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Professor Stuart Davis

ENGL 2080 (Shakespeare and the Twentieth and Twenty First Centuries)

May 30, 2020

Traces and Appropriations

In assembling this portfolio, I tried to find artifacts embodying the description of bad jokes and sheer kitsch; even if these examples may induce cringing on the part of their viewers, they nevertheless show the extent of William Shakespeare's work on literary and popular culture. Many of these examples are actually memes illustrating certain moments in various plays to either comedic or absurd effect (whether they succeed and how good they actually are is left up to the viewer. There are also some more "straight" or serious examples, created fairly recently.

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1. One of the most sustained and notable recent references or appropriations of Shakespeare's work that comes to mind is actually another play: *Gary: A Sequel to Titus Andronicus*, written by Taylor Mac and produced last year on Broadway. As the title implies, the main action of the play takes place after the end of the final scene of *Titus Andronicus*; Gary, a Roman servant, has been tasked with cleaning up all of the bodies of those killed over the course of Shakespeare's play in time for the coronation ceremony the next day. Using Shakespeare's play as a jumping point, Taylor Mac's play explores issues of class divide, emotional investment, and other matters—along with a procession of dead naked Roman soldiers.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/04/21/theater/gary-a-sequel-to-titus-andronicus-review.html>

<https://www.playbill.com/production/gary-a-sequel-to-titus-andronicus-booth-theatre-2018-2019>

2. Recently, Bob Dylan released a song titled *Murder Most Foul*, about the assassination of President of John F. Kennedy; the title is obviously a reference to the famous *Hamlet* quote, and contains a number of other thematic allusions to the play throughout.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3NbQkyvbw18>

Next, we have some pictorial representations of moments throughout Shakespeare's plays.

3. <https://i.imgur.com/57Ap9vM.jpg> (The denouement of *Titus Andronicus*)
4. <https://i.redd.it/94oaw1djwj151.jpg> (Claudius's reaction to his brother's death in *Hamlet*)
5. <https://i.redd.it/fcpa2vc2kju41.jpg> (A poster of *Breaking Bad* retooled to represent Shakespeare)
6. <https://i.redd.it/0su5sipbeju41.jpg> (Another retooling, this time of Michael Jackson's *Bad*)
7. A version of Lizzo's song *Truth Hurts*, rewritten in Shakespearean style (found online, errors and all):

VALOR EXCRUCIATES BY LADY LIZZO

Why men great 'til they gotta be great?

Why art lords exceptional until they must be exceptional?

Woo

Woo

I just took a DNA test, turns out I'm 100% that bitch

I hath taken an examination of mine genetics, and the results indicate I art a maximum wench

Even when I'm crying crazy

E'en when I be spilling tears of hysteria, hastily

Yeah, I got boy problems, that's the human in me

Ay, i got sirrah [1] problems, that's the mortal in me

Bling bling, then I solve 'em, that's the goddess in me

Spoils of war. Spoils of war, then i rectify 'em, that's the divine entity entrapped in mine soul

You coulda had a bad bitch, non-committal

Thou coulda had a ill wench, Not expressing or revealing commitment to a definite opinion or course of action.

Help you with your career just a little

Help thou with thy apprenticeship, just some few

You're 'posed to hold me down, but you're holding me back

Thou art supposed to bear me down, yet thou art bearing me back

And that's the sound of me not calling you back

And that be the cacophony of mine self not bidding thou back

Why men great 'til they gotta be great?

Why art lords exceptional until they must be exceptional?

Don't text me, tell it straight to my face

Do not enscribe me a sonnet, say to it straight to mine brow

Best friend sat me down in the salon chair

Meetest friend lowered mine arse down into the grooming seat accommodation

Shampoo press, get you out of my hair

Bonnet mine locks, get thou out of mine mane

Fresh photos with the bomb lighting

Novel illustrations accompanied by the superior illumination

New man on the Minnesota Vikings

Novel sirrah [1] harkened from the Minnesota Nordics

Truth hurts, needed something more exciting

Valor excruiates, I plead for excitement

Bom bom bi dom bi dum bum bay

Hark, bom bom bi dom bi dum bum day

You tried to break my heart?

Thou tried to shatter mine cardiovascular entity?

Oh, that breaks my heart

Oh, that decimates mine blood-pumping vessel

That you thought you ever had it

That thou thought thou aye possessed it

No, you ain't from the start

No, thou cannot be characterized as such from the emergence

Hey, I'm glad you're back with your bitch

Hark, I be blissful thou art back with thy wench

I mean who would wanna hide this?

I mean whom would desire encave this?

I will never, ever, ever, ever, ever be your side chick

I shall ne'r, aye, aye, aye, aye be thy side caitiff [2]

I put the sing in single

I bequeath the holy chorus to lonesome song

Ain't worried 'bout a ring on my finger

I worry not of the consequence of a circlet on mine forefinger

So you can tell your friend, "shoot your shot" when you see 'em

So thou uttered to thy companion, "shoot thy shot" when thou view 'em

It's OK, he already in my DMs

It is satisfactory, he hath previously visited my undeviating communication

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I'ma hit you back in a minute

I shall strike thou in return in one sixtieth of an hour

I don't play tag, bitch, I been it

I hath not concern myself with the likes of a playground game involving two or more players' chasing other players in an attempt to "tag" and mark them out of play, usually by touching with a hand. I hath embodied it

We don't fuck with lies, we don't do goodbyes

We shall not rut with falsifications, we shall not bid thy pardon

We just keep it pushing like aye yi yi

We shall simply continue to propel like aye aye aye

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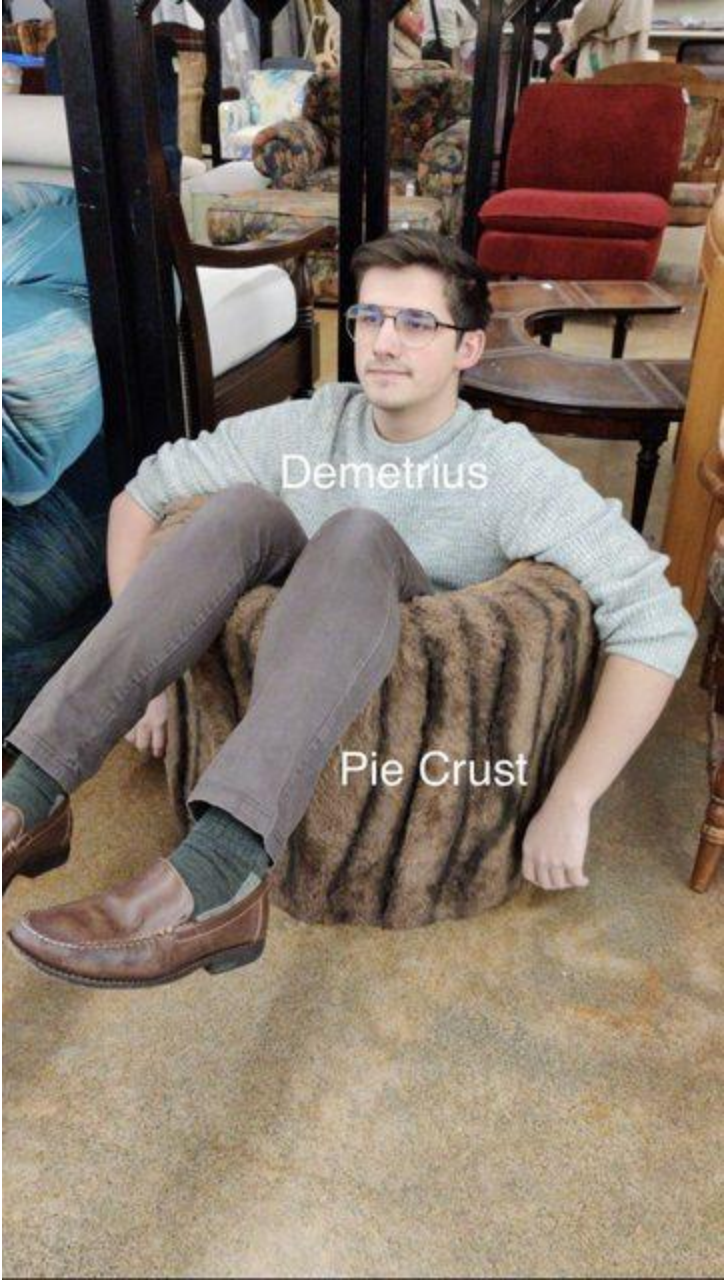
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8. Here is a “Shakesphere” for all to see: <https://i.redd.it/r0im93jwurs41.jpg>

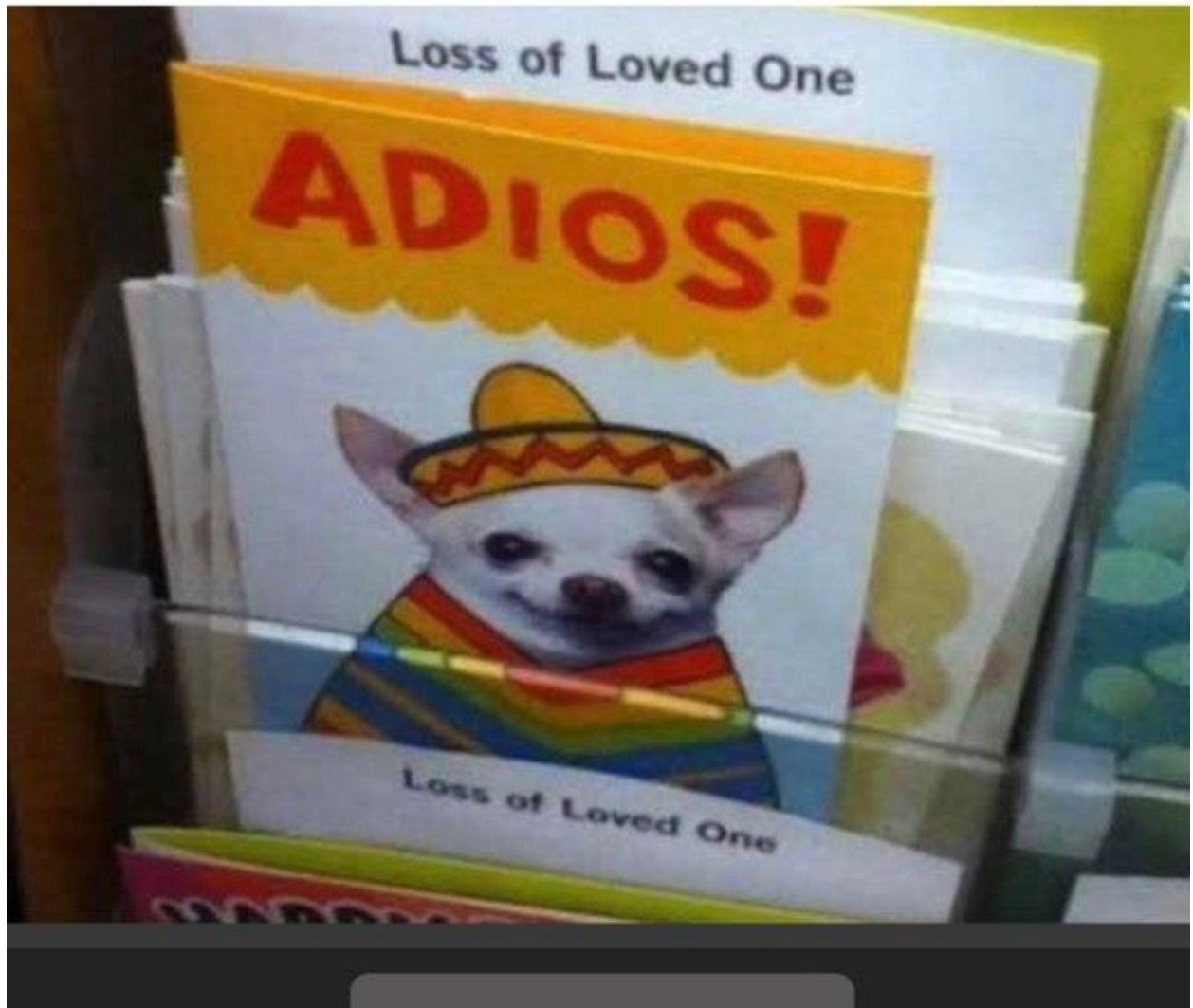
9. And, finally, everyone’s favorite toy: a Shakespeare punching puppet (picture below).



Demetrius

Pie Crust

Claudius when his brother died:



UNEASY LIES THE HEAD
THAT WEARS A CROWN

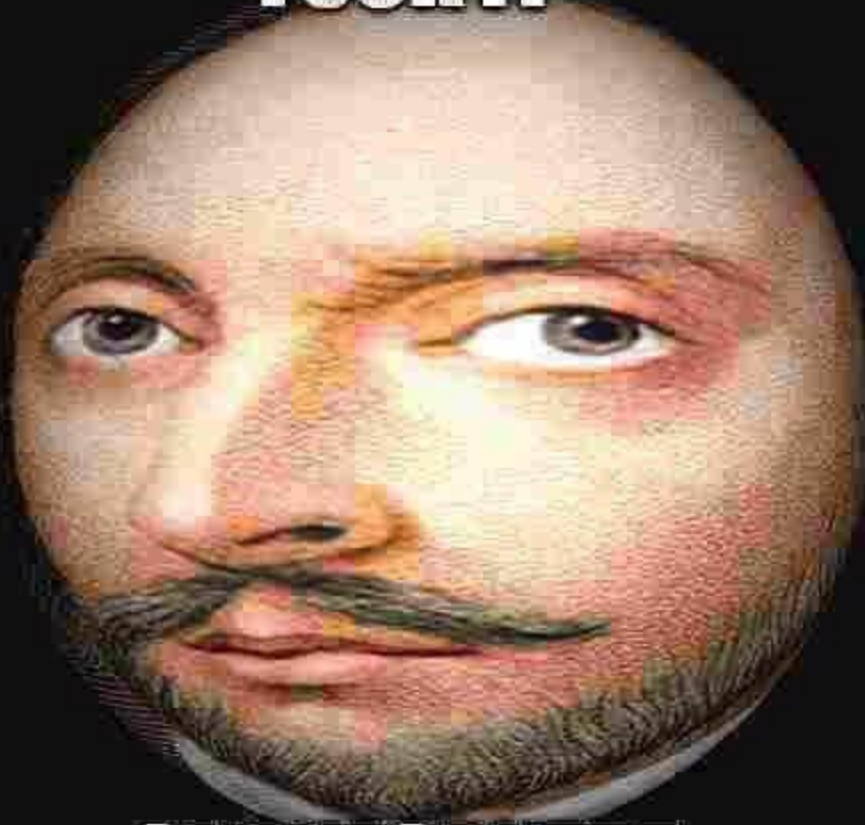


³⁵Br eaking
⁵⁶Ba rd



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FUCK IT



SHAKESHERE



Archie McPhee