buttercup herself could become a model for a 'miniaturized beast' meme. Nevertheless, this little video, buried among the RSC promotional trailers and recordings chronicling all levels of performance, shows that the potential for a strain of amateur YouTube video does exist. We can only hope to see soon the evolution of Shakespeare's bear as an amateur meme.

'THE GREAT ONES EAT UP THE LITTLE ONES': *CYMBELINE*, *PERICLES* AND *TWO NOBLE KINSMEN*

YouTube's algorithm, user practices and, more generally, the educational and cultural politics of Shakespearean reception reinforce the canonical preference for *The Tempest* and *The Winter's Tale* and so push the other romances further out along the 'long tail' of YouTube videos related to Shakespeare. *Cymbeline*, *Pericles* and *Two Noble Kinsmen* have fewer uploads, less viewer activity and virtually no amateur creativity evident on YouTube. Still, looking at these final three plays can confirm what we have seen about the general

ecology of the romances, reflecting their particular cultural place in the world of YouTube Shakespeare.

*Cymbeline* is a newcomer to the YouTube canon. When I began working on this essay, the site was abuzz with talk about the then-forthcoming Michael Almereyda adaptation starring Ethan Hawke. As of 2 October 2016, one complete copy of that film can be found on YouTube ('Cymbeline 2014', 9 May 2015). The site also offers complete performances of other productions. Shakespeare by the Sea's summer 2016 outdoor performance appears on the first page of hits,<sup>34</sup> as does a copy of the 1913 Florence La Badie silent film adaptation, which is provided by the Cinema History Channel.<sup>35</sup> We can find a few examples of an older YouTube genre, the Shakespeare monologue from aspiring actors. And there is a fair amount of material related to the 2016 RSC production of *Cymbeline*. Educational material is less apparent. The indefatigable Finger Puppets group offers a plot summary of the play,<sup>36</sup> but eNotes is absent. Most attempts at summary come, instead, from professional organizations seeking to educate audiences in preparation for watching this unfamiliar play. The RSC, for instance, offers a synopsis for *Cymbeline* as it does for *The Tempest* ('Synopsis | Cymbeline | Royal Shakespeare Company', 24 May 2016). On the other hand, much of the recent activity concerning *Cymbeline* on YouTube has come within the past two years, suggesting perhaps that the cult film by Almereyda may have begun to make a place in the public imagination for *Cymbeline*.

*Pericles*, as the most esoteric play with a negligible presence in popular culture, is represented almost exclusively through clips of performances from various venues,

<sup>34</sup> 'Shakespeare's Cymbeline', Shakespeare by the Sea, YouTube, 3 August 2016.

<sup>35</sup> 'Cymbeline-1913-Florence LaBadie- A romantic tale from Shakespeare's late career-Great adaptation,' YouTube, 9 May 2015. The film was directed by Lucius Henderson and starred Florence La Badie.

<sup>36</sup> 'Finger Puppet Shakespeare: Cymbeline', YouTube, 28 April 2016.

professional and amateur. We have trailers announcing live performances, archived videos of past performances, vintage audio recordings and a lecture from Marjorie Garber. The absence of the pedagogical imperative and study aids from for-profit companies means that a wider range of theatrical companies, both big-time and small-time, have the potential to court viewer attention. The pattern continues for *Two Noble Kinsmen*.

In her essay for *Shakespeare on Screen*'s open-access resources for *Othello*, Ayanna Thompson characterized that play's presence on YouTube as representing the 'pilfered, the pedagogical, and the parodic'.<sup>37</sup> The case is different, at least for the moment, for the less canonical, less popular, and less politically edgy romances, at least as suggested by their presence on YouTube. There is some pilfering, mostly in the form of complete film uploads of the Taymor *Tempest*. The pedagogical is also present but in diminished amounts related to each romance's classroom status. And, finally, there is remarkably little parody. Part of the issue may be a current tendency to see the romances as elegiac rather than comic. These factors operate in combination with a host of contingencies, ranging from the rhetoric of dramatic trailers to the enclosure practices of well-organized professional channels. Nevertheless, the materials uploaded to YouTube have classroom utility, offering material that is enjoyable and edifying. And, if you dig deep enough, you'll come upon gems like the kids' *Winter's Tale*. Finally, for those interested in media trends, keeping track of the accidental archive clustered around YouTube romances by Shakespeare helps scholars monitor how YouTube continues to morph in response to all these factors. Shakespeare's

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<sup>37</sup> A. Thompson, 'Othello/YouTube', CUP Online Resources, in S. Hatchuel and N. Vienne-Guerrin (eds.), *Shakespeare on Screen: Othello* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), <http://www.cambridge.org>

romances are old tales, but they can tell us much about the performance and educational worlds they inhabit.

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