Shakespeare, Humanity Indicators, and the Seven Deadly Sins

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Abstract

Given the current obsession in universities with "Humanities Indicators," this article proposes a new measure for Shakespeare studies: "humanity indicators." It traces the possibilities for such measurement of using different senses of "humanity" derived from the *OED* by examining three different versions of Shakespeare in popular and elite culture: an episode of *Doctor Who* in which the Doctor meets Shakespeare (*The Shakespeare Code*, 2007); an opera in which a version of *Macbeth* is sung by baboons (*The Okavango Macbeth*, 2009); and the graphic novel by Conor McCreery and Anthony Del Col, *Kill Shakespeare* (2010-11). Finally, it turns to the implications for Shakespeare studies of the brutal and racist state law in Arizona that has led to the closure of Mexican-American Studies in schools across the state.

In the last while, the obsession among universities in the U.S., in a mood reminiscent of the "decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed" (Luke 2.1), is that anything and everything must be counted.[1] Humanities indicators are particularly odd since, though scientists and social scientists know exactly how to count output, dissemination, and publication, no one has had much idea how to count what is done in the narrowly-defined humanities and even less idea how to count paintings, lighting designs, or concerts in disciplines in the arts that may or may not be part of the humanities. As Stefan Collini commented presciently in 1989, "Not everything that counts can be counted" (Collini 2012, 20). As early as 1998, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences set up its "Initiative for Humanities and Culture" because "the Academy recognized that the humanities are the only disciplines that lack reliable, comprehensive, and consistently updated statistical data necessary to chart trends and draw conclusions" (Humanities Resource Center Online, 2009). Rather than considering that there may be good reasons, inherent in the nature of the humanities, *why* these disciplines are not amenable to statistical data collection, the Academy has worked with assorted other bodies, like the American Council of Learned Societies

and the National Endowment for the Humanities, "to develop an infrastructure for the compilation, analysis and publication of comprehensive trend data about the humanities"; and in case anyone is wondering what the basis for this urgent need to spend millions of dollars developing such an infrastructure might be, the AAAS explains that "the Humanities Indicators . . . is [*sic*] modeled after the Science and Engineering Indicators published biennially by the National Science Board." We may not be the sciences and engineering, but we can try. Too many of us have suffered under such modeling.

One of the aspects of this work that I find continually startling is the deafness, the sheer inability to hear the implications of the language and acronyms into which this project slips. So the massive 2002 report of the AAAS's initiative was called *Making the Humanities Count: The Importance of Data* (Solow et al. 2002), with no one apparently alert to whether the coercive tone of "making" was to be enforced on a society unaware that the humanities mattered or on the humanities themselves, now to be compelled to spend thousands of hours counting anything and everything. Did no one find it odd that the acronym for the Humanities Indicators Prototype used pervasively in the Project's own reports is HIP? As if there is anything hip, let alone cool about it. As if. One segment of the HIP, part five of the reports on the data gathered in, for instance, its survey of 1400 humanities departments, after segments on "undergraduate and graduate education in the humanities" and "humanities funding and research," is called "The Humanities in American Life," known as HAL — and producing phrases like this from Julie Ellison in her account of "This American Life: How are the Humanities Public?": "encountering the HAL portion of the HIP is like selecting the 'hybrid' view in Google Maps" (Ellison 2009, 1). HAL might suggest to us a certain prince whose journey to rule we follow attentively and anxiously — I leave it to you, when you are bored with this article, to work out what the acronyms HARRY and HENRY might stand for, or, for the really ambitious, FALSTAFF. But HAL might also suggest the rogue computer of Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968), whose dedication to the mission's success and increasing recognition of the malign influence of human error on that mission leads to its breaking the first of Asimov's three laws of robotics and seeking to eliminate the humans on the spaceship. The HAL part of HIP might then be seen as unintentionally imagining an American life in which the humanities would exist without the inconvenience of humans.

My purpose is not to play easy games with factors in our academic activities that, in the middle of the night and through most of our waking hours too, send most of us into unremitting panic. Instead, I want to try an indirection by which we might find directions out. I propose instead that a more reasonable focus would be on how to count humanity, rather than the humanities, how to understand humanity indicators. And, being endlessly intrigued by the stranger manifestations

of Shakespeare in our popular and not so popular cultures, I use four examples of him and what he might represent in such cultures as test cases.

I

> *humanity,* n.
>
> II. Sense relating to human adj.
>
> 3. a. The condition, quality, or fact of being human; human faculties, attributes, or characteristics collectively; human nature. (*OED*)

Shakespeare's army of biographers has unaccountably ignored an extraordinary first-hand account of the opening night of *Love's Labour's Lost*, provided by a doctor who attended it. At the end of the performance, it appears, Shakespeare was called out of the tiring-house, where he had been watching the performance, by repeated cries of "Author, author" from the capacity crowd at the recently-opened Globe in 1599. The evidence puts the conventional dating of the play in question, making it significantly later than has usually been argued and making one wonder why it didn't appear in James Shapiro's micro-biography (Shapiro 2006). And my comment on "opening *night*" was not a slip for "afternoon" — the performance does indeed appear to have taken place at night. It also adds fuel to the argument about the conceptualization of authorship in the period, the extent to which an author-function was crucial to reception, especially as this would appear to be the first time that playgoers called for the playwright at a premiere by calling "Author" — Jeffrey Masten and Jeffrey Knapp might be particularly interested in this. But what is most remarkable of all is the doctor's description of Shakespeare and his humanity. Since even more surprising than the existence of the account is the existence of film of the event, I should allow you to hear what the Doctor has to say. *(A film clip is available in the HTML version of this document.)* This is from *The Shakespeare Code*, an episode of *Doctor Who*, written by Gareth Roberts and first broadcast in 2007. Roberts was advised on the project by the scholar of early modern theater Martin Wiggins, thereby explaining the presence of a character called Wiggins in the cast, as well as the remarkable awareness of current scholarly debate mockingly present in this and other sequences. Shakespeare as celebrity, with a hint of rock-star, makes his very self-satisfied entrance as mocking abuser of his fans — and they love it. Martha's wry comment may stand for that desire to know and fear of knowing, the gap between the character the culture creates and the individual who cannot possibly adequately be that myth, a sense here of the limits that reality always imposes. Witty and deliciously self-aware, *The Shakespeare Code* plays on and plays off the Shakespeare we might desire. But

the Doctor's face when the words this most human of humans speaks only show the limitations of Shakespeare's humanity — humanity but not humility, human but not particularly humane.

II

> *humanity*, n.
>
> I. Sense relating to humane adj.
>
> 1 a. The quality of being humane (humane adj. 1a); (now) spec. kindness, benevolence.
>
> 1 b. An act of kindness or (formerly) courtesy. (*OED*)

The *OED* tries to police a boundary that, of course, early modern English finds impossible to maintain as a secure border — this is a border crossing between human and humane and, given the forms of early modern orthography, there is very often no means of knowing which word is which (we assume two word-forms, they only one), and so always a blur, always potentially a semantic doubleness, always a choice in our modernized texts that risks misrepresenting something that is less an ambiguity than an adjacency, the human and humane modulating into each other, so that to be human ought to be, might be to be humane. Does Prospero speak of Sycorax's "sorceries terrible / To enter human hearing" or "humane hearing" (*The Tempest*, 1.2.265-66)?[2] F's spelling, with a terminal *e*, cannot determine — nor could its spelling have done so if it lacked that *e*. Is Caliban "not honoured with / A human [or humane] shape" (1.2.284-85), or did Prospero use him "with human/humane care" (1.2.348)? Would Ariel's "affections . . . become tender . . . were I humane" (5.1.20)? Each usage, each as it happens with terminal *e*, invites us to consider — and editors usually fail to consider — the openness of the nature of this humanity, for, since, say, F4 or Rowe, they have placed the word firmly and unequivocally on one side of *OED*'s divide, losing the doubleness that Shakespeare's audience may have heard and that we cannot.

This moment in *The Shakespeare Code* is one where we see this Shakespeare's smug consciousness of his own celebrity, a soaking up of the applause and admiration that might be or would be characteristic of Timon of Athens at his first banquet, functioning as a sign of a further identity of being human — and, of Shakespeare's (and his collaborators') eleven uses of the word *humanity*, three are in *Timon*, one of which is probably Middleton's. Humanity as human-ness includes that which diminishes humanity as humaneness; inhumanity is not that which denies humanity but is an aspect of it, not the non-human but the inhumane, as in Shakespeare's one use of the word in the extraordinary ending to Hand D's speech for Sir Thomas More as he defines the

mob's actions towards the city's aliens: "This is the strangers' case, / And this your mountainish inhumanity" (Add.II.d, 154-55), that adjective suggesting not only how immense is this act that is not humane, but also that it is the kind of thing that mountain-dwellers were likely to do — and in early modern culture the mountain is, of course, a space that is not civil, courteous, kind, humane.

But there is also in the Doctor's comment about Shakespeare something that outblooms Harold Bloom — and I take it that the screenplay writer is well aware of his own Blooming in the Shakespeare he invents: this Shakespeare is not simply the inventor of the human but is himself the "most human human," the self that creates now containing the vast range of that creativity's construction of the human. The ultimate Romantic myth of the nature of this superhuman creativity — as in Dumas *père*'s awed comment, "After God Shakespeare has created most" — is to make the human being multiply the container, the embodiment of that which s/he creates.

The Shakespeare Code beautifully and brilliantly develops its Shakespeare — it is, I think, the most subtle exploration of Shakespeare as creator on screen — from the boorish opening to the penetrating intelligence he slowly reveals, even as it plants playful hints of future writing, with Dr. Who feeding him lines he will use and Martha coming to stand for the potential Dark Lady of the *Sonnets*. At the end of the episode, as the Doctor tries to save the world from the Carrionites (no, don't ask for a plot summary) and prevent the earth from becoming what one of the Carrionites' advance party of three women (proleptically the witches of *Macbeth*) calls a "blasted heath," it is to Shakespeare, no longer the celeb, that the Doctor turns for salvation, for what is needed to close up the portal in space that will let in the exterminating race of Carrionites is language, just as the "witches" have inserted the necessary language code that opened the portal into the last speeches of *Love's Labour's Won*, making a spellbound Shakespeare mechanically and involuntarily write in what they need to have spoken aloud in the scientific instrument that is the fourteen-sided Globe. And Shakespeare's language here fails. The "new, beautiful, brilliant words" that he "always chooses" won't complete the counter-spell. *(A film clip is available in the HTML version of this document.)* So it is not Shakespeare who saves the world but J. K. Rowling and, given that Shakespeare is rhyming and more of the viewers of *Doctor Who* have read *Harry Potter* than Shakespeare, the natural filler for the tongue-tied genius' lacuna is "*expelliarmus*," the disarming charm that will, among other uses, reflect Voldemort's killing curse in the final battle. In this wonderful convergence of the two writers who stand for an immensely broad demographic of consumption, humanity, in many senses, is being saved. It is no accident that *Doctor Who* and the *Harry Potter* narrative continually engage with limits of the human: Dr. Who is himself not human but a Time Lord (see Hartley 2009); the wizards at Hogwarts are not Muggles. The modern and the classic prove to harmonize, and the text that represents the contemporary excitement of publication

proves to complete, complement, and re-energize the early modern excitement of performance. As exemplar of a particular form of convergence culture, this moment magnificently and delightfully redefines the humanity of creativity.

I have spent so much space on *The Shakespeare Code* not least because I enjoy it and because delight is a crucial part of the humanities and something that has always seemed to me to be a quality which has led to a broad governmental-political disapproval: we shouldn't enjoy what we do quite as much as we manage to, and we certainly shouldn't enjoy the materials of our work — after all, in what other field would one's film and theater tickets be tax-deductible? But I want to glance briefly now at two other Shakespeare phenomena, apparently and superficially from opposite extremes of high-low culture.

III

> *humanity*, n.
> II. 4. Human beings collectively; the human race. (*OED*)

Iago has no doubt about the borders of what it means to be human, even if we may choose to find, as Othello suggests at the play's end, that he may be literally diabolic, as, after twenty occurrences in the play of the word "devil," its last appearance metamorphoses or bisects into "demi-devil" (*Othello*, 5.2.307), that figure of whom much will be demanded, but nothing answered: "Demand me nothing" (5.2.309). What lies beyond humanity for Iago is to be a monkey: "Ere I would say I would drown myself for the love of a guinea-hen, I would change my humanity with a baboon" (1.3.314-16), this in a play that will move location to Cyprus, home of "Goats and monkeys" (4.1.265) — and, if I were going to pursue this, it is Cassio's use of the term "monkey" to describe Bianca (4.1.126) that speaks of *his* construction of the limits of humanity. My concern here is not with the old idea about monkeys and typewriters and the works of Shakespeare, but with monkeys performing a Shakespeare opera.

The Okavango Macbeth was first performed just outside Gaberone in Botswana in 2009, and the converted garage that served as the venue was called the No. 1 Ladies Opera House because it was bought up and refurbished by Alexander McCall Smith, author of the *No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency* series. Smith also wrote the libretto for the opera, composed by Tom Cunningham. It was subsequently performed in Edinburgh in 2011, and that production was released on CD.[3] The singing roles are primarily baboons, and the narrative concerns the efforts of a female baboon, identified as Lady Macbeth, to avoid having to marry Duncan, the leader of the troop, by convincing

her suitor, Macbeth, to murder his rival. Macbeth is reluctant because having offspring by Lady Macbeth is "against baboon law," but she persuades him. In the end Lady Macbeth is killed by a leopard, and a character anticipates that Duncan's son will kill Macbeth and become the "dominant male":

> A new dominant male
> Will replace another:
> This is the history
> Of the baboons,
> This is the history
> Too of this world. (Smith and Cunningham 2012)

Shakespeare's text is filleted down to nothing more than a narrative about the power of the female to lure her lover to commit murder, just as so often *Romeo and Juliet* comes to be no more than a narreme about the death of two adolescents in love. Shakespeare fragmented becomes generalized into a narrative about primates, and the applicability of Shakespeare narrative forms to other contexts is little more than a process of adaptation. Shakespeare here is no longer the preserve of humans. As McCall Smith comments, the idea for the opera came from a combination of a safari holiday and reading *Baboon Metaphysics*, by the primatologists Dorothy Cheney and Robert Seyfarth: "I was struck by the hierarchical nature of baboon society and by the status and role of powerful females. It seemed to me that the essential elements of the Macbeth story could well be told in the context of baboon society. I sounded out the composer, Tom Cunningham, and we decided that this was a theme worthy of opera" (quoted in *The Okavango Macbeth*). With time, we could think about the extent to which the triangulation of baboons, Shakespeare, and opera speaks of elite cultural forms and the aspirations of a writer of popular detective fiction.

But it is the echoes in the libretto of Cheney and Seyfarth that intrigue me. The baboon action of *The Okavango Macbeth* is observed by a group of primatologists — often comic in their observation — who themselves are observed by the baboons who sing of them:

> Such strange creatures,
> Such strange, unfinished creatures,
> They do not belong here;
> They are in the wrong place. (Smith and Cunningham 2012)

The observers cannot intervene: the scientist watches but may not influence events because "Science," they sing,

is a hard-hearted
Mistress, who lets things
Happen . . .
We shall note
We shall make
A history now
Of each thing,
As you'd record the weather.
There are no tragedies in nature,
Only events, things that happen. (Smith and Cunningham 2012)

Observation and description, analysis without metaphysics also turn the primatologists, overweeningly, into divine beings:

As God is to man
In his grant of free will,
That gives such freedom
To suffer and to die,
So are we to these
Dumb creatures. (Smith and Cunningham 2012)

Of course, the opera shows the baboons not to be at all "dumb." It is the half-seeing, half-seen primatologists who offer us a perspective on the limited nature of our own assumptions about the boundaries to our humanity. Iago's sense of limit is, as so often, inadequate: changing one's humanity with a baboon is not to change very much.

IV

humanity, n.

I. Sense relating to humane adj.

2. Freq. in *the humanities*.

a. In *sing* and *pl*. Literary learning or scholarship; secular letters as opposed to theology; esp. the study of ancient Latin and Greek language, literature, and intellectual culture (as grammar, rhetoric, history, and philosophy); classical scholarship. In later *sing*. use, chiefly in Scottish universities: the study of Latin language and literature. Cf. *humane letters* n. at humane adj. Special uses, *litterae humaniores* n. (*OED*)

You will know that familiar assumption that the nineteenth-century worker's home had in it two books — the Bible and Shakespeare — at a time when a complete works of Shakespeare could be bought for a shilling. (If you do not remember, please read Andrew Murphy's brilliant study *Shakespeare for the People: Working-class Readers* [2008].) If you were brought up in the U.K., you will remember too that choice given to the castaways on *Desert Island Discs*, radio's longest-running factual programme: which book would you take in addition to the Bible and Shakespeare, which are on the island already (later modified to include the presence of a large encyclopedia)? What precisely was the difference between the two books? Does Shakespeare function as an equivalent, for "secular letters," of the central text of its opposite, theology? Or as the modern classic of classics, the text that replaces the objects of attention of the humanities as "'classical scholarship," the early modern text for the study of *litterae humaniores*, defined as "the humanities, secular learning as opposed to divinity" (*OED*), albeit at Oxford the course long known as "Greats"?

Somewhere here is the anxiety caused in English by our limited use of the term "human sciences," which has primarily come to mean the social sciences, where, for instance, French treats "les sciences humaines" much more broadly and inclusively. In the *OED*, the entry for "human sciences" includes this notion: "[compare German *Geisteswissenschaften* (1829 or earlier); also *the humanities* at humanity n. 2] (in *pl.*) those academic subjects in which people or their actions form the object of study, as contrasted with the natural sciences or physical sciences; the humanities, (in later use *esp.*) the social sciences."

As Robin Milner-Gulland, responding to an article by George Monbiot, the environmental activist, commented in a letter to *The Guardian* (7 April 2010), "Only the English language uses 'science' to mean exclusively the natural sciences, or has adopted the 19th-century coinage 'scientist,' and can speak of 'the scientific community.' Monbiot is right in deploring the consequent damage to education, not to mention the disastrous and unnatural schism between various fields of knowledge and scholarship all this opens up" (Milner-Gulland 2010).

If the humanities fail to be the human sciences, ceding this ground to anthropology, psychology, and sociology, we can also note the humanities' imperialism, annexing the transcendental by no longer being the secular realm opposed to theology but absorbing the latter. And how precisely the religious turn might redefine Shakespeare study in an unexpected way is my next step. I turn now to comic-book Shakespeare or, rather, to give it its more dignified title, Shakespeare in graphic novel form, not the long line of *manga* versions of Shakespeare plays, but a twelve-part work by Conor McCreery and Anthony Del Col called *Kill Shakespeare* (think: Tarantino and therefore the joke on *Kill Shakespeare)*. The narrative unmoors Shakespeare's characters from their plays and their plots, allowing them to interact freely across a canvas of a

world that is peopled by Shakespeare's creations but without being constrained by his concept of action. They are instead constrained by a pre-determinate — that is, Shakespearean — character so that the action pits the expected forces of evil (Lady Macbeth, Richard III, Don John, Iago) against the equally predictable forces of good (Hamlet, Falstaff, Othello, Juliet) in a quest to find Shakespeare himself, the hidden god of a prophetic myth, in order to gain control of the magic quill (think: the pen as phallus, the penis mightier than the sword) in a world in which one swears "by Will." Shakespeare turns out to be living in a dilapidated cottage (think: Anne Hathaway's cottage abandoned by the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust), a deeply depressed alcoholic, unable to write more than odd fragments of text on pages tacked up on the walls. But summoned by Hamlet to the final battle, where he kills Richard III and calls on his "children" to end the fighting: "Children, break thy weapons! Now is the time for empty hands! And the rest shall be silence!" (McCreery and Del Col 2010-2011). In spite of Lady Macbeth's repeated definition of him as a "false god," Shakespeare in *Kill Shakespeare* is the true deity — father, creator, author — who ends his role in the narrative wandering off with a backpack, accompanied by some fairies (think of Neil Gaiman's famous 1990 *Sandman* story, "A Midsummer Night's Dream" [Callahan 2004, 257-80]), giving Hamlet a speech to read out to the assembled survivors of the battle, which turns out to be Sonnet 71, "No longer mourn for me when I am dead."

Graphic novels' concepts of humanity tend to be moral black and white, with no room for shades of grey, but *Kill Shakespeare* shows an intriguing fascination with the plight of a creator whose despair is driven by an awareness that his creation spirals out of control. The divine Shakespeare or, rather, the mortal Shakespeare whose creatures view him as divine, redraws this separation of humanity from theology, asks us to rethink in what ways humanity's indicators are or are not limited when the humanity is that of a dramatic character — oh, and Juliet turns down the resurrected Romeo and goes off with Hamlet in the final frames. With people cosplaying its characters at conventions, a film version in preparation, and national fame when Julie Taymor mentioned it on *The Colbert Report*, *Kill Shakespeare* displaces authorship and theology, resurrecting the author, proving his reality for the narrative, and giving, as Douglas Lanier has argued (Lanier forthcoming),[4] Roland Barthes' argument for the death of the author a wholly new spin.

And where, you may be wondering, do the Seven Deadly Sins fit in to all of this exploration of the interaction between Shakespeare and the boundaries of the indications of humanity, the topic which is still, I believe, centrally and justifiably our communal project? When in Marlowe's *Dr. Faustus*, Beelzebub and Lucifer come from hell to make sure the wavering hero does not turn to

heaven, Faustus' renewed obedience leads to reward: "Faustus, we are come from hell in person to show thee some pastime. Sit down, and thou shalt behold the Seven Deadly Sins appear to thee in their own proper shapes and likeness" (Marlowe 1962, 6.104-107). The moral warning against sin has turned into a parade led by a piper, a sight that Faustus unguardedly anticipates as one "as pleasant to me as paradise was to Adam the first day of his creation" (109-110). If Faustus' experience of the show drains it of moral power so that it becomes simply a pastime ("O how this sight doth delight my soul!" 170), this opposition between pleasure and learning, between delight and moral engagement does not have to be ours. Our humanity, though not his doubly contracted one, allows us to learn and to enjoy our learning.

V

> *inhumanity*, n.
>
> 1. a. The quality of being inhuman or inhumane; want of human feeling and compassion;
>
> brutality, barbarous cruelty. (*OED*)

I turn finally to inhumanity in a particular conjunction with being allowed to learn in describing a series of decisions that by turns anger and terrify me. Arizona's state law HB2281 includes the following provisions (15-112):

> Prohibited courses and classes; enforcement
>
> A. A school district or charter school in this state shall not include in its program of instruction any courses or classes that include any of the following:
>
> 1. Promote the overthrow of the United States government.
>
> 3. Promote resentment toward a race or class of people.
>
> 5. Are designed primarily for pupils of a particular ethnic group.
>
> 7. Advocate ethnic solidarity instead of the treatment of pupils as individuals.
>
> (Arizona House Bill 2281, 2011, Sec. 15-112)

The first two provisions might be seen as unexceptionable. The third and fourth reveal the real purpose of the law, which was promoted by Tom Horne, then a State Senator and now the State's Attorney-General. The attack on Ethnic Studies was, of course, never intended to

be universally applied. Horne was succeeded as Arizona's Superintendent of Public Instruction by John Huppenthal, who campaigned on a platform that included his (to me, entirely racist) promise to "stop la Raza." Huppenthal used the law, upheld in court, to end Tucson's thirteen-year program of Mexican-American Studies (to return to my initial interest in acronyms, it's known as MAS). Note that the attack on ethnic studies has been used solely to end MAS and no other kind of ethnic studies. The Tucson Unified School District had appealed Huppenthal's ruling but, frightened of the penalties the law imposed on non-compliant schools, was unwilling to appeal the decision, made in December 2011 by Judge Lewis Kowal, that the program was in breach of the law; "the law permits the objective instruction about the oppression of people that may result in racial resentment or ethnic solidarity. 'However, teaching oppression objectively is quite different than actively presenting material in a biased, political, and emotionally charged manner, which is what occurred in (Mexican-American Studies) classes,' Kowal wrote. The judge said such teaching promotes activism against white people, promotes racial resentment, and advocates ethnic solidarity" (Billeaud 2011). Note that it is assumed throughout this process that ethnic studies programs are solely intended for those people who are members of that ethnicity and, while studying Chicano history is clearly of tremendous importance for the Chicano/Chicana students who make up 60% of the school population in some TUSD schools, it is, in my view, of at least equal and perhaps greater importance for the other 40%. The attack on MAS is the state's exercise of its power to act in terms that I can only see as a sign of inhumanity.

So, in mid-school year, following Judge Kowal's list, the TUSD boxed up and removed to a depository all the textbooks used in MAS courses from the schools, including many contemporary novels and works with such inflammatory titles as *500 years of Chicano History in Pictures*, *Rethinking Columbus: The Next 500 Years*, and Richard Delgado's *Critical Race Theory*. The books were not banned: they are still available in the library system, but they cannot be used in the classroom. And MAS, which was nationally admired for its success in increasing high-school graduation rates, is no more in Tucson.

And what has this to do with SAA? Two matters. The first, which, more than any other part of this horror, propelled the story into the national press was the fact that Curtis Acosta, a much-admired, award-winning teacher at University High School and then at Tucson High Magnet School, where he taught Chicano literature, was told by the school's site administrators not to teach *The Tempest* from a perspective that might consider the play as a text of colonialism, oppression, race, and power. Here is Acosta's account of what happened:

> What is very clear is that *The Tempest* is problematic for our administrators due to the content of the play and the pedagogical choices I have made. In other words, Shakespeare

> wrote a play that is clearly about colonization of "the new world" and there are strong themes of race, colonization, oppression, class, and power that permeate the play, along with themes of love and redemption. We study this work by Shakespeare using the work of renowned historian Ronald Takaki and the chapter "The Tempest in the Wilderness" from his a book *A Different Mirror,* where he uses the play to explore the early English settlements on this continent and English imperialism. From there, we immerse ourselves in the play and discuss the beauty of the language, Shakespeare's multiple perspectives on colonization, and the brilliant and courageous attention he gives to such important issues. However, TUSD is basing our compliance upon their appeal and Mr. Kowal's ruling. Thus, I believe our administrators advised me properly when they said to avoid texts, units, or lessons with race and oppression as a central focus. If we are asked to follow a bad law then absurdities such as advising I stay away from teaching *The Tempest* not only seems prudent, but intelligent. We also have not received confirmation that the ideas, dialogue, and class work of our students will be protected. In clearer words, if I avoid discussing such themes in class, yet the students see the themes and decide to write, discuss, or ask questions in class, we may also be found to be in violation. The stakes are far too high since a violation of the law could cost the district millions, our employment, and personal penalties from the state for breaking the law. (Biggers 2012)

The advice was widely misreported as being a ban on *The Tempest*. It was not. It was simply a prudent requirement that most of the issues in the play that Mr. Acosta thought worth discussing in class be excluded. It is not easy to analyze oppression and colonization dispassionately if one is Chicano. In Arizona, it is also illegal to fail to do so.

The second reason for our concern here at SAA with Superintendent Huppenthal's inhumanity is his comment in an interview reported on *Fox News Latino* on 28 March 2012, that he "is considering taking his fight to the state university system":

> Huppenthal . . . says Tucson's suspended Mexican American studies curricula teaches [*sic*] students to resent Anglos, and that the university program that educated the public school teachers is to blame. "I think that's where this toxic thing starts from, the universities," [he] said. (Planas 2012)

Before HAL and after it, we need to guard against IAL: Inhumanities in American Life, a list in which these actions in Arizona would serve as a prime example. That is where Shakespeare studies should stand as the indicators of humanity.

Notes

1. This is a lightly revised version of the paper given as part of the plenary panel at the 40th Meeting of the Shakespeare Association of America, Boston, April 2012. Beyond putting back in some material cut for length, I have deliberately kept it close to that version as a record of a moment. My thanks to the Trustees of the Shakespeare Association of America for the invitation and to the staff of the SAA office for all their help.
2. All references from Shakespeare are to the *Complete Works*, edited by Stanley Wells et al. (1986).
3. Quotations from the libretto are taken from the CD liners (Smith and Cunningham 2012).
4. My thanks to Doug for an advance copy of this in draft form.

Permissions

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