Surviving Stratford High: Agency and Community in Young Adult Adaptations of Shakespeare's Monarchical Tragedies

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Introduction

Not every Shakespeare play lends itself well to adaptation. Certainly, some provide greater challenges than others. These challenges only increase when the adaptation in question is written for teenagers, slotting the new story firmly into the Young Adult genre. For such an audience, it requires little imagination to retell *Romeo and Juliet,* as the stars *are* teenagers, for example. When attempting darker plays such as *The Tragedy of Macbeth* or *The Tragedy of Hamlet,* more steps are involved to make such an adaptation work: with the territory of Young Adult fiction come certain expectations and tropes, and not all of them combine well with the Shakespearean play they are based on. For example, the male-dominated worlds of Shakespeare's tragedies do not align with the contemporary push for strong, female characters to lead a story. Indeed, how *do* adapters of Shakespearean tragedies increase the agency of the main female characters in their Young Adult adaptations? Writing on feminism in *10 Things I Hate About You* and *She's The Man,* two popular teen-movie adaptations of Shakespeare's comedies, Jennifer Clement repeatedly brings up the importance of community and "female solidarity" (9, 11, 15). This thesis sets out to assess whether community is indeed an important factor in altering the agency exercised by the female main characters of similar teen adaptations—of Shakespeare's tragedies. Specifically, this thesis will analyse how community affects agency, and how such agency is exercised by Jade, the Lady Macbeth character in the 2020 *Macbeth* adaptation *Foul is Fair,* written by Hannah Capin; and by Ophelia, the Ophelia character in the 2013 *Hamlet* adaptation *A Wounded Name,* written by Dot Hutchinson. Both novels make changes to the community that is present in their respective source-texts, and they also change the setting and the characterisation of the protagonist. In order to consider the effect of the change in community, the setting and the characterisation will be analysed as well, so that all changes in the adaptations are considered in the analysis. Ultimately, one of

these changes will be the definitive factor in that change; this thesis argues that community will be that factor.

A vast amount of academic research already exists when it comes to Shakespeare, adaptations, and even adaptations written specifically for a Young Adult audience. The two novels that are analysed and discussed in this thesis have not yet been covered in any academic publications, however. Writing on similar Shakespearean adaptations, academics agree that adaptations may "talk back" to the original plays (Detmer-Goebel 116) and indeed, the analysis in this thesis will show how these adaptations bring attention to aspects of Shakespeare's characters that might have otherwise gone unnoticed. As the literature review in Chapter One: *Adapting Articles* will point out, there are trends in adapting Lady Macbeth—many adapters choose to increase her likeability—and Ophelia—many adapters change Ophelia's character to suit their needs and increase her agency. The two subsequent chapters—in-depth analyses of *Foul is Fair* and of *A Wounded Name*—will illustrate how the characters in these novels deviate from those trends. In this thesis, the two contemporary Young Adult adaptations have changed much surrounding the characters, but the core of audiences' understanding of Lady Macbeth and Ophelia has remained intact in their reimaginations. Indeed, both novels contain versions of Shakespeare's characters that the Bard himself may still recognise—the setting and the environment these characters find themselves in is mainly what has changed.

In Shakespeare's plays, the action takes place at castles or palaces, physical representations of the royal court: places of hierarchy, expectations and surveillance. A modern setting that resembles a royal court for its properties *and* that is familiar to teenagers is typically found in a contemporary high school. This setting comes with problems: Young Adult novels, particularly those that are set in high school, tend not to engage with the themes featured in these plays and adaptations. Characterisation plays a large part in making this

setting work. Both novels have shifted focus in terms of the characters: whereas Shakespeare's plays revolve around the men in the stories, many Young Adult adapters choose to place a female character at the centre of the story, instead. Rather than Macbeth, we follow Lady Macbeth and instead of Hamlet, we follow Ophelia.

So far, three important fields of interest have emerged and these will in fact form the basis of the individual chapters: after the first chapter which will provide an overview of the existing research and how this thesis will align with those existing findings, a chapter on the *Macbeth* adaptation and a chapter on the *Hamlet* adaptation will follow. In these two chapters, and in the final chapter that will combine the observations and analyses set out in chapters two and three, the focus will be on setting, characterisation, and community. Each of those fields of interest will make up its own subsection in the chapters in order to finally, when all information is combined, answer the question "how does the addition of community alter (or, hopefully, increase) the agency exercised by the main characters of Young Adult adaptations of *Macbeth* and *Hamlet?"* Analysis will point out that community plays a vital role in the agency of these characters, and that not all community is adapted equally: In Hannah Capin's *Foul is Fair,* community is added in the adaptation whereas Dot Hutchinson's *A Wounded Name* keeps Ophelia's isolation intact, showing the community that exists in her world that she cannot be a part of, and indeed this emphasises Ophelia's emotional response to that isolation.

Chapter One:
Adapting Articles

There is no denying that Shakespeare still intrigues both audiences and adapters, even over four hundred years after the initial performance and publication of his works. Indeed, "[t]here is a significant Shakespearean presence in contemporary fiction and it has an audience" (Hartley 6). Specifically, Laurie Osborne comments on "the avalanche of YA *Romeo and Juliet*, *Hamlet,* and *Macbeth* novels" ("Gender and Sexuality in Adaptations" 10). Examples from these last two make up the main body of this thesis and so the practice of adapting Shakespeare, specifically when aimed at teens, needs to be examined. Though my specific research is not yet well represented in academic scholarship, there are many articles to be found that share borders with my work. Articles might comment on adaptations of other plays (such as Osborne, "Gender and Sexuality in Adaptations"), but provide insight into both the workings of and trends within these adaptations. Though not directly applicable, articles that comment on adaptations in other genres (such as Hateley and Osborne, "Romancing the Bard") and articles that comment on the habit of adapting Shakespeare in other mediums such as TV and film (such as Finkelstein, Cochran and Mišterova) prove useful when put together. Combined, these articles provide background for the work in this thesis despite differences in focus and medium.

Scholarly criticism on the adaptation of Shakespeare's plays is as abundant as the appropriated stories are. Not all of this pertains specifically to the adaptation of Shakespeare's plays to Young Adult fiction novels, and some of it does not even deal with adaptation as novelisation at all. Still, they reflect a certain culture, or attitude, which relates to the adaptation of Shakespeare's works, regardless of what shape that adaptation takes. To begin with, many scholars comment on the habit of adapting Shakespeare due to his cultural authority (Balizet 3; Finkelstein 131; Hateley 133; Kamps 27). However, the manner of adaptation—which will be discussed in more detail further on in this chapter—can contribute

to "the original [moving] into the background" (Hartley 3). Some might consider adaptations "low-value (and unnecessary) interpretations of existing valuable work" (Mišterová 209). Ivo Kamps, in the introductory chapter of Desmet and Sawyer's *Shakespeare and Appropriation*, describes an "anxiety over the destruction and mutilation" of Shakespeare's "literary body" (23), in line with ideas about the "dumbing down" of Shakespeare's work when these are adapted (Detmer-Goebel 117, Finkelstein 131). Kamps then aims to relieve some of this anxiety by suggesting that "[e]very reading of a Shakespeare play […] is already an appropriation [and] an interpretation" (28). To interact with Shakespeare is to adapt Shakespeare. Some critics argue that adapting Shakespeare is not only commonplace, but indeed important. The precise content, genre, or medium of these adaptations do not matter: "It is more important *that* one writes about Shakespeare than *what* one writes about him" (Kamps 28). Hartley and Hateley also argue in favour of freely adapting all that can be adapted, suggesting that "Shakespeare's work is free to rethink, refashion, reimagine" (Hartley 2), and that "Shakespeare is not a static cultural authority weighed by centuries of interpretation and appropriation; instead, he is to be argued with and against" (Hateley 142). According to Balizet, some of that very "cultural authority" adaptive authors seem to rely on now actually stems from "youth market Shakespeares" (6). The teens reading Shakespeare are keeping him young.

The manner Shakespeare is adapted has undergone change, though. Adaptations of the Bard's body of work have moved from "retelling to reversion" (Osborne, "Gender and Sexuality in Adaptations" 3). Whereas older appropriations merely "allude to Shakespeare", they now "wrestle with him, they claim him, they tease him, they revise and reconstruct him, fight with him and celebrate him" (Hartley 7). Indeed, the many changes made by adapters are "things Shakespeare did to his own source materials, things which are and always have been

at the core of the writer's constructive enterprise" (Hartley 7). Adapting Shakespeare is thus commonplace, necessary, and entirely Shakespearean.

Why *adapt* Shakespeare?

In the realm of Shakespearean adaptation, Young Adult adaptations of Shakespeare plays in particular are "creative responses" (Detmer-Goebel 117) that "revise Shakespeare" (Osborne, "Romancing the Bard" 44) and build on the Bard's plots or characters to create "coming-of-age stories" that include "a path toward agency and autonomy" (Hateley 129). This path to agency is an important part of the adaptations analysed in this thesis.

Andrew Hartley, in the introduction to his book *Shakespeare and Millennial Fiction*, considers modern novelisations of Shakespeare's work to be a "hybridity of scholarship and artistic production" (11), which mirrors the sentiment expressed by Flaherty who asserts that "YA adaptations serve as critical extensions of Shakespeare's play, enacting both fictional creation and scholarly reflection" ("Daughters Lady Macbeth" 113). For the purposes of this thesis, adaptations will not be considered modes of scholarship, but rather viewed mainly in line with Detmer-Goebel's emphasis on creativity. This thesis considers Shakespeare's plays as frameworks authors play around with, rather than rely on. Adaptations, for the purposes of this thesis, are *not* to be considered "'bridge' texts" (Detmer-Goebel 116) that primarily intend to "[guide] young readers to an original version" (Mišterová 209). Instead, this thesis agrees with Hartley's criticism that for examinations of Young Adult adaptations, "the critical emphasis is on pedagogy and the use of modern adaptations to open up the Shakespearean originals to young people, rather than on those originals or the subsequent adaptations as ends in themselves" (3). Indeed, despite the "moralizing tendencies of YA fiction" (Flaherty, "Daughters Lady Macbeth" 104), Young Adult adaptations of Shakespeare's plays are valuable in their own right as they "[reflect] upon ongoing social and ethical issues"

(Osborne, “Gender and Sexuality in Adaptations” 3) and “provide particular insight into the precise specifics of a previously unknown cultural moment” (Hartley 4). Though they might inform their audiences’ opinion on certain social matters, it is not the primary goal of these novels to educate the teenagers reading them. Instead, these adaptations offer “sequels, prequels, concurrent narratives, and even telling combinations of the three” (Osborne, “Gender and Sexuality in Adaptations” 19). They can be seen as additions to the existing literary universe of the plays they adapt, or as responses to them. Some might insert Shakespeare as a character (Hartley 3, Jacobsen 46), some use the setting of a high school which is due to perform the Shakespeare play that the novel revolves around (Osborne, “Gender and Sexuality in Adaptations” 5), some imagine children for existing characters (Flaherty, “Daughters Lady Macbeth” 103; Osborne, “Gender and Sexuality in Adaptations” 14) and “some of them update the settings and language of particular plays, rethink his plots or shift the balance of perspective from the main character of the original, to someone else” (Hartley 3). Particularly this shifting of perspective, and therein the assigning of a new protagonist, will be analysed in this thesis.

In this phenomenon, the aspect of gender requires special emphasis. Many Young Adult adaptations, including the ones this thesis revolves around, focus on gender (Osborne, “Gender and Sexuality in Adaptations” 4). Adaptations commonly contain female characters who have been invented to provide a wider range of relatability (Flaherty, “Daughters Lady Macbeth” 104) or the gender structures that do already exist in Shakespeare’s works may be inverted (Hateley 130; Osborne, “Romancing the Bard” 44). Through their reworking of gender-structures, these adaptations “invite readers to reconsider the place and significance of young women in Shakespeare’s plays” (Hateley 130). In feminist considerations of modern movie adaptations of these plays, the importance of community and “female solidarity” is stressed (Clement 9, 11, 15). Many Young Adult adaptations, despite their emphasis on girl-

power and the importance of friendship, will still feature romance, too: writing specifically on historical romances, Osborne comments on these novels' emphasis on marriage as the "goal and resolution" ("Romancing the Bard" 43). Though the teenaged characters in the adaptations of this thesis do not necessarily covet marriage, many Young Adult adaptations are made up—at least partially—of a romance plot (Hateley 129), and *Foul is Fair* and *A Wounded Name* are no exceptions. The centring of female characters as described above also applies to the chosen texts: Lady Macbeth, Ophelia, and their adapted characters in these two contemporary works will be the stars of this thesis.

Lady Macbeth

Lady Macbeth, one of the most re-interpreted characters in the literary canon, divides scholars. Surely, "in the centuries since the play was written, both Macbeth and Lady Macbeth have become bywords for tyranny and cruelty" (Hopkins 145). Is it precisely that associated tyranny that pushes the trend, in adaptations, to 'soften' Lady Macbeth? To attempt to justify her actions, in academic articles? Lady Macbeth deals with the deterioration of her mental health (Couche 146), and—as analysis op Ophelia will also point out—the combination of 'madness' and agency proves problematic. Yet, not all scholars agree on the degree of madness Lady Macbeth portrays, though most do agree that Lady Macbeth is "consumed by her desire for control" (Flaherty, "Daughters Lady Macbeth" 107), that she "clearly seeks power" (Chamberlain 72-73), and that she has been seen as "little more than a synonym for an ambitious, murderous woman, or a desiccated housewife" (Carroll 2). Clearly, Lady Macbeth is a controversial character, in scholarship, in adaptations, and even in the universe of Shakespeare's play itself. There is much to be said about the dynamic of power in *Macbeth*, most of which pertains in one way or another to Lady Macbeth. Flaherty asserts that most of Lady Macbeth's life is spent "focusing on the power of the men in her life

(and her power over them)" ("Daughters Lady Macbeth" 108). Chamberlain expands upon this idea by claiming that "Lady Macbeth ultimately refuses masculine authority" (Chamberlain 79). Instead, Lady Macbeth—according to Chamberlain—"craves" a gender identity that exists outside of the "cultural constraints governing women" (Chamberlain 80). It may then come as a surprise that the way in which authors attempt to "rehabilitate" (Carroll 1) Lady Macbeth is by "[reinscribing] her in patriarchal discourse" (Carroll 12). A lot of "rehabilitation" is done through a complete make-over of Lady Macbeth which leads, in many of these adaptations, to "a repentant, heroic, even innocent—and above all, a maternal—Lady Macbeth" (Carroll 2). The final addition in Carroll's quote points to an obsession with Lady Macbeth's maternity is often referenced (Chamberlain 73; Couche 137; Flaherty, "Daughters Lady Macbeth" 102), yet for this thesis, focused on *teenaged* adaptations of these characters, the question of maternity becomes irrelevant. Adapters and scholars alike have placed significant emphasis on Lady Macbeth's motherhood: through the creation of daughters for Lady Macbeth to mother (Flaherty, "Daughters Lady Macbeth" 103), and through analysing and over-analysing Lady Macbeth's statements regarding smiling babes and her unsexing, respectively. This thesis will have to explore what remains of the issue of maternity when it is side-lined as it is in *Foul is Fair.* Another commonly adapted plot aspect pertains to Lady Macbeth's demise. As is the case for Ophelia, also (Detmer-Goebel 116; Flaherty, "Reviving Ophelia" 11), "adaptations for the most part also deny Lady Macbeth the option of suicide" (Carroll 11). Such removal of suicide can be problematic in terms of our understanding of a character's agency: though horrible, suicide presents a strange pinnacle of autonomy. How does the removal of this option—though it provides the characters with a happy(er) ending overall—affect the agency of both adapted Ophelias and adapted Lady Macbeths? Carroll summarizes that "[m]any of the efforts described here not only inadvertently deny agency to Lady Macbeth and imagine her in feminine stereotypes, but also more generally attempt to

normalize and domesticate the play's wildness, its strangeness, its ellipses, refusals, and erasures" (12). I agree with Carroll in the implied assertion that in order for an adaptation of *Macbeth* as a play, and Lady Macbeth as a character, authors should not shy away from exaggerations. The wish to rehabilitate a character in a new adaptation is a perfectly explicable one, but to attempt justification—through posthumously and anachronistically diagnosing a character with "postnatal psychosis" as in Couche's *A Mind Diseased* (137) – may do more harm than good.

Ophelia

Although she has, in recent years, become a cultural icon, Ophelia has not always been someone to look up to. For much of Shakespeare's play, she is a "passive victim" (Detmer-Goebel 126), everything but self-assertive, though every bit "self-destructive" (Cochran 206) and "shaped to conform to external demands, to reflect others' desires" (Dane 408). From these descriptions, Ophelia has barely been anyone at all. Perhaps this lack of a distinct, intrinsic personality is what has made her so popular to adapt. Dane describes Shakespeare's Ophelia as "a vessel into which an identity has been poured" (412). Though Dane reflects here on the way the men in Ophelia's life seem to decide her life for her, this quote also provides a good summary for Ophelia's treatment post-Shakespeare: she has become somewhat of a blank canvas onto which adapters project whatever it is their story needs their Ophelia to be. The adapted Ophelias can simultaneously be tragic and heroic. Indeed, Ophelia has become a "synecdoche for girlhood in crisis" (O'Neill 8) and she is "emblematic of women denied agency, whose stories must be told and told again in order to foreground the long history of gender inequality" (O'Neill 11). Her tragic association with passivity and lack of agency explains also the trend among adapters to re-imagine Ophelia as a strong female character. Even in the Shakespearean setting, Ophelias reworked by contemporary authors

talk back to Hamlet and challenge his misogyny, refuse "to be defined only through their relationships with the male characters" (Flaherty, "Reviving Ophelia" 4), and become "a young adult capable of struggle" (Detmer-Goebel 126). Authors "re-create Ophelia by presenting her as a capable, headstrong teenage girl who can survive the painful circumstances that drive her Shakespearean predecessor to madness and early death" (Flaherty, "Reviving Ophelia" 2). Considering that the research question of this thesis revolves around how the character changes as her environment does, it is important to note what changes audiences are already used to seeing in adaptations of Ophelia as a character. Her supposed increase in agency, troubled by the association of madness (Dane 412; Detmer-Goebel 120), provides an interesting contrast to that of Lady Macbeth and her adapted reiterations.

All's well that ends well

Despite a lack of articles that fit into the niche of this thesis precisely, enough has been written about Shakespeare, adaptation, Young Adult novelizations and the common practices within these to reach an understanding of what to expect from a YA novel that has its roots in Shakespeare's plays. Agency and how it changes plays a large part in many of these adaptations, especially when coupled with gender. Ophelia and Lady Macbeth in particular represent two ends of a spectrum on which all of Shakespeare's female characters reside. Not all trends in rehabilitating and re-imagining characters are equally effective, nor are they equally common. However, the fact that these rehabilitations and re-imaginings are taking place at all, point to the fact that Shakespeare's heroines (and anti-heroines) are getting the attention they deserve. This thesis, though, will highlight spaces in which these female characters could yet receive *more* attention as it works with a genre that is under-represented in academic writing thus far.

Chapter Two:
Macbeth: Foul is Female

Shakespeare's Scottish play is concerned with power, succession, and violence. These themes are triggered as a result of the Weird Sisters' prophecy: only after Macbeth reports in a letter what has been promised to him does Lady Macbeth start plotting the demise of the current king in order to clear the path for her husband (I.V). The events of the play are bloody and Lady Macbeth's character leaves a lot of space for speculation: is she the driving force behind the horrors of the plot? Was this prophecy just the push she needed to reveal her true, intrinsically evil self? Without rewriting Shakespeare's work, there will never be an answer.

Luckily for those interested in the extent of Lady Macbeth's evilness, Hannah Capin has done just that and provides a much clearer picture of a re-imagined Lady Macbeth in her 2020 novel *Foul is Fair*. Though *Macbeth* is "a play that has no existing social spaces for young, unmarried female characters" (Flaherty, "Daughters Lady Macbeth" 104-105), Capin has adapted the play for a Young Adult audience and focused her narrative on exactly this type of character missing from Shakespeare's play. Moved from medieval Scotland to contemporary California, Capin's version centres sixteen year old Elizabeth Jade Khanjara, with the help of her "coven" of friends consisting of Jenny, Summer and Mads. These girls, however, are not concerned with a popularity contest, as the setting might lead one to assume. Instead, they are out for revenge.

Setting

In changing the catalyst of Shakespeare's work from a magical appearance of three witches to the horrible events of a prep school party, the genre of the narrative changes. Not only does Capin present a contemporary Young Adult novel based on an Early Modern play, she also changes the characters' efforts from a tragedy of ambition to a revenge tragedy. As will become apparent through further discussion of the events of the novel, "[r]evenge tragedies

feature someone who prosecutes a crime in a private capacity, taking matters into his own hands" (Maus ix). Though typically this is done "because the institutions by which criminals are made to pay for their offences are either systematically defective or unable to cope with some particularly difficult situation" (Maus ix), in Jade's case her need for revenge stems from pre-existing violent fantasies, rather than distrust in the authorities. This need for revenge specifically originates from the events of the St Andrew's Prep party and the systematicity of the attack: the guys in Duncan's pack worked together to facilitate the rape and each carries the responsibility for the part they played. The institution Jade distrusts is the patriarchy as it manifests through this attack, the system she challenges is this group of boys as a well-oiled machine. Nonetheless, her story "[testifies] to an apparently ineradicable yearning for justice […] But at the same time, [it registers] a troubling discrepancy between the desire for equity and the means of fulfilling that desire" (Maus ix). As the following section will illustrate, such a discrepancy certainly exists in Jade and her plans.

Unlike in Shakespeare's *Macbeth* which focuses on Lord Macbeth and how the events of the play affect him, the Lady Macbeth character is the focus of Hannah Capin's reimagination, both in terms of the main character and the narration. The distinct narrative style of the novel, as well as Jade's conviction of her plans, her actions, and her ultimate goal provide the reader with insight into this re-written Lady Macbeth from the very first page onwards.

Another change to the setting of the novel in terms of Jade's environment is the addition of secondary characters—ranging from adaptations of the Witches in Shakespeare's play, to the invention of parents, or expanding upon smaller female parts, such as McDuff's wife who is reimagined here as Piper. With the events of the novel no longer taking place at an isolated medieval Scottish castle, but rather a contemporary Californian prep school, it makes sense that there would be a larger cast of secondary characters to fill this school with—

even if very little of the story actually pertains to this physical setting at all. Many of these secondary characters, however, seem to do little more than just that "filling": most of them are one-dimensional, with some of them—specifically, the group of boys targeted in Jade's revenge—barely distinguishable at all. Jade is the only character in the novel that feels fleshed-out, which is in part due to her narration: readers are taken along by Jade and convinced of her convictions due to the lack of push-back from within the novel. None of the characters seem to ever oppose Jade, other than Piper who protests at times, but never truly interferes. Even the witches, Jade's most precious friends, only ever support her. When hatching her plan, Jade asks her friends "Are you in?" "even though [she knows she doesn't] need to" (39). As a result of this agreement of the supporting characters, a certain vacuum is created in the novel where Jade's mindset and reasonings are the only one the audience is presented with – making her plans seem like the only possible solution to her problem, at times. Truly, the focus of this novel is Jade and her goal: Hannah Capin provides her audience with blinkers that block out anything that is not her iteration of Lady Macbeth.

Characterisation

"[M]any adaptations of the past century […] move far away from earlier texts in which 'Lady Macbeth' is little more than a synonym for an ambitious, murderous woman, or a desiccated housewife" (Carroll 2). Instead, readers of such adaptations are met with "a repentant, heroic, even innocent –and above all, a maternal – Lady Macbeth" (Carroll 2). From the onset, it is obvious that Capin's adaptation is unlike others. Capin's Lady Macbeth is *not* maternal, nor repentant, heroic, or even remotely innocent. From the very first page, Capin puts her interpretation of the character on full display: Elle, as the main character goes by at this point in the story, describes herself and her three friends as "sirens, like the ones in those stories. The ones who sing and who make men die" (1). Though Elle/Jade acts

murderous ‘only’ in response to what happens to her, as indeed Capin has rewritten Macbeth to be a revenge tragedy, this description of herself and her friends is given before the events of the party: this Lady Macbeth fantasizes about violence and murder well before she has been given any reason to.

When it comes to adapting Lady Macbeth, typically a lot of attention is paid to Lady Macbeth’s maternal side, and the distinct lack thereof: according to Chamberlain, “Lady Macbeth’s reference to motherhood and infanticide near the end of act one of *Macbeth* remains one of the more enigmatic moments in all of Shakespeare’s drama” (72). Many adaptations reimagine her as a mother, in order to answer “[t]he question of Lady Macbeth’s children [which] taps into the anxiety about femininity and procreation that resonates in Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*” (Flaherty, “Daughters Lady Macbeth” 109). This transformation into a mother also actively works to ‘soften’ her character, to separate Lady Macbeth from the notions of tyranny and regicide. This obsession with maternity (Carroll 6) does not apply to Capin’s *Foul is Fair,* with Lady Macbeth reimagined as a girl who has only just turned sixteen, there is no societal expectation of maternity. The matter of babes with dashed-in heads is therefore irrelevant.

Nonetheless, the consideration of Lady Macbeth’s comments about hypothetical infanticide as a marker of her character does still apply:

> I have given suck, and know
> How tender ‘tis to love the babe that milks me:
> I would, while it was smiling in my face,
> Have plucked my nipple from his boneless gums,
> And dashed the brains out, had I so sworn as you
> Have done to this. (I.VII.54-59)

In Early Modern considerations of motherhood, "only a mother, and a virtuous one at that, could adequately care for her child" (Chamberlain 75). Lady Macbeth's childlessness is a marker of her characterisation: she's not "virtuous" enough to 'deserve' a child. Better yet, the text implies that she *had* a child, but is now without, leading to the conclusion that she could not "adequately care for her child" as a result of her lack of virtue. "Indeed, the infanticidal mothers represented in the assize records are all Lady Macbeths, who would lightly dash out the brains of the babes entrusted to their care" (Chamberlain 77). Though maternity does not play a part in Jade's characterisation, other manners of sign-posting her cruelty are included in the text. From the very first page onward, Jade and her coven are obsessed with the idea of "[making] men die" (Capin 1). The unwarranted male-targeted violence replaces the wailing babe in terms of indicating cruelty in these characters.

In *Foul is Fair*, Jade plans her ascension to the social throne as part of a revenge plot after she is sexually assaulted during the St Andrew's Prep party. As seen more often in Young Adult adaptations of *Macbeth*, the "vulnerability of […] young women […] provides some context for Lady Macbeth's desire to achieve power throughout the play" (Flaherty "Daughters Lady Macbeth" 107). Though Flaherty writes about added characters of lower social classes who face adversity,[1] the same applies to an aged-down Lady Macbeth who faces adversity: the sexual assault that occurs during the party provides a 'rise-from-the-ashes' opportunity for Elle/Jade. As part of her plan in response to this, she creates her prophesising witches, who recite the lines she feeds them: "'Tell us what you want,' says Mads. 'We'll do it, Elle'" (5). When Elle/Jade decides on her new name, all three girls echo the new name, which Jade considers "magic, dark magic. A spell from my three witch-sisters" (6). When Mads, Jenny, and Summer are at St Andrew's to carry out part of the plan, Jade stops and reminds herself that "first it's my coven's turn. Everything has to happen exactly

[1] Flaherty specifically writes about Caroline B. Cooney's *Enter Three Witches* and Lisa Klein's *Lady Macbeth's Daughter*.

the way I want it" (55). Jade texts them the exact signal, and her narration of their performance indicates she is the mastermind behind it all: before the girls speak, Jade observes that "[t]hey say it together" (57), seemingly already knowing what "it" is before the words are spoken. Indeed, the coven is not just any coven, but Jade's coven specifically (58).

When her plans are first put into motion, Jade does not even have her Macbeth yet, and indeed when she finds him, she shapes and moulds him to exactly what *she* needs from *him* in order to execute her plan. Though her plan is a reaction to something done to her by others, the ambition behind her plan is all hers, fuelled by revenge, and her Macbeth is little more than an accessory. Herein Jade differs vastly from her Shakespearean counterpart: Lady Macbeth's plan to overthrow the king and rise through the ranks is merely a response to the vision of others, of the Weird Sisters. Though she instigates the violence and tells her husband to "[l]eave all the rest to [her]" (I.V.72), the inspiration came from outside of Lady Macbeth. In Jade's case, the inspiration came from within. Between Lady Macbeth and her husband, Lady Macbeth is the more ambitious one, but when compared to Capin's reimagination, Shakespeare's character, in terms of ambition and violence, cannot keep up.

All the deaths in *Foul is Fair* can be attributed to Jade: in most cases, she orders or orchestrates the kill, and for Duncan and Piper, Jade lands the fatal blow. Lady Macbeth, in her story, instigated all of the violence in the play, but only actively plans the King's death. The chamberlains who die in *Macbeth* after the discovery of King Duncan's lifeless body are murdered by Macbeth (II.III.103-4), as is young Siward when he opposes Macbeth and calls him an "abhorrènt tyrant" (V.VII.10-5). Macbeth also orders the murderers to kill Banquo and Fleance (III.I), as well as MacDuff's family (IV.I.148-54). Lady Macbeth's plan was to kill Duncan and blame it on the chamberlains (I.VII.61-72)—there was no reason, in her plan, for them to be murdered. Lady Macbeth pushes Macbeth initially, but it is he who repeatedly crosses the line. Indeed, Shakespeare insists on "Macbeth as murderous" (Hopkins 145),

whereas in *Foul is Fair*, Jade is the criminal mastermind and who will bear the responsibility for the deaths in the story.

Jade, after the events of the party, transfers to St Andrew's and is 'the new girl' there. The Macbeth character (Mack), as far as we know, has always been at St Andrew's and has already cemented his social position there, high up in the ranks of Duncan's boys. Compared to him, then, one might expect the rest of the St Andrew's crowd to be wary of Jade as the new girl. Instead, it seems any potential qualms about Jade are immediately eased precisely because Mack welcomes and trusts her: "The golden boy and the new girl, turning gold now, too. Alchemy by association" (Capin 61). Jade is shown to be incredibly aware of her image and the impression she leaves on people. Most of the characterisation of Jade as an evil person, or a "cruel bitch" (11), in her own words, comes from Jade (1, 8, 10, 11, 16—to list some examples).

As much as Lady Macbeth sees blood on her hands, she is not physically guilty of any crime. The same cannot be said for Jade. Jade's first kill is the former version of herself. Jade kills Elle when she cuts her hair, dyes it black, and changes her name. In a way, this is Elle/Jade's "unsexing": throughout the novel, readers get the sense that Jade is very aware of how she is perceived and what is expected of her—of girls, in general. By trading in her "splintering platinum blonde" hair for short, black hair (3), Jade changes what other people see and therein changes their expectations. Lady Macbeth's speech addressed to "spirits that tend on mortal thoughts" (I.V.39-40) has been read as an "attempt to seize masculine power to further Macbeth's political goals" (Chamberlain 72) and indeed, Jade needs to "unsex" herself in order to continue with her plans: she needs to change her looks so that the boys of St Andrew's cannot recognize her. Again, her need for this conspiracy with the demonic comes from within herself: she is not (yet) acting in response to an incapable partner. Moreover, "Lady Macbeth's 'unsex me here' speech tends to deconstruct gender categories,

unfixing the rigid cultural distinctions as well as attributes which define male and female" (Chamberlain 79). For Jade, too, her "unsexing" in the form of a make-over, deconstructs gender: it divides "good girl" and "bad girl". In Young Adult fiction, "bad femininity equates with criminality, punishment, and social exclusion, while good femininity equates with romance, reward, and social inclusion" (Hateley 138). These two categories are conflated in *Foul is Fair:* Jade's criminality comes with romance and hinges on social inclusion. Jade performs a type of "good femininity", knowing exactly what is expected of girls, and through this performance she reaches the "social inclusion" that this good femininity warrants. That performance, like her faux-romance with Mack, is part of her criminal plan, however—aligning her with "bad femininity". The punishment and social exclusion that should follow as a consequences of Jade's criminal "bad femininity" comes into play when Jade is taken away in the back of a police car at the end of the novel, though Jade's true fate remains ambiguous. As blurry as the lines between male and female become in *Macbeth* after Lady Macbeth's desire to be "unsexed", the lines between good and bad behaviour become equally blurry in *Foul is Fair.*

This consideration of gender thus proves important. Jade and her friends are eager to set themselves apart from other girls. Jade looks down on the other girls in Connor's clique at St Andrew's, referring to them dehumanisingly as the "flock-girls" (33, 44, 62, for example) and repeatedly rejects the type of behaviour she knows is expected of her as a girl—especially in relation to emotions, specifically crying (2, 6, 43). Jade thus rejects the notion of "other girls" in her understanding of emotions but she sets herself apart through her violent actions, too: "[i]n the world of *Macbeth* […] masculine power is expressed through the use of physical force" (Chamberlain 79). In *Foul is Fair,* too, most of the physical violence is acted out by male characters. Jade orchestrates the kills, but she does not carry them out. Partially, this may be to keep others from suspecting her, to cause the chaos and distrust she needs to

complete her plans. She justifies her actions by claiming that "[k]illing hurts worse if somebody you love is holding the knife" (8). This justification shows her cruelty: merely killing them is not enough. It needs to also hurt emotionally. Nonetheless, the chosen method of having the boys kill one another also reinforces the gendered structures and expectations both the play and the novel grapple with, as well as showcasing Jade's cruelty. With each of the violent plot points that occur, such as Connor's, Duncan's and Porter's deaths (75-77; 162-164; 183-184; respectively), Jade's plan is ever-present. When Banks kills himself (234-238) and when Malcom, Duffy and Mack poison themselves (310-312; 324), Jade is physically present, too, but leaves the action up to her victims. She puppeteers her classmates from the shadows, but rarely gets blood on her hands.

Readers learn quickly, though, that Jade is impatient. At the first party after her soured sweet sixteen, she escalates her ideas rapidly: "Mack is almost mine already; the plan is almost real already; the boys are almost dead already—" (Capin 63). Similarly, in Shakespeare's play, "Lady Macbeth acts on impulse and doesn't consider her actions and their subsequent results with a long-term perspective" (Chamberlain 84). She is short-sighted in terms of the future. Indeed, "Lady Macbeth appeals to the maternal to deny the patrilineal. She would readily kill Macbeth's progeny to secure her husband's succession, but in killing the progeny she must likewise destroy his patrilineage, rendering his short-lived reign a barren one" (Chamberlain 82). Though the entire discussion of maternity does not pertain to Jade, this attitude of Lady Macbeth's is mirrored in Capin's adaptation. Although Jade plans more and can't be considered impulsive, per se, she does also seem to be a short-term thinker: she doesn't stop to consider the consequences of her actions outside of her personal gains, choosing to instead blindly believe the crimes could never be traced back to her—or her friends, for that matter. Even if they do, Jade and her friends believe that even "the shittiest defense attorney in LA could guarantee she'd walk" (139). In her case, this speaks not

necessarily to impulsiveness, but rather her privilege, visible through reference to lawyers and the protection from Jade's parents (Capin 9, 23).

Moreover, Jade—like Lady Macbeth—seems more than willing to sacrifice Mack/Macbeth in order to achieve these short term goals. After Duncan's death—when Banks is supposed to be next—Jade reflects on the damage dealt so far and concludes then that "[w]e'll fall, too, someday. I don't care, as long as they fall first. As long as they know who pushed them" (217). Yes, Macbeth will be king, but there will be no dynasty without children; similarly, Mack and Jade will rule the school, but Jade knows that Mack will not live to reap the benefits, and she might not either. Perhaps the major difference between Lady Macbeth and Jade lies in that community: Lady Macbeth has say, sway and a reputation. She's known in her community and could not transgress in opposition of it without consequences. For Jade, though her wealth and privilege bring her influence, she remains rather anonymous in the St. Andrews community: no one *really* knows who she is.

Community

Does Lady Macbeth know the Weird Sisters in Shakespeare's play? Does she work with them, in and out of the shadows, to set her plan into motion? There appears to be a superficial connection between Lady Macbeth and the Witches through the former's interest and call on the supernatural in the famous "unsex me here" speech. "Come here spirits that tend on these mortal thoughts" could *be* the Witches (Kimbrough 179), or less powerful beings somehow conscripted to them. Though the connection may remain unclear, Lady Macbeth herself should not be considered a witch. The same does not go for Jade: she is part of the coven, along with her friends who she considers her "three witch-sisters" (6). Not only that, she is the clear leader of this coven and therefore perhaps the most powerful witch of all. Witch, here, though, is understood in its contemporary understanding of "powerful woman", particularly

those who wish to live outside of the constraints of the patriarchy—not necessarily as a woman with supernatural powers. The fact that this "Lady Macbeth" is so clearly part of a coven is interesting not just for its potentially demonic implications, but for its stark contrast to the isolated Lady Macbeth that Shakespeare paints. Shakespeare's "Lady Macbeth's first appearance is alone on stage" (Couche 141) and "is characterised by her isolation from female community" (Couche 145). The only moment when Lady Macbeth seems to have support is in her death, when it is announced and

> there is that strange off-stage cry of women at Lady Macbeth's death, which is so brief and unexplicated that it could conjure a sense of either a normal community of women who have attended Lady Macbeth and her household activities all along but remained unseen, or women called in to care for Lady Macbeth in her infirmity, of whom the gentlewoman is only one, or even the witches wailing the loss of one of their own. (Couche 145)

The fact that Lady Macbeth's suicide occurs off-stage and is announced after the fact by Macbeth's servant (V.V.16), points to her isolation. The most dramatic thing that happens to Lady Macbeth is rather literally side-lined and given very little attention by the surviving characters. Even Lady Macbeth's death is "solitary", considered by Chamberlin to be "apt punishment for the havoc Lady Macbeth's infanticidal fantasy wreaks upon the social and political order" (87). This actually speaks to a much neglected aspect of Lady Macbeth's character: her loneliness. Her husband is a warmonger who visits the battlefield more often than the life they share. Jade is very different in this regard: she has friends and support from multiple sources. One very strong indication of the community that Jade finds herself a part of, that seems to both parallel and juxtapose the childlessness of the Macbeths, is the addition of Jade's parents in the novel, who are present in the story, and who support her—perhaps too much.

Reflecting on the privilege mentioned previously, Jade operates throughout the novel with the knowledge (or the assumption) that her parents can bail her out: she describes her father as someone who "will do anything to make sure his daughters get the very best lives money and sweat can buy" (23). Jade's parents are not particularly present in her life, however. When they have dinner together after Duncan's murder, Jade says that it happens "for the first time in a month" (194). Jade's parents are facilitators, Deus-Ex-Moneymakers who give her what she wants (such as a transfer to a private school) and are assumed to be prepared to give her what she needs (such as a fancy lawyer in case she gets caught). They tolerate her vengeful behaviour: when discussing Duncan's death in the same dinner-scene, Jade's father asks her if she knew the boy who died, and what he was like. "The sort of boy with daggers in his smile", Jade tells them. Jade then describes that her parents "watch" her. "Both of them. Their faces give nothing away" (195). She then elaborates by saying Duncan was "the sort of boy who needed a dagger in his ribs to match" (195). Her parents do not seem to respond to this at all. Instead, Jade's mother shifts the questions to ask about "the boy who killed him" (195). After dinner, after their conversation, Jade's parents sit outside Jade's room and wait for her to fall asleep (195-196). Jade's mother's "then it's done?" is ambiguous depending on one's interpretation of "then", here: is she concluding that "it" is done, or is this the final question in a conversation that discussed what else still needed to be done? Either way, this interaction indicates a knowledge or an understanding that more is going on than meets the eye, that Jade is somehow involved, and probably even responsible. The fact that Jade's mother has waited to ask the question until Jade has fallen asleep indicates the protectiveness of her parents: though they understand Jade is involved, they do not want to confront her. Jade's parents support and protect her beyond reason.

Moreover, at school and the social situations with her school 'friends', Jade seems generally well-liked by her peers—as long as they are unaware of what she is really up to.

The friends who *do* know, like her parents, are of course the coven of witch-sisters. These girls are not particularly worried by Jade's plans and behaviours but rather support them and seem concerned, above all, not with getting caught, or Jade's mental health, but with whether or not she is starting to fall in love with Mack. As important as the coven is to Jade, the three girls do operate from the shadows—much like Shakespeare's witches, who "occupy" spaces "at the edges of society, confirming the hostility toward women at Dunsinane" (Flaherty, "Daughters Lady Macbeth" 106). Jenny, Summer and Mads (always together, and always in that order) are involved in the action, but remain rather on the fringe of it all. They exist outside of the world of St Andrew's, appearing peripherally when Jade summons them. It is quite common, now, to attempt to "recast the witches in a more positive light" (Carroll 1) and indeed, in *Foul is Fair*, there is a certain emphasis on the kind of girl power-friendship between Jade and her coven.

In many Shakespearean adaptations "using Shakespeare as a shared language often signals the intellectual compatibility between hero and heroine" (Osborne, "Romancing the Bard" 44). In *Foul is Fair*, most of the obvious referencing to Shakespeare's language is done between the four girls. Jade shows herself to be the undisputed leader of the coven when Mads declares "we're going to kill them. We're going to do exactly what you tell us, until it's done". Jenny replies, "singsong, 'Until the battle's lost and won'"(9), which echoes the opening lines of the Weird Sisters in Shakespeare's play. Later on, too, the girls justify Duncan's killing and Jade's hope to "dream about him dying every night for the rest of [her] life" (139) by commenting that "*fair is foul, and foul is fair"* (139), again repeating the words of Shakespeare's witches. There are more obvious comments shared between the girls that would usually be reserved for the romantic relationships in novels, too: Jade speaks of her coven when she says "[t]hey are mine and I am theirs" (7), and she considers Mads "the most beautiful girl in the world. I love her more than anything" (19). Not only is an overt

connection between Lady Macbeth and the Three Witches established, it is cast as the most important relationship in the novel by coding it as a romantic relationship—so often the focus of Young Adult novels.

Demise

Unlike Lady Macbeth, Jade does not die. She nearly does when she slits her wrists after murdering Piper, and the ending of the novel does imply a potential removal from society quite like death, but Jade is alive by the end of her story. Still, unlike many adaptations that erase, neglect, or ignore suicide as an option (Carroll 10), the choice *is* given to Jade. Both near the end of the novel, and at its very start.

The make-over Jade undergoes at the start of the novel can be construed as a suicide to an extent: Elle, with the "ghost-bright hair from Mads and jade-green eyes from Jenny and contour from Summer" (3) is killed. Elle's metaphorical death allows for the birth of Jade—opposite to Elle in appearance with short black hair and brown eyes, dark lipstick and a new set of nails (3-4). Jade kills a version of herself in order to allow another to bloom. Later on in the novel, once most of the violence has taken place according to the plans and Jade breaks down in the bathroom, she *is* given the choice to take her own life in the literal, physical sense. Arguably, she is saner than her Shakespearean counterpart when she is faced with the choice, but the scenes where Jade cuts her wrists are the least consistent and coherent we have seen her. Jade sees the blood on her hands because it *is* there, she is actively ensuring that it is. Metaphorically, the blood is on her hands too now that she has killed Piper, who Jade did not mean to kill, initially. At first, her list consists of Duncan, Duffy, Connor and Banks (7, 12, 42). Later on, Jade includes Malcolm, Porter and Piper: when Mads accuses Jade of being reckless, due to the "four boys [that] are dead" as a result of Jade's actions, Jade interrupts her to say "Six. It will be six. And one girl" (243). Jade does not appear remotely repentant or

guilty over the deaths of Duncan and his pack, and is resolute in this addition to the plan. Still, when she comes to kill Piper, she seems to feel bad because of the circumstances surrounding this kill. For one, Jade and her support system are convinced that their actions are justified: the boys deserve to die for what they did. Piper, though part of the system, had no active part in the attack on Elle/Jade. Secondly, Jade lashes out in a way the audience has not seen her do before. As much as Jade relies on plans throughout the novel, she seems to abandon these plans in favour of impulsivity when Jade reveals herself to Piper and kills her in response to Piper's revelation that Mack is not as much of a "golden boy" as Jade seemed to think he is (278-281). Jade acts rashly, out of anger, out of hurt, because as much as she had promised her coven that she would not fall in love with Mack—it has become rather apparent by this point that she has, despite her better judgment.

Jade's love for Mack makes her human—the same effect that Kimbrough describes about Lady Macbeth's suicide: it "proves her humanity, for it shows that she was not as tough as she thought she was" (186). Neither characters are above human emotions and responses—certainly not to the extent that they both thought they were. Jade's love for Mack humanizes her, then, and also subscribes her more closely to "traditional YA novels" in which the main character "rebels" "only to choose social norms and romance" (Hateley 185). Capin toys with this expectation near the end of the novel. Throughout, as the plans and the plot progress, more and more reference to Jade's true feelings are made, by both Jade and her group of friends (59, 77, 191, for example). When Jade reveals herself to still be alive after her suicide attempt, it appears she will choose Mack but in the end, she chooses no one in particular as Mack kills himself and Jade is taken away in the back of a police car (322-324). This ending is ambiguous. Throughout the book, Jade and her friends have reassured themselves that their parents' lawyers would solve their problems for them, but the book ends before we learn whether or not this works out. For Lady Macbeth, "her violent death at the

conclusion of an equally violent reign of terror constitutes justice. That she who is the author of such social and political strife should perish at her own blood-stained, now suicidal hands seems appropriate" (Chamberlain 86). To an extent, this sentiment does apply to Jade, too: as much as she thought she would get away with all she has done, it feels justified that she at least got caught. Still, the idea that she will be bailed out by her parents looms over this scene and it is intensified by Jade's admissions as she considers herself to be "free", "everything [she had] ever wanted to be" (323). Like Lady Macbeth, who "dies unrepentant, unable either to wash clean the murderous hands that helped secure Macbeth's unlawful succession nor to yield the agency which enabled her crime", Jade's final words "[speak] to a guilt which cannot be absolved" (Chamberlain 87): she concludes her narration by sharing that she smiles "with [her] fangs showing": "I am the queen and the killer. I am not sorry" (324).

Conclusion

Hannah Capin's version of Lady Macbeth erases the very aspects of her character that others obsess over and highlights instead that which audiences may forget: Lady Macbeth, in Shakespeare's play, is terribly lonely. One almost cannot fault her for resorting to the company of spirits. In creating *Foul is Fair*'s take on the character, the very things that are lacking in *The Tragedy of Macbeth* are added: companions and support. Jade is surrounded by a group of friends who will stop at nothing for her, by parents who are more than capable of bailing her out, and by a boy who does exactly as she tells him. Placing Lady Macbeth at the centre of the story, and ageing her down to only just sixteen, shows the character in a different light and creates opportunities that Shakespeare's character did not have. Simultaneously, though, this Lady Macbeth character is more evil, more violent and more calculating than her Early Modern counterpart. She *does* have the support of a community around her and therefore has no need to resort to the matters she resorts to: her society has alternative

solutions in place—precisely those cops and lawyers she rejects (9). Jade can be read as a story of girl power, friendship and revenge; a contemporary feminist classic, by that description, but like the trap that other girl-ified adaptations walk into, Jade and her friends "are still inhabiting spaces and roles that focus on their relationships with men" (Flaherty, "Daughters Lady Macbeth" 107). Jade's revenge (and thus, her power) is entirely dependent on her relationship to male characters—to cast them both as accomplices and as victims. Even though Jade gets to control her life in a rather literal sense, the ending to her story is decided by men who literally lift her out of these plans and into the back of a police car. As Jade tells herself when the cops close in on her: "what's done is done" (321).

Chapter Three:
Hamlet: To Be or Not To Be a Ghost

The Tragedy of Hamlet concerns grief, revenge, and language and performance. These themes culminate as a result of the death of King Hamlet of Denmark, the discovery of his ghost and the plot against him that led to his death. Most of the play revolves around Hamlet, the Prince of Denmark, and his relationship to his step-father/uncle who has ascended the throne (and King Hamlet's marital bed) as a result of his death. Though women feature in the play, they are not the focus. If anything, women are blamed for much of the goings-on—particularly by Hamlet who proclaims that "frailty, thy name is woman" (I.II.146), and appears, at times, more upset that his mother has re-married *at all*, rather than be upset about the fact this new husband is the very man who murdered her first husband. Ophelia, despite her supposedly privileged position as Hamlet's love interest, also finds herself on the receiving end of his disapproval of women: he seems to distrust her and orders her to remove herself from royal life: "Get thee to a nunnery" (III.I.37). Indeed, "Shakespeare's Hamlet doesn't seem very fond of women at all" (Cochran 205).

Considering then the trends in Young Adult fiction, with its intention of appealing particularly to young girls, it would appear *Hamlet* poses a problem in terms of its adaptability, yet "there has been a surge in children's and young adult literature rooted in *Hamlet*" (Susser 81), seemingly working around this projected problem "by focusing on Ophelia" (Susser 81). Ophelia, as much as she has become a code in literature, "a synechdoche for girlhood in crisis" (O'Neill 8), does not automatically equate an easy path to a girl-power-version of Shakespeare's work. "Indeed, with her identity constructed always in reference to another, Ophelia is, in essence, nothing, an empty cipher waiting to be infused with whatever meaning the particular mathematician should require" (Dane 410). As much as Polonius, Laertes and Hamlet mistreat Ophelia in Shakespeare's play, by pushing their

expectations, desires, and orders onto her, so too do writers who adapt the character: these authors fill the vessel of Ophelia with whatever their particular story needs.

Setting

Dot Hutchinson's *A Wounded Name* adapts Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and moves the tragedy from Medieval Denmark to the modern day United States of America. Instead of a royal court, Ophelia and her friends and family are part of high society, with the adults working in the upper echelons of a fancy boarding school, Elsinore Academy, and the teenagers attending there. Ophelia is made into the main character and embellished as a character through the addition of paranormal capabilities—seeing ghosts, morgens, and other mythical beings. Moreover, Ophelia is cast as the narrator of the story. In that sense, Ophelia seems to be in charge of the narrative. However, like other events that occur at Elsinore Academy, not everything is as it seems. Even though Elsinore Academy should by all accounts be a modern prep school, the curriculum is more than out-dated. Whereas boys are educated to become senators and CEOs, the girls are merely trained to be good wives: "For the male students, success is measured by money and power. For the female students, success is measured by the success of our husbands and how our accomplishments may serve to aid them" (11). This is no doubt in reference to the misogyny that is rampant in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. It appears that adapting a play so entrenched in hatred for women poses a challenge to authors writing for modern audiences. Like many other YA novelists,[2] Dot Hutchinson has chosen to make Ophelia—merely side-lined and barely speaking in the Early Modern play—the main character and narrator of her contemporary version. In doing so, audiences get a chance to see more *of* her and *through* her. Though it inflates her character, this choice adds very little to the story as we know it: Ophelia's narration provides additional insight into other characters

[2] See for example Lisa Fiedler's *Dating Hamlet: Ophelia's Story*, Lisa Klein's *Ophelia*, or Michelle Ray's *Falling for Hamlet.*

through her observations of them ("Laertes needs a reason to do things, just as he needs things to do" (26), "Gertrude is not quite bright" (101), for example) but reveals very little about herself other than the expectations people have of her and the promises she has made them. Moreover, this Ophelia keeps the resolution of the original story's conflict from the audience as the story ends with her. What Ophelia has shown us of herself is questionable and does not allow for a clear picture of her personality to appear. Hutchinson keeps Ophelia a mystery, shrouded in clouds and violets, surrounded by ghosts and medication.

By changing the focus from Hamlet to Ophelia in this adaptation, the genre of the story is changed. Not only is Hutchinson's work a contemporary Young Adult Novel rather than an Early Modern play—though it does honour its source-text's structure by implementing a five part division in the story—it also moves from a revenge tragedy to more of a fantasy novel, or a mythical murder mystery. Ophelia is not personally wronged by Hamlet Sr's murder in the way that Shakespeare's Hamlet is. Instead, this Ophelia is concerned with guilt, morality, and keeping promises—all the while dealing with ghosts, sirens and pixies. Indeed, Hutchinson plays with the aforementioned structure, by adding more before Dane, the Hamlet character, sees the ghost of his deceased father—which occurs very early on in Shakespeare's play. It is not until page 126 that the events on the page mirror the dialogue of Act 1, scene 1 in *The Tragedy of Hamlet.* Up until then, Hutchinson sets up her own world of the academy, complete with a graveyard and its ghosts, and creates *her* Ophelia. Ophelia isn't given enough time with her *own* story, though, in order to warrant her being the main character in the novel as a whole. The first two parts of the five part structure focus on Ophelia, her interactions with the supernatural, her attempts to balance her promises and expectations, but as the story progresses, more and more of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* seeps through and becomes visible. As a whole, most of the action remains with Dane and his conflict with Claudius.

After the novel starts to resemble *Hamlet* in its shape as well as its content, more and more of Hutchinson's original world disappears to the background to make place instead for the better known Shakespearean setting. This clinging to the well-known five-act structure is a safe way of creating familiarity between her work and Shakespeare's, but it is not the only way Hutchinson works with (and from) *Hamlet*. Detmer-Goebel lists the various ways Young Adult adaptations may interact with their source-texts, referring to "earlier novelizations of Shakespeare's plays" that were "seen as 'bridge' texts", or adaptations that "seem to 'talk back' to the source text in order to address or challenge crucial issues such as representations of race or gender" (116). Especially when it comes to adapting Ophelia for Young Adult audiences, "authors may challenge the canonical depiction of the tragic Ophelia," though "another, equally strong impulse seems to be simply to engage creatively with the familiar character and see what might be possible" (116). *A Wounded Name* combines these approaches in that it does play with Shakespeare's work and it adds to it, but it also seems to respond to it, particularly further on in the novel when more and more of Shakespeare's lines work their way into the characters' conversations. This thesis' understanding of adaptations with a focus on creativity, rather than a response to earlier work or even a rectification of it, is hard to rhyme with the movement of the novel from a seemingly original take on the play to a more generic rehashing of it.

Characterisation

In Shakespeare's *Hamlet,* Ophelia's intelligence and naivety is referenced when Laertes and Ophelia discuss her relationship to Hamlet, and Laertes asserts that "if [Hamlet] says he loves [her] / It fits [her] wisdom so far to believe it" (I.III.24-5). Polonius adds to this when he calls his daughter a "green girl" (I.III.101), even "a baby" (I.III.105), when telling Ophelia that "[she does not] understand [herself] so clearly" (I.III.96). Intelligence and experience are

linked here, and Ophelia's own conclusion is the nail in the coffin for her characterisation as a naïve, unknowing person: "I do not know, my lord, what I should think" (I.III.104). Dot Hutchinson's Ophelia is not given the chance to dispute this, or rectify it: despite her story being set at a prestigious academy, the rules of the school prevent Ophelia from truly learning anything—other than flower arrangements and dinner party etiquette (11, 61-2, 115, 298).

This treatment of girls is rather general, then, but Ophelia's oppression in *A Wounded Name* is much more personal, too. Not only do her father and her brother both watch her every step, commenting on everything from her appearance (4, 9) to her sex life (130-2), they medicate Ophelia. She is supposed to take five different pills each day, intended to keep her sane. Ophelia's use of medication, or lack thereof, is a very obvious representation of oppression. Her father forces her to medicate and regularly checks whether or not Ophelia has done so. The reasoning behind Polonius' wish to have Ophelia on these medications is shaky at best: the interspersed flashbacks throughout the novel and in particular the references to "the cold place" (3, for example) combined with Ophelia's fear of being sent back, indicate that she has no say in the matter and instead her father is in charge of these medical decisions. Early on in the novel, it appears Ophelia has internalized her father's fear of her abilities and would rather repress them than learn to deal with them: in a conversation with Horatio, Ophelia reveals this when, upon Horatio's reassurance that her ability need not be madness, "maybe [Ophelia] really just [is] seeing more than the rest of [them] can" (24), she retorts "Or I've more madness than the pills can handle" (24). Not only does this dismiss Horatio's suggestion, it points to a fear of Ophelia's that she is 'too' mad, 'too' different and therefore unable to ever fit in in the world of Elsinore academy, or even the physical world at all.

Unlike Shakespeare's Ophelia, whose deterioration can be considered as a "flight into madness" (Dane 412), Hutchinson's Ophelia has been understood to be mad—and 'treated'

for it—from the onset of the novel. In Shakespeare's *Hamlet,* Ophelia's 'madness' and subsequent suicide are seen as her only acts of agency: Ophelia

> emerges to make her first autonomous choice. Reflecting on the rotten state that robs her of viable alternatives, Ophelia decides that in order authentically 'to be' she must choose 'not to be'. While the notion that suicide becomes the only possible route to autonomy for this woman is undeniably tragic, Ophelia's choice might be seen as the only courageous—indeed rational—death in Shakespeare's bloody drama. (Dane 419)

Indeed, "[t]he idea that Ophelia could achieve freedom through madness or take action through suicide has been praised in the context of performance reviews or feminist criticism as a way of claiming Ophelia as an agent of her own fate" (Flaherty, "Reviving Ophelia" 11). Surely then, when re-writing Ophelia for modern audiences, used to more modes of agency, this suicide presents a problem, narratively. Flaherty comments on two other authors who have reworked Ophelia to a Young Adult context and notes that "[i]n negating both Ophelia's madness and death, they rewrite the very actions that critics have previously used to make the case for an active Ophelia. They replace the passive rebellion of Ophelia's self-destruction with the more active rebellion of self-preservation" ("Reviving Ophelia" 11). How does that work in this novel? Unlike in Shakespeare's work, where the audience is merely witness to the spectacle that is Ophelia through Gertrude's retelling of her demise, in *A Wounded Name* the audience is in Ophelia's head, hearing her voice and therefore experiencing her experience. Despite the fact that the audience is an active witness to the tragedy, it remains unclear whether Hutchinson has gone down the path of "passive rebellion" through "self-destruction" or has indeed replaced it with "the more active rebellion of self-preservation" (Flaherty, "Reviving Ophelia"11): whether Ophelia's decision to go down the lake can be considered her demise in this adaptation remains up for discussion: considering the City of Ys

that, according to Ophelia's mother, exists at the bottom of the lake and the opportunities *that* society may provide Ophelia with, the apparent suicide might be an ascension rather than demise. Still, Ophelia, in having chosen to align herself with her mother and her mother's supernatural world, leaves behind the physical world and appears to have given up on the idea of ever becoming someone like Gertrude.

Like in Shakespeare's work, in *A Wounded Name*, too, Ophelia is a spectacle: her suicide isn't glamorized by Gertrude as the novel ends when Ophelia's (mortal) life does. Still, Gertrude treats Ophelia as a dress-up doll (32, 85, 100, 116) and makes a spectacle out of her while she lives. When Gertrude takes Ophelia out shopping for clothes prior to Gertrude and Claudius' wedding, Ophelia displays her dissatisfaction with the way Gertrude treats her: "Is that what I am? A painting? Will I be framed and displayed somewhere, admired for my silence and the colors across my face?" (85). Ophelia expresses her dislike of the treatment again slightly later and says: "I don't like being her living doll, the human toy to dress up however she wants" (100). These admissions provide more insight into Ophelia's character than audiences of plays are used to. It shows her to be reflective and perhaps silently rebellious. Still, this Ophelia reverts to the familiar, submissive version as she continues: "but I always let her do it. I let her because it gives her pleasure, because it pleases Father" (100). Even when Ophelia is the main character of a story, even when she is the narrator, too, she surrenders to the wants and desires of others.

This surrender extends beyond the desires of others, though. Ophelia seems obsessed with pain and is eager to take it on. Considering the "moralizing tendencies of YA fiction" (Flaherty, "Daughters Lady Macbeth" 14), this aspect of Ophelia's character is troubling, especially when taking into account the often idealised notion of romantic relationships and how that plays out in this novel. Dane is often the source of Ophelia's pain: he holds her hands so tight the knuckles pop (11, 14), or she attempts to take on his emotional distress

(150), or he uses her sexually when he is most distressed. Still, Ophelia seeks him out and wants to be with him, to be there for him. This Ophelia does not fit the bill of the girl-power-version audiences of adapted Ophelias have grown accustomed to.

Indeed, "[l]acking personal ego boundaries of her own, Ophelia seems compelled to absorb whatever psychic identity is thrust upon her" (Dane 410), however it may affect her. This aspect of Shakespeare's Ophelia has not been changed by Hutchinson: Ophelia seems to float between different ideas of what she "should" be and what she could mean to others—particularly, her father, Dane, and the headmaster. In *A Wounded Name*, this male absorption is contrasted through the addition of Ophelia's mother, Morgen Bishop: another person for Ophelia to relate to and feel pressured by. In contrast, Shakespeare's Ophelia is "[m]otherless and completely circumscribed by the men around her, […] shaped to conform to external demands, to reflect others' desires" (Dane 408), and "defined only through their relationships with the male characters" (Flaherty, "Reviving Ophelia" 4). The combination of these two observations point to the potential that adding a 'mother' character to the novel would have: another anchor point for Ophelia to relate to, someone to perhaps rescue her from all these men and their expectations. Ophelia does relate to her mother—too much so, at times—and they share a tragic backstory that provides insight into Ophelia's ability to see ghosts and such, but there is not much respite to be found in the character Hutchinson invented. Not only does Ophelia deal with the expectations of the men around her, she has to contend with the promise she made to her mother as well. Though the mother provides a different perspective, it does not change the fact that Ophelia exists in relation to others. When faced with a choice, Ophelia speaks of the things she "should" do, rather than what *she* believes is right, what she *wants* to do. Ophelia's mother is not physically present in her everyday life as she has become a morgen in the lake that Ophelia was nearly drowned in when she was eight, but she is very

present in Ophelia's mind—as well as in Polonius' and Laertes' minds, partially explaining their protectiveness over Ophelia. Though her mother provides a stark contrast to the day-to-day at the academy and the attached mansions—a wild mermaid type of being who lives without sorrow or any negativity, really, versus the strict expectations of the academy rife with grief, as well as Ophelia's living family's rules for her—Morgen fulfils the same kind of purpose: Ophelia feels a need to please her, to keep a promise made to her, and to live according to her mother's philosophies, as much as it contradicts her father's expectations of her. Indeed, Ophelia juggles the promises she has made to these adults and considers promises to be "a rope around the neck" (136). Particularly the promise Ophelia has made to her mother overshadows all else: to an extent, Ophelia's choices do not matter, carry no weight, because *she* knows she will not be around to suffer the consequences once she joins her mother as a morgen in the city at the bottom of the lake. Cochran describes Ophelia as "self-destructive" (206), which certainly seems apt for Hutchinson's Ophelia who is seen negotiating and bartering between promises, navigating a minefield of expectations. Shakespeare's Ophelia is "[s]coffed at, ignored, suspected, disbelieved, commanded to distrust her own feelings, thoughts and desires, […] fragmented by contradictory messages" (Dane 409). This modern Ophelia, too, is fragmented and contends not only with contradictory messages but more importantly, contradictory promises.

Community

Ophelia is both part of *A Wounded Name*'s society, and on the fringes of it: she describes herself as the type of person who can disappear in a crowd, even referring to herself as "the living ghost in the corner of the room" who "just listens and remembers and never tells anyone what she hears" (150). Ophelia is not the only one who casts her in this role: Laertes, too, comments on Ophelia's hiding in the shadows (131). To Ophelia, her identification with

ghosts is another connection to her mother: she describes herself as “a ghost tied to [her] dead mother in the lake” (115-6), and indeed others consider Ophelia in her mother’s context, too. “Sometimes [Ophelia wonders] if there will ever be a time when [she is] not defined by [her] mother” (54).

It might seem, then, that this connection to her mother is the defining characteristic that sets this Ophelia apart from others, that provides the unique insight into Ophelia’s character that seems to have been missing thus far, but Ophelia’s mother Morgen is not part of the community that Ophelia struggles to fit into. Instead, Morgen is representative of a different, supernatural community—one that Polonius, Laertes and even Hamlet V in his lifetime actively try to keep Ophelia away from. Indeed, despite the invention of the “mother” character, there are still no reasonable female role-models. Rather—because the two older female characters in the book, the only potential role models for Ophelia to look up to, are so diametrically opposed—all that this invention spawns is the possibility of a choice. Ophelia’s mother represents everything wild, “feral” (67, 105, 160), whereas Gertrude “has always been the ideal headmaster’s wife, a woman of poise, grace and the utmost propriety” (6), and Ophelia’s actions over time will align her with the one or the other.

Another addition to the cast of characters are the servants that bustle about the academy grounds. These servants present the opportunity of a chorus for Ophelia to cast her woes onto, to share her feelings with, but they support her only physically. They will make her meals and bring her snacks, but when Ophelia needs support after Polonius dies, they all ignore her. “No one has time to tell little Ophelia what’s going on. They glance at me as I approach or wince when I address them, and then they look away” (261). This emotional neglect, contrasted with their physical care, adds to the division between the ‘real’, tangible world, and the world beyond that, full of things that cannot be seen: emotions, yes, but ghosts

and wailing women, too. The household staff have all made their choice of where to fit in, and it proves incompatible with Ophelia's needs.

That leaves just one option for this Ophelia. Do the bean sidhe, bean nighe, and the other supernatural creatures make up Ophelia's community? It appears that if any female presence comforts Ophelia, it would be that of the wailing women and the washer women. Their "impossible lovely voices" indicate "sorrow" but to Ophelia "whispers seduction" (1). Ophelia ruminates that "[i]t would be easy to cross to them […], to weave and dance beyond the reach of the wrought iron fence and add my voice to theirs. So easy" (2). This kind of longing and admiration reappears throughout the novel (29, 36-7, 92-3, for example). Especially when the neglect Ophelia experiences upon Polonius' death from those that surround her physically is contrasted with the warnings that the washing women gave her, it does seem that if there is any set of beings that look out for her, it would be the supernatural ones. The bean nighe announce someone's passing as it occurs by "[laundering] the clothing and armor of those about to die in battle" (254), and Ophelia views them from her window as they take out clothes to wash: clothes that "refuse to lay flat", "distinctly rumpled" (254). The only character who has been continuously described to be messy and unkept in terms of their clothing amidst proper society is Polonius. This description occurs most obviously when Ophelia describes her father's appearance at the funeral, noting that his suit "has already succumbed to the slight rumple that always envelops him" (6), but is referenced again on pages 7, 187, 220 and 226. The bean nighe warn Ophelia, or prepare her, but she fails to make the connection. Still, these supernatural beings attempt to communicate much more than the house staff do.

Considering the afore-mentioned reference to Ophelia's self-identification as a ghost, she aligns herself with this community much more than she does with the girls at school, with the servants, or with Gertrude. She does also choose to join their world—even if it is only

through a promise kept. Yet this connection proves to be a double-edged sword in the sense that this very community is the reason she is shunned from the 'proper' world; her ability to connect and communicate is labelled 'madness' and medicated away. The bean sidhe, bean nighe and morgens look out for Ophelia and welcome her to their world—after having been the reason she was excluded from the world of her father, brother, Dane and Gertrude.

The added subsections of community, through the addition of Ophelia's mother Morgen, the servants, the supernatural, do not help Ophelia along in the way one might expect to see in a Young Adult adaptation of the famous character. These supposed communities do not aid Ophelia in gaining agency and instead, she remains a victim, is still used by her surroundings, and is mainly concerned with being "a good daughter" to Polonius (116), "a good sister" to Laertes (25), and being "what Dane needs" (42), to the point where these conflicting promises destroy her and she reverts back to the one thing everyone has consistently seen her as: her mother's daughter (144). So much of Ophelia's personality and characterisation remains conditional, dependent on her behaviour and others' perception of that behaviour, and external: Ophelia is defined only through her connections and relationships with and to others.

Conclusion

The setting and structure of this novel do not aid its success. The idea of an academy so entrenched in patriarchy is hard to accept as real, especially in the context of Young Adult novels that typically seek to create kinder worlds for girls, and the five-part structure makes for a story that shows promise at the start, but ends up disappointing. Hutchinson's apparent obsession with remaining as faithful as possible to Shakespeare's *Hamlet,* mimicking the structure and the lines more and more overtly as the story progresses, actually hinders her attempt at delivering a successfully adapted Ophelia. By the end of the novel, Ophelia is

drowned out and her narrative is overtaken by that of Hamlet and his revenge. Yet that narrative does not reach its conclusion because Ophelia finally chooses which community she wishes to align herself with: the story ends when she ends her mortal, physical life.

Though characters have been added and therein, community appears to have been created, there is no space that Ophelia really comfortably sits in. There are communities in the novel, such as Gertrude's upper class society, and the household staff, and even the supernatural beings that appear only to Ophelia, but she does not belong anywhere. She rejects Gertrude's world and the performance that belonging there entails, the household staff shuns her outside of her physical, corporeal needs and the supernatural is the reason she does not fit in to begin with. Still, she chooses to join this last group and therefore one could conclude that they thus form her community. Unfortunately, after suffering alongside Ophelia at Elsinore Academy, readers are not granted the relief of seeing Ophelia create her new life in the City of Ys alongside her mother. *A Wounded Name* proves to be an exception to the rule of Young Adult adaptations revamping Early Modern tragic side-characters to contemporary heroes and increasing their agency through the addition of 'new' characters and community.

Chapter Four:
That Way Agency Lies—A Comparison of the Findings:

The previous two chapters have discussed the way in which authors of Young Adult adaptations of Shakespearean tragedies have dealt with issues of agency and community in their retellings. Both *A Wounded Name* and *Foul is Fair* have placed the female character from the play they interact with centrally in these new versions of old tales—and yet both novels do not yield the same results. In general, Jade has more influence on the events of her life, and therein more agency, than Ophelia does. The considerations of setting, characterisation and community show how these novels differ, and if there is any clear path to increased agency through the addition of community for Shakespearean tragic female characters.

Setting

Both *A Wounded Name* and *Foul is Fair* are adaptations of Shakespeare's tragedies that have been transposed to modern settings. In reviews online, *Foul is Fair* is hailed[3] as a "re-telling of Macbeth for the #MeToo and #TimesUp era" (Muxworthy, 2020). Indeed, the theme of assault—although it is a timeless problem—is a very contemporary concern and by centralising it the way Capin has done in her novel, the contemporary setting of the novel is displayed. The diversity in the most prevalent set of characters also represents this contemporariness, with the coven, including Jade, representing both marginalized LGBTQIA+ identities as well as various ethnic backgrounds. In *Foul is Fair,* the modern setting is represented in multiple ways and can be considered a success. This alteration does not prove equally successful for *A Wounded Name,* the supposed modern setting—evidenced by little more than the occasional reference to a cell phone—does not mix well with the sustained misogyny in the story, nor is it well integrated with the novel's fantasy elements.

[3] See also Ana Grilo's review on thebooksmugglers.com and the review of the novel on kirkusreviews.com.

The novels are also both set at prestigious schools, and yet in both novels, very little educating happens. In *A Wounded Name,* Ophelia tells her audience of the school's practice of educating men to be senators, and educating women to be these senators' wives (11). In *Foul is Fair,* Jade does receive the same education as her male peers as they are in class together, but the focus simply is not on schoolwork. When reimagining a Shakespearean plot for teenagers, the typical court setting of both *Macbeth* and *Hamlet* would need to be changed to something that the intended audience might relate to more. There is also a need, in order for the plot and structure to remain recognisable, to maintain the hierarchy that is prevalent in these court settings. Indeed, *The Tragedy of Macbeth* is concerned with hierarchy—and murder, rather than homework. Of course, hierarchy is something that exists in schools—or at least in fictionalised versions of the American High School with its cliques and popularity contests. Still, the school settings of both novels prove that an Early Modern representation of court is not easily transposed to a high school setting. To Ophelia, the school almost serves as a prison as it is the only place she exists in. Travel does not seem to occur to her and her whole life is tied to Elsinore Academy—despite receiving no real education, especially, by modern standards. For Jade, this is very different: she *asks* to be transferred to St Andrew's Prep school, actively wanting to be there—albeit for all the wrong reasons. Jade spends more time in her story at the school, when compared with Ophelia: Ophelia only speaks of her school and what she learns there, but never describes going to class. Her time is spent in her room or on the school grounds. As for Jade, there is still no reference to classes or learning, but particularly the school sport events provide the backdrop for plot progression. In that sense, the setting of the high school is utilized more in *Foul is Fair* than it is in *A Wounded Name,* and is therefore a more explicable choice.

Hierarchy is not the only aspect of a royal court that can be reflected in these reimagined high school settings, however. Other common aspects of royal courts are isolation

and surveillance: members of a court cannot easily leave their posts and simultaneously, such a setting is hard to penetrate as an outsider. There are few opportunities for friendship or even companionship. Both Lady Macbeth and Ophelia, in their plays, are lonely. Some of this loneliness is eased for the contemporary counterparts by the creation of community in their modern adaptations, but it is precisely this creation of community that highlights the loneliness of the Shakespearean characters. As for surveillance: the attention to detail that both Jade and Ophelia display through their understandings of perceived and performed femininity indicate that they know they are being watched—and that they participate in plenty of watching, themselves. Being concerned with image and expectation, as both of these characters are, is a direct consequence of the surveillance that exists in high schools—of being watched by schoolmates and teachers alike. In turn, this high school surveillance mirrors the close observations that members of a royal court find themselves under: like in high school, there are high expectations and reputations to uphold in a royal court. In that aspect, both St Andrew's Prep and Elsinore Academy echo a royal court—for its hierarchy and its surveillance.

Characterisation

The high school setting in both novels provide an excellent background for a major aspect of teenage life: any concerns of fitting in are easily explored in the halls of high school. Both Ophelia and Jade are shown to deal with this, though with vastly different approaches: Ophelia rejects much about the school and chooses to portray herself unlike other girls. Jade, too, thinks she and her coven are not like other girls and indeed, the coven works to actively distance themselves from the idea of what a girl might be like when they are amongst themselves. Before Jade transfers to St Andrew's, she considers herself and her coven "the very best girls at Hillview" (17), her previous school. In public, Jade is happy to perform a

certain type of femininity because she knows it will aid her in her plan; she performs being "just the new girl" and "an innocent flower" (27), for example. Despite her disdain for the flock-girls, Jade knows exactly how to act around them and what behavioural choices to make. For Jade, then, the school setting makes more sense because she is willing to 'play the game' of fitting in and participating in St Andrews' dynamics and popularity contest. Ophelia is never shown to be learning anything at school and continuously rejects what is expected of her from the Academy, and so considering this as well as the lack of formal education, the idea of a high school setting appears unfitting: she does not fit in and does not attempt to.

The two characters approach the manner of fitting in differently: Jade plays along with expectations in order to achieve her goal, and Ophelia refuses to fit in, but feels the pressure of the expectation to fit in, nonetheless. Though their responses are different, a connection can be established between the pair with respect to 'fitting in', as both show to be very mindful of both their reputations and more broadly, what is expected of them. Indeed, both characters are hyperaware of perception: this ties again to the concerns of the intended audience and their potential insecurities, but it accomplishes more than that sense of relatability. It also serves to aid in the readers' understanding of both the characters themselves, as well as the worlds they navigate. Ophelia shows herself to be aware of these expectations, when she describes for instance that she could never be "that girl" "who could throw herself headfirst into life and forge an unbreakable name, an identity that stands on its own without fathers or brothers or loves who devour and shatter" (299-300). Jade on the other hand actively plays with similar expectations and uses them to her advantage. Jade shows this kind of knowledge through the way she describes herself at times. When she is waiting for future victims to arrive at St Andrews on her first day she refers to herself as an "[i]nnocent little flower with a silver crucifix" (27). She is performing the type of girl she is, here, and manipulates the others into

viewing her a certain way with this knowledge. She performs a type of femininity that will help her achieve her goal: a type of femininity she has learned through observing other girls and through knowing that she, in turn, will be observed, too.

In many ways, Jade is more active than Ophelia, which could be due to Jade being more goal-oriented, too: more than Ophelia, Jade knows and shows what she is working towards. Indeed, the starkest contrast between these two characters and their plot progression is that in *Foul is Fair,* it is rather obvious from the first chapters onward where the story is going to go and what kind of choices Jade is going to make. In *A Wounded Name,* one of the greatest potential frustrations of the novel is that this kind of a throughline does not appear. Ophelia floats from one promise to another, switching her loyalties and priorities based on whoever it is she last spoke to, without really indicating what her story is going to be and what path she will go down. It is not until Ophelia actually *makes* her choice that the audience is informed of it: though there are crumbs hinting at this interest and this yearning for the supernatural throughout the novel, Ophelia's narration is so focused on her father and her brother that it does not seem to be a viable option: the world of ghosts and morgens is inextricably intertwined with Ophelia's mother—who is the opposite of what Ophelia should be like according to her living family. Ophelia is very concerned with being a "good daughter" (116), which cannot co-exist with her interest in the world beyond the physical world. This distinction is presented as an either/or situation, and until Ophelia actually goes down the lake it remains unclear which of the two extremes she will pick. Jade in that sense is more predictable as a character: she accomplishes what she has set out to do.

Community

In both novelizations of these plays, there is a large contrast between the main character and the cast of supporting characters: in *A Wounded Name,* Ophelia remains a flat character whose

story is pushed out as Hamlet's revenge takes over. Even when the plot does focus on Ophelia, most of her narration pertains to others, how they are perceived, and how they might perceive her. The sense of 'imprisonment' of Ophelia's academic career comes back here as the comings and goings of other characters are noted, with Ophelia staying in place. Ophelia appears so used to her every move being tracked, that she does the same unto others. Ophelia is observed, and she observes. The surveillance that would be present in a royal court is inflicted upon, and *by,* Ophelia.

In *Foul is Fair*, the inverse of this is the case: the secondary characters are so superficial in their descriptions and characterisations that, for the reader, there is no alternative to being entirely taken by Jade, to being convinced by her and to adopting—to an extent—her mindset. In part, this is due to the wealth of support that Jade receives: her network provides her with loyalty beyond reason and protects and aids her without question. This unwavering support certainly enables Jade in her plans and even adds fuel to the fire. When Jade is first considering her revenge plot, her coven suggest murder before Jade has even mentioned it: after Jade declares "I'm ready for war" (5), and explains her make-over and her new name, Mads is the one to suggest that "[w]e can kill them" (7). Jade's response that "killing hurts worse if somebody you love is holding the knife" (8) indicates that they are on the same page, and that she had already given thought to this idea but wants to take it further.

Ophelia, like Jade, is surrounded by others, even crowded out at times, but Ophelia remains alone. No one understands her—nor even attempts to. She takes on the concerns and expectations of others through the promises she makes them, but no one is truly there for Ophelia to vent to or lean on. She spends the novel making promises to her community—and breaking most of them—whereas in *Foul is Fair*, Jade's community makes and keeps promises to her. Ophelia is theoretically considered a part of her society, but does not belong

there. Many of her interactions with others revolve around her being used (by Polonius and Laertes to ease their trauma of losing Morgen through controlling Ophelia, by Dane to comfort him and being "what [he] needs" (42)), or around superficial matters (like Gertrude's commitment to dressing Ophelia up). In Jade's case, her connection to her community is much deeper and much more beneficial to her: in the novel, Jade is not really shown to reciprocate her community's dedication to her as such, but it also does not provide reason to assume that Jade is forcing either the coven or her parents to do anything—especially not in the way we see Ophelia's community to in *A Wounded Name.*

In both *Foul is Fair* and *A Wounded Name*, though, these societies and communities remain patriarchal. At Elsinore Academy, this is obvious through the choice of curriculum and the rather literal dictation by father figures—such as Polonius and Claudius. As discussed in the previous chapter, Ophelia exists only in relation to others and particularly in relation to other men: Polonius, Laertes, and Dane all have expectations of Ophelia that she has promised to keep and even Horatio is used as a measure of morality through the many references of him being "the best of us" (10,124, 226, for example). Though Jade is not as literally defined by men—stating very clearly that the events of the party did not change her, and that "those boys didn't turn [her] into anything [she] wasn't before" (16)—she does depend on them. Her theory of killing hurting worse "if somebody you love is holding the knife" (8) hinges on the participation of the four —later six—boys she has chosen to kill. If they do not cooperate, her plan will not work and she will never achieve the revenge she so clearly desires. Both Ophelia and Jade have been placed at the centre of their respective retellings but they "are still inhabiting spaces and roles that focus on their relationships with men" (Flaherty, "Daughters Lady Macbeth" 107).

The extent to which Ophelia and Jade have broken free from the constraints that their Shakespearean counterparts are bound by may still be questioned, then, and that is not the

only ambiguity that surrounds them. In both novels, the endings are ambiguous: Ophelia might be dead, or she might be more free than she was in the mortal world. All the audience is told is that she is "falling and [her mother] catches her, the lake catches [her] and cradles [her] and whispers *mine"* (310). As Ophelia drowns, she does describe seeing "thousands of candles burn, candles in windows and streets and the hands of women who laugh and dance and play and left fear and grief far behind" (310-1). Indeed, Ophelia seems to be welcomed to the lost City of Ys, but by the very end "[t]he rest is silence" (311). Maybe her own worries and concerns are finally silenced, or maybe the candles she thought she saw were a mere trick of light fracturing over the surface of the water: it is up to the reader's interpretation to determine Ophelia's fate. Even in this 'death', the choice is not truly hers.

In *Foul is Fair*, Jade is taken away in the back of a police car yet she considers herself "free", and a "queen" (323), and she may well be so in her mind as the weight of her self-imposed need for revenge is removed with the last murders, but physically, she is less free than she ever has been. Of course, the novel's previous references to lawyers keep alive the hope—or worry—that Jade may yet be released and indeed gets away with her crimes, so like in Ophelia's case, her fate is not set in stone. An interesting similarity between these two endings is that both novels offer that distinction between the physical world and a world beyond that—either in the sense of fantasy by means of ghosts, morgens, and lost cities for *A Wounded Name*, or more figuratively a world of emotions and relief for Jade in *Foul is Fair*. Through this separation of the physical world from the psychological and paranormal, a certain emphasis is placed on the *experience* of the characters, rather than the more objective predicament these characters find themselves in. Jade is arrested, but she feels free for having achieved her revenge; Ophelia can never return to her life at Elsinore Academy, but she has finally made her choice. Perhaps it does not matter that audiences are left to guess what

remains for these two characters; perhaps all that matters is that Ophelia finally made her choice, and that Jade accomplished her goals—regardless of each of those outcomes' costs.

Conclusion

In analysing these two novels, a picture pertaining to agency and community has emerged that is not as straight-forward as it might have initially seemed. Merely the creation of community does not suffice in aiding a character's agency. Rather, the manner in which a character fits in to that community matters, and how they participate in it. Jade is happy to play the part that is expected of her so that she may be accepted at her new school—a crucial step in her revenge plot, whereas Ophelia bemoans being an outsider and does not quite fit in with anyone—which seems to eventually drive her to the lake. In both of these cases then, the matter of fitting in influences (if not determines) the fate of the protagonist in question. The type of community matters, too. In *Foul is Fair*, there are plenty of characters that are like Jade and could be substitutes for her with relatively minor tweaks: her coven has been shown to think like her and she is of comparable socio-economic positions to Lilia, Piper, and the flock-girls. She is not merely surrounded, but surrounded by people who are like her, and people who like her. The same cannot be said for Ophelia who is the only teenaged girl in the whole novel, outside of some brief references to other students. Her only anchor-points in the larger community are either teenage boys, such as Dane, Laertes, and Horatio, or older women such as her mother Morgen or the headmaster's wife Gertrude. All of these differ vastly from Ophelia in varying ways: the setting of Elsinore Academy means that Ophelia could never be considered equal to the boys, and both Morgen and Gertrude have made choices that Ophelia cannot understand or relate to—as far apart as those choices may be. In a sense, the conclusion here is quality over quantity: it matters not that community is added, but the value and relatability that community provides for the main character.

The idea of setting these retellings in a high school seems to be a logical one when considering the demographic that is targeted by these novels, but prove clumsy at times; particularly when the defining traits of a school—typically, it should be a place of learning—do not pertain to the story at all. It does provide a relatively easy way to sketch hierarchy and it mirrors the surveillance common in royal court settings, but the looming isolation gets lost in these stories where more characters share the spotlight and indeed these two protagonists are seemingly never truly alone. The setting of the school works well for the purpose of exposition, illustrating how dynamics between characters and in society develop, evolve, and exist. Still, it is not the ideal substitution of an Early Modern representation of a royal court.

Finally, in comparing the two characters, many potential similarities have been discovered between Ophelia and Jade, yet the essence of each comparison boils down to the fact that Ophelia will merely observe what Jade actively participates in, such as the concerns of fitting in at school, as well as the awareness of perception and expectation. This analysis has set out to show that one of the decisive factors in this difference is the amount of support each character receives: both Ophelia and Jade are surrounded by people, but only Jade is seen, understood, and supported. The degree of support these female characters receive in their Young Adult adaptations of Shakespeare's tragedies decide how successful they are in increasing their respective agency.

Conclusion

After analyses of *Foul is Fair* and *A Wounded Name,* in conjunction with relevant theories of adaptation, a more nuanced understanding of the interaction between agency for female characters and the community they find themselves in has emerged. Having started with a combination of multiple different fields of interest—female agency, power dynamics, the high school setting, and the decisions made about the novels' respective main characters, to name a few—the observations about these fields have combined to answer this thesis's question: "how does the addition of community alter (or, hopefully, increase) the agency exercised by the main characters of Young Adult adaptations of *Macbeth* and *Hamlet?"*

Although the high school setting played a big part in the selection of the Young Adult adaptations that would be used in this case study, this setting has proven a strange choice for these novels. Though the location of a school provides a space for the characters to socialise and provides a backdrop to the hierarchy and, to an extent, the surveillance that exists in the royal courts of Shakespeare's plays, the educational character of the setting is neglected and the isolation—such an important aspect in both Lady Macbeth and Ophelia in Shakespeare's works—hardly appears at all. Jade, in *Foul is Fair,* is constantly surrounded, flocked, by classmates, peers, and friends. Ophelia, too, describes crowds of people, though with the noteworthy addition of the detail that she does not fit in with them. Jade, on the other hand, knows just how to behave how to fit in. This degree of fitting in—perhaps even the degree of *wanting to* fit in—proves important in the considerations here.

In both novels, the community that surrounds the stories' respective main characters is much more visible than it is in Shakespeare's work. Through Jade, Hannah Capin answers the question surrounding Lady Macbeth and her witch-friends: do they work together? Can Lady Macbeth be understood to be one of them? In *Foul is Fair,* the answer is definitely a yes. Jade is surrounded by and supported by her coven. Ophelia in *A Wounded Name,* too, is seen more

in the context of her community than is the case in Shakespeare's work, but the assessment that she is *supported* by her surroundings does not apply here. Rather, Ophelia is controlled and manipulated by the people around her—her father, her brother, the Hamlet character, and Gertrude all have their own ulterior motives. Where Jade can be considered the leader of her immediate surroundings, Ophelia is more of a victim. In that sense, Ophelia's character has not changed much from Shakespeare's version and all the observations of Ophelia as a phenomenon in adaptation do not apply to Dot Hutchinson's version of the character.

The Ophelia in *A Wounded Name* is no "capable, headstrong teenage girl who can survive […] painful circumstances" (Flaherty, "Reviving Ophelia" 2). Instead, she remains the "self-destructive", "passive victim" that Cochran and Detmer-Goebel describe, until the very last moment when suddenly—she is not. The novel does not really work towards Ophelia's choice as a resolution to her conflict, but rather an anguished attempt to re-claim the narrative's attention as her story is progressively pushed out by that of Hamlet and his plot for revenge. In *Foul is Fair,* Jade's choices are consistent and ever-present: readers are taken along by Jade, her coven, and their plans, from nearly the first page onward. Jade's character does not leave much space for questions: she is much more clear-cut in terms of her motivation and ambition than both her Shakespearean counterpart and her contemporary comparative co-star Ophelia.

Precisely those choices and that visibility of those choices allow for the conclusion that Jade exercises more agency than Ophelia does. When compared to the assessment of community in these two novels, a clear correlation then appears between the *quality* of community and the agency a female character in one of these adaptations exercises. Readers *see* Jade make decision, *see* her plans come to fruition and *see* her satisfaction even with the consequences to her actions. Ophelia's choice seems rushed and questionably motivated, leaving readers with more questions about her decision to go down in the lake and without the

same satisfaction as the ending of *Foul is Fair* presents: Ophelia's story ends without reflection. All the audience knows is that she has made her choice—no mention of consequences or results. Though Ophelia has a better chance of a happy ending—if her mother is right about the City of Ys at the bottom of the lake, maybe Ophelia will finally find a place where she fits in and where she can live her life *for her*—the ending for the narrative does not provide the same closure that Jade's arrest at the end of *Foul is Fair* does.

Ophelia's one redeeming feature in terms of agency is that she made her choice by herself and carried out her plan herself. For Jade, this is more nuanced: she relies on the support of her coven in order to commit to her plans and in executing her plans, she relies on the very group of boys she has targeted. Jade's plan would not work without the people around her. Yes, her choices are her own and her support enables her to act upon her impulses, but the downside is that she cannot solely rely on herself. Ophelia in *A Wounded Name* carries out her plan all by herself, proving perhaps to be more self-reliant. For Ophelia, then, the lack of quality in her community ends up as an opportunity for her to grow and gain her independence: she breaks free from all her mortal promises and seems to make her choice to join the morgens in the lake solely on how she feels. For Jade, the quality in her community provides the opportunity to act in a system, similar to the one she targets for her revenge. The boys worked together as a well-oiled machine at the party where Jade was assaulted; Jade and her coven form a well-oiled machine in response. Though analysis has pointed out that Jade is the instigator of her plans, her crimes, and her revenge, there is still room for speculation as to whether or not she would have been able to complete her plans without the help of those around her. To be surrounded by a qualitative community provides agency; but as Ophelia's case proves, this does not always follow the same path.

The consideration of the quality of community is probably the most distinct finding of this thesis: where the research started with the assumption that adding a community for the

main character to exist in would be sufficient to alter the extent of their agency, the conclusion now is that the character needs more than simply existing in a community: they need to fit in. They need to *want* to fit in. The character in the adaptation needs to feel like they are a part of the world they exist in: for Jade, this is definitely the case. Analysis has pointed out that she understands the rules of her society and will play by them in order to achieve her personal goals. Ophelia describes herself as someone who does not really live in the society she is supposed to be a part of: she is a ghost, half-dead and half-living. She does not relate to anyone in the mortal realm and therefore risks fitting in with the paranormal. Again, that is the only choice readers really witness Ophelia making. Contrasted with Jade's many choices and clear decision-making along the way, it is fair to conclude that fitting in to the community created for a character influences the degree to which they act with agency.

Both novels have taken a different approach in adapting community: in *Foul is Fair,* Capin adapts *Macbeth* through the addition of community for the Lady Macbeth character. In *A Wounded Name,* however, Ophelia's community is not changed by Hutchinson, but rather her emotional response to her isolation is adapted. There is a difference in the two novels' interaction with the source-texts, too: In *A Wounded Name,* Ophelia does not get narrative control and is pushed out by Hamlet and his story. Jade is truly in control of her narrative and has been made the main character of the adaptation in every sense of the word. Yet, considering the trends in adapting these characters as described in chapter one, it is noteworthy that both novels work against these trends. No agency is added to Ophelia as she remains mostly passive, nor is Lady Macbeth 'softened: instead she is described as violent from the onset.

In broader terms of adaptation, this thesis reinscribes the notion that adaptations can alter an audience's understanding of the source-text. Though these Young Adult adaptations have been viewed, during research and analysis, with the understanding of an adaptation as a

playground for authors, "free to rethink, refashion, reimagine" the texts they interact with (Hartley 2), the consideration of community for these characters *has* highlighted a painful truth about Shakespeare's characters. This conclusion is concerned with the quality of community, meaning there is a community to analyse and describe. For Shakespeare's versions of these characters, there is no such luxury. Ophelia and Lady Macbeth are both terribly isolated and awfully lonely characters: misunderstood in the context of their plays, and maybe even in their cultural reputations, too.

Considering the field of adaptation, and specifically Shakespearean adaptation, this thesis has contributed a perspective on a so far rather overlooked genre: teen adaptations typically interact with comedies or tragedies that feature romance. Adaptations of plays concerned with power, monarchy and succession have so far received little academic attention. Through the analyses here, a first step has been made to uncover this genre that has been mostly neglected thus far: tragic, ambitious, and lonely characters such as Ophelia and Lady Macbeth absolutely deserve more attention and have been proven to be fascinating subjects for research. Now that Shakespeare's female characters are centred in reimaginations of his stories, that trend deserves to continue in academia, too. Lady Macbeth and Ophelia, merely two examples of tragic heroines who have been either overlooked in these considerations or over-hauled in adaptation—having changed beyond recognition—deserve more attention and therefore more case studies such as this one should be welcomed. Further research could focus on other interesting connections that have revealed themselves during analysis: the connection between femininity and surveillance that is established through these characters' understanding of performing femininity, for example, and indeed the degree of performance of gender—all too Shakespearean, thematically, yet very present in these contemporary adaptations, too.

In short, this thesis has opened the door to a broader kind of Shakespearean Young Adult adaptations to be discussed and analysed. The question pertaining to the balance between community and agency for female characters has been answered with the added nuance that it matters not merely *that* community is added, but *what* that community is like and how a story's characters fit in to the community. To feel supported is to consistently enact one's agency: Jade in *Foul is Fair* can fall back on her friends, her parents, and the peers she has manipulated. Ophelia in *A Wounded Name* is the person manipulated, and the person that others fall back on: she is not given the chance to choose because she is smothered by her surroundings. When a character in a Young Adult adaptation of a Shakespearean power-focused tragedy knows where they stand in their community and who they can rely on, their agency becomes much more visible and therefore, these girls can become more powerful. In these adaptations, to fit in is to stand out.

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