

Joe Orton and Shakespeare: Library Books, Class and Queerness

In Joe Orton's posthumously published early novel *Head to Toe*, the scholarly Doktor von Pregnant boasts that he can recite 'the whole of Shoxbear' alongside works by other canonical authors (1971, 76). Impressed by the Doktor's encyclopaedic knowledge, the protagonist Gombold begs tuition but becomes so preoccupied by learning that he forgets his attempts to escape the prison where the two men meet: 'study took the place of liberty' (Orton 1971, 79). A surreal, picaresque, comic adventure, *Head to Toe* lampoons all forms of authority but this scene specifically satirises what Pierre Bourdieu terms 'cultural capital': non-economic assets that signal class distinction. Rather than bestowing social advantage, in *Head to Toe* the re-articulation of approved forms of knowledge results in Gombold's continuing confinement. By altering the names of highly-esteemed writers and texts in ways that render them ridiculous, Orton mocks the canon's cultural capital, subverting the notion that appreciation of legitimate or high art reflects refinement and confers superiority. The transformation of Shakespeare into 'Shoxbear', *Macbeth* into 'Mockbreath' and *King Lear* into 'King Lour' deflates the Bard's status (1971, 76). Likewise, instead of 'cultural nobility' (Bourdieu 2013, 9), the literary tradition celebrated by the Doktor connotes whininess (Thomas Aquinas becomes 'Saint Trimmer-Ac-Whinous'), illness (Goethe becomes 'Goitre'), and spit (Aristotle becomes 'Arrispittle') (76). In this way, Orton's satirical treatment of high culture in general, and Shakespeare (as the privileged representative of English literary tradition) in particular, implicitly challenges social division and inequality.¹

¹ I am grateful to my colleagues Anne Marie D'Arcy, Sarah Knight and Kate Loveman, and for their generous and helpful comments on this essay.

While Orton abandoned fiction in favour of drama soon after *Head to Toe*, the novel establishes an interest in Shakespeare that runs throughout his work. This essay considers Orton's relationship to Shakespeare through analysis of the library book covers that he defaced (or redesigned) with his partner Kenneth Halliwell and through the revision of Shakespeare in his plays. While Orton admired his predecessor, I propose that his treatment of the library book covers subverts Shakespeare's function as an emblem of social prestige in mid-century Britain. As a working class gay man and social outsider, Orton disidentifies with the authorised version of Shakespeare. Through both the doctored dustjackets, and the plays that follow, he 'recycles' Shakespeare from a socially marginalised and emphatically queer perspective as a means of resisting and reinventing dominant culture. More broadly, this essay illustrates that Orton's relationship to Shakespeare is more substantial, sustained and sophisticated than previously acknowledged. It also challenges established assumptions about Orton's creative partnership with Halliwell and casts fresh light on the cross-fertilisation of literature and art in his work.

In 1959, the very year in which Orton wrote *Head to Toe*, he and Halliwell embarked on what has come to be regarded as an infamous literary prank. Orton claims that out of annoyance at being unable to borrow a copy of Edward Gibbon's *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, he and Halliwell undertook a protest against the 'rubbishy books' that lined the shelves of their local London libraries (qtd. Lahr 1980, 97). The two men stole books, redesigned their dust jackets using collage, then returned them to the library shelves, waiting to witness the shocked reactions of unsuspecting readers to their absurd or 'mildly obscene' new covers (qtd. Lahr 1980,

96). Some of the best-known examples of the altered dust jackets include a picture of an almost naked, heavily tattooed old man pasted onto a book by Poet Laureate John Betjeman; the face of a monkey inserted into the centre of a flower on the front of Bertram Park's *Collins Guide to Roses* (1956); and a painting of Venice into which has been inserted a family of giant cats on the cover of Agatha Christie's thriller *The Secret of Chimneys* (1925). After stealing more than seventy books, Orton and Halliwell were eventually caught, prosecuted for theft and malicious damage, and sentenced to six months in prison. Orton interpreted the harshness of the sentence, grossly disproportionate to the crime, as indirect punishment for their undeclared and then illegal homosexuality: 'because we're queers' (qtd. Lahr 1980, 100).

Orton's invocation of *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* signals a political motive for the defacement of the library books (a desire to overthrow the ruling elite) and a method of achieving this goal (the Vandals, an East German tribe that sacked Rome in 455, destroyed Roman art, giving rise to the term 'vandalism' for the defacement or destruction of property). Akin to the Situationists, an anti-capitalist movement of avant-garde artists and activists that emerged in late 1950s, Orton and Halliwell employ the tactic of *détournement*: the reworking or recontextualising of an existing work of art or literature to radically alter its meaning. Like the Situationists, who believed that art could be an agent of social and political change, Orton and Halliwell unite playful action with subversive ideas to prompt public outrage. Nonetheless, the political significance of Orton and Halliwell's project was lost on representatives of the legal and judicial system of the day who condemned what they saw as the wanton and senseless destruction of public property. Their defacement of library books prompted consternation and condemnation from the prosecuting counsel

at the trial: 'For some reason which seems not to be clear the two men had not only stolen the books but had caused the most extraordinary damage to them' (qtd. Lahr 1980, 83). The magistrate censured the pair for being 'childish' and a senior probation officer characterised them as bitter and resentful failures: 'frustrated actors and frustrated writers' (Shepherd 1989, 14). The deeply subversive implications of the dust jackets also elude Orton's biographer, John Lahr, who views them as nothing more than 'a caper' (1980, 97). Though Lahr describes the doctored library book covers as a satirical 'prank' (1978, 151), Simon Shepherd recognises them as a protest that expresses 'disrespect for social and cultural authority' (1989, 14). According to Shepherd, Orton and Halliwell's altered book covers constitute an 'attack on arty pretensions and sexual propriety' (1989, 14). Arty pretension is mocked on the cover of *The Lunts*, a biography of celebrated actors Alfred Lunt and Lynne Fontanne. A stylish and dignified black and white studio portrait of husband and wife is replaced with a surreal scene of toy deer, Humpty Dumpty and a large flying insect. Subtitled 'An Illustrated study of their work', the book's new cover thus ridicules the Lunts' contribution to stage and screen. The subversion of sexual propriety is epitomised by Orton and Halliwell's modifications to *The Collected Plays of Emyln Williams*: 'night must fall' becomes 'knickers must fall', and sexually suggestive phrases such as 'up the front' and 'up the back' are added to the cover.

Like Shepherd, Richard Hornsey contests the characterisation of Orton and Halliwell as immature gay men 'selfishly and hedonistically amusing themselves' in the library (2003, 50). He views their work as queer protest: 'an attack on the dominant heteronormativity of reading and knowledge' (2003, 52). Until homosexuality was (partially) legalised in 1967, same-sex desire was rarely represented in books, unless it

was being demonised or condemned. Orton and Halliwell contest this by playfully bringing queer desire into public view. The photograph of the groin of an almost naked man pasted onto cover of Bentz Plagemann's navy novel *The Steel Cocoon* renders the title (which originally refers to a ship) sexually suggestive ('cock' being a synonym for penis and 'steel' suggesting hardness) and the all-male environment of the navy ship situates desire in a homosocial context. Likewise, the couple pasted a photograph of two semi-naked male wrestlers onto the cover of Phyllis Hambleton's romance *Queen's Favourite*, playing on the use of 'queen' as a synonym for an effeminate gay man in popular parlance. As Hornsey states, 'Orton and Halliwell's vandalism forced the queer pleasures of illicit reading into the heart of the hallowed heterotopia' (2003, 50).

Although Shepherd and Hornsey stress the political significance of Orton and Halliwell's guerrilla art, they both distinguish the treatment of Shakespeare's plays from the other altered books. Of the forty-one defaced library books that survive, sixteen are Shakespeare plays.² Despite constituting a sizeable proportion of the dust jackets (just under 40%), the revised Shakespeare covers have 'provoked little interest' since the trial (Hornsey 2003, 39). This is because they are considered to offer a 'sincere' (Hornsey 2003, 39), 'tactful' (Lahr 1980, 96), even 'reverential' (Colsell 2013, 29), homage to Shakespeare. Lahr argues that Orton and Halliwell simply 'jazzed up' the 'drab designs' of the original book covers, which bore no image (Lahr 1980, 96), and D. Grant Campbell proposes that the pair's artful designs offer 'a tasteful exposition of the play's themes' (2013, 631). Likewise, Ilsa Colsell describes the Shakespeare dustjackets as 'sympathetic' to the plays' contents (2013, 29). At first glance, this appears to be the

² Some were destroyed; it is not known how many.

case. On Orton and Halliwell's cover of *The Tempest* (Fig. 1), a painting of St John, exiled on the island of Patmos, makes him a suitable representative of Prospero. Also, the obelisk on the left of the image, taken from Marieschi's *Fantastic Landscape with Obelisk* (1735), has been sliced in two, evoking the 'lasting pillars' on which Gonzalo states that the reconciliations that conclude the play should be recorded in gold (5. I. 207-8).

Insert Fig. 1

However, a closer examination of the dust jackets reveals that they are far from sincere in the respect they pay to Shakespeare. The collage that adorns the cover of *The Tempest* ironizes both St John's revelation and the reconciliations that conclude the play. In Orton and Halliwell's hands, St John is witness not to a struggle between good and evil that culminates in the Second Coming of Christ but a scene of pagan hedonism, represented by naked gods and cherubs frolicking in Tiepolo's *Olympus* (c. 1740), in which good looks set to be overwhelmed by evil as Mercury, the god of thieves and tricksters, falls towards a fearful St John.³ The cover of *King John* is equally ironic (Fig. 2). By using an image of a sovereign bearing the Latin motto 'non utitur aculeo rex cui paremur' ('the king to whom we are subject does not use his sting') on the hem of his tunic, Orton and Halliwell present a King John - famously presented as a 'Bad King' in the comic history book *1066 and All That* (Sellar and Yeatman 1930, 24) - as a model of ideal kingship. Irony is also palpable on the cover of *The First Part of King Henry IV* (Fig. 3). A play about rebellion against a king who demands absolute obedience is re-covered with part of *Les Tres Riches Heures du Duc de Berry* (1413-15), an idealised image of court that depicts happy subjects receiving new years' gifts from a benevolent ruler. As

³ The figure at the top of Olympus is Mercury, not a 'devil', as Colsell states (2013, 152).

these examples indicate, despite being more subtle, the redesigned Shakespeare dust jackets are as subversive as the rest.

Insert Fig. 2 and Fig. 3

Shepherd identifies three subversive features of the middlebrow and popular books redesigned by Orton and Halliwell: 'irreverence to Art, irreverence to eminent persons and the presence of sex' (1989, 14). These features are equally evident on their revised covers of the Shakespeare plays. Irreverence for art is expressed through the use of collage, an artistic technique that assembles diverse fragments into a new whole. Since the term 'collage' was coined by Georges Braque and Pablo Picasso, this art of appropriation, deformation and reformation has been associated with avant-garde challenges to the status quo. Collage is an art of revision and transformation in which established meaning is contested as images acquire fresh significance in new and unusual contexts. By revising the images they appropriate from Western art, Orton and Halliwell implicitly express a desire for change. Collage also enables a queering of Western art. Based on 'incongruous relations' (Cran 2014, 24), the illicit encounters between disparate objects and styles engendered by collage make it a suggestively queer creative practice. Taking 'queer' to mean not just 'homosexual' but irregular or non-normative, Orton and Halliwell's Shakespeare covers further celebrate queerness by blending different materials - paint and bronze: for example, *Richard II* (Fig. 4) and *Timon of Athens* (Fig. 5) - and different genres (religious and secular art), whilst combining images drawn from anomalous social contexts and historical periods.

Insert Fig. 4, Fig. 5, Fig 6

The second subversive feature identified by Shepherd, irreverence for eminent persons, is exemplified by the cover of *Julius Caesar* (Fig. 6), the statesman famed for his

leading role in the rise of the Roman Empire. As indicated by Orton's desire to borrow Gibbon, he is less interested in the rise of Rome than its decline and fall. Orton and Halliwell invoke the downfall of the Roman Empire through Piero della Francesca's *The Battle Between Constantine and Maxentius* (1458), a painting of the conflict that marked the Emperor Constantine's conversion to Christianity, an event that signalled the beginning of the end of the Roman Empire. Dissenting from the view of the editor, T. S. Dorsch, that Shakespeare emphasises 'some less noble and impressive attributes in Caesar without obscuring his essential greatness' (1955, xv), Orton and Halliwell call Casear's 'greatness and nobility' (Dorsch 1955, xxix) into question through a parallel with Hitler created through the Hohenstaufen eagle on the flag held by the soldiers in the foreground, a symbol appropriated by the Nazis. Furthermore, whereas Caesar was famed for his military prowess, and Shakespeare's play opens with the people of Rome celebrating Casear's victory, Orton and Halliwell stress the horror of war. Albrecht Altdorfer's painting *The Battle of Alexander at Issus* (1529), used as a backdrop in the collage, celebrates Alexander the Great's victory over Darius III of Persia, but the epic scale of the original is neutralised by the obfuscation of the grand battle scene by the men on horses in the foreground. This in turn makes the tablet hanging from the ominously dark and menacing sky that records the number of dead (100,000 infantry and 10,000 cavalymen) the most prominent part of the picture.

Royals, nobles and religious icons are treated with the same irreverence as Ceasar. The cover of *Henry V* (Fig. 7) features Raphael's *St Michael* (1504), a painting of the archangel Michael slaying a dragon, as relayed in the Book of Revelations.⁴ Colsell

⁴ Orton scholars and enthusiasts owe Ilsa Colsell a huge debt of gratitude for identifying many of the pictures used on the Shakespeare covers. However, this image is *St Michael* (1504/5) and not *St Michael Conquering Satan* (1518), as she states (2013, 152).

proposes that the scene evokes the Battle of Agincourt: St Michael represents the king with the 'conquered' French army behind him (2013, 152). However, the dragon, a symbol of evil, has been excised, thus eradicating Henry's moral justification for war. Furthermore, far from seeming 'conquered', the French army appears to be overwhelming St Michael, who is skewered with red lances. The suggestion of English defeat rather than victory renders ironic Canterbury's plea, 'May God and his angels guard your sacred throne' (I. ii). Indeed, confirming Shepherd's view that Orton repeatedly mocks British imperialism, anti-Communism and 'the nation herself' (1989, 147), his *Henry V* offers a striking counterpoint to Laurence Olivier's 1944 film of the play. Olivier's *Henry V* epitomised Shakespeare's function as a conduit for heroic English nationalism. Encouraged to make the film by Prime Minister Winston Churchill during the Second World War, and partly funded by the British government, Olivier's patriotic *Henry V* was originally dedicated to the 'Commandos and Airborne Troops of Great Britain' and parallels the D-Day landings with Henry's invasion of France. Orton and Halliwell's *Henry V* offers a direct retort to a film that presents the English as morally righteous victors and stresses the nobility, rather than the horror, of war.

Insert Fig. 7, Fig. 8

Henry V is one of several kings whose eminence is eroded by Orton and Halliwell. On the cover of *King Henry VIII* (Fig. 8), the power and majesty conveyed by Holbein the Younger's famous portrait of the monarch are compromised by the removal of an arm on one side and the large sleeve that denotes strength and status on the other. The king's ornate rings and leather glove, symbols of wealth and military prowess, have also been erased. Disdain for monarchy is further expressed through the addition of the Latin motto 'non utitur aculeo rex cui paremur', transposed from the painting used on

the cover of *King John*. By disordering the words, Henry VIII's status as a good king, and the very concept of good kingship, are rendered meaningless. In the context of the excitement surrounding the coronation of Elizabeth II in 1953, Orton and Halliwell's aversion to the conspicuous display of monarchic wealth and power is pointed. As Henry VIII introduced the Buggery Act of 1533, the first English law to criminalise sodomy and make anal intercourse punishable by death, a challenge to his authority constitutes an act of queer as well as class protest.

Jesus is another eminent figure whose status is negated. In the collage that adorns the cover of *Cymbeline* (Fig. 9), the Jesus who appears in Konrad Witz's *The Miraculous Draught of Fishes* (1444) is almost entirely obscured by the man on horseback, taken from Gozzoli's *Procession of the Magus Melchior* (1459-61). Moreover, the face of Jesus, just visible behind the gentleman's hand, has been scribbled out. Despite his more prominent position, the status of this man is also undermined: the top of the crown that signifies imperial authority has disappeared, and the missing back leg of his steed invokes the trope of the spavined horse, a symbol of obsolescence. On several of the other Shakespeare covers eminent figures are notable by their absence. Jesus is missing from Veronese's 'The Wedding at Cana' (1563) on the cover of *Titus Andronicus* (Fig. 10). Not only has Jesus been removed, but he has been replaced at the head of the table by a man eating his own child, a grisly image taken from Goya's *Saturn Devouring his Son* (1818). The cover simultaneously evokes the dramatic climax of the play in which the Goth Queen Tamora is fed her two sons Chiron and Demetrius in a pie and satirically mimics the cannibalistic ritual of Holy Communion. In asserting that the cover of *Henry IV Part I* (Fig. 3) features 'an almost complete and unaltered reproduction of January, painted by the Limbourg brothers as part of *Les Très Riches*

Heures du Duc de Berry' (2013, 151), Colsell fails to observe that the image has been cropped to remove the Duke, implicitly negating his authority and resisting social hierarchy.

Insert Fig. 9 and 10

Sex is suggested on the cover of *All's Well That Ends Well* (Fig. 11), which features a cropped but otherwise unaltered reproduction of Hans Baldung Grien's *Portrait of a Woman* (1530). The subject's direct gaze, strikingly red lips with their pronounced cupid bow, and her slightly flushed face and neck all suggest sexual desire, and the chain of her necklace draws the viewer's gaze to her breasts. Desire is equally palpable in the collage that adorns the front of *Antony and Cleopatra* (Fig. 12). A flushed Venus, the Roman goddess of love, gazes longingly at a naked Poseidon rather than at herself, as in the original painting, Titian's *Venus with a Mirror* (1555). Furthermore, the robe that covers her genitals has been excised, except for the fur at its edges. Severed from the robe, the fur acquires the appearance of pubic hair, and the phallic mast of the ship at the bottom of the collage, which points directly at her genital area, emphasises lust over love. At the same time, the cover of *Antony and Cleopatra* typifies the queerness of Orton and Halliwell's protest through resistance to heteronormativity. Although Venus gazes lustfully at Poseidon, he turns his back on her. Cupid, the god of desire, who holds the mirror into which Venus gazes in Titian's painting, has been moved from the right to the left hand side of the image so that he too faces away from her, turning his back on heterosexuality.

Insert Fig. 11 and 12

The Shakespeare collages not only resist heteronormativity but also celebrate same-sex desire. On the cover of *Othello* (Fig. 13), St Maurice, taken from Matthias

Grunewald's *The Meeting of St Erasmus and St Maurice* (c. 1524), represents the eponymous protagonist; Venus, taken from Giorgio Barbarelli da Castelfranco's *Sleeping Venus* (c. 1510), represents his lover, Desdemona. However, there is no sign of intimacy between the two. Neither looks at the other, and Desdemona's hand covers her genitals, either barring entrance or suggesting auto-erotic touch. Sex is suggested in this image, but the possibility of erotic contact exists between Othello and the man standing behind him, who points an arrow at his backside. Like the arrow, the columns, Othello's long sword and the staff originally held by St Erasmus (who has been excised) render the image emphatically phallic. The cover of *Timon of Athens* (fig. 5) is just as homoerotic. The queer potential of St John's status as 'the disciple whom Jesus loved' (John 13:23) is amplified by the insertion of a Roman or Greek statue of a naked man behind St John in Hieronymus Bosch's *St John the Baptist in the Wilderness* (c. 1489-99), so that the head of one man is positioned close to the penis of the other. At the same time, the phallic plant in Bosch's painting points at the mouth of the statue. Significantly, the lamb, which signifies innocence in Bosch's original, and represents an alternative to the life of the flesh and fruit of temptation symbolised by the plant, is cut.

Insert Fig. 13

King Lear (Fig. 14) offers a further example of homoeroticism. Colsell notes that the angle of Giambattista Piazzetta's *Martyrdom of St James* (1722) has been altered (2013, 152), but does not comment on the radical significance of this change. The effect is to transform a scene of religious piety into one of sexual passion. Instead of looking upwards to heaven for inspiration in his time of need, St James now faces straight ahead. Instead of struggling to stand or pull away from his captor, as in the original, St James appears to be bending over. Together, these changes strongly imply erotic

contact, a suggestion endorsed by a parallel between the posture of the two men on the cover of *King Lear* and the two semi-naked wrestlers that Orton and Halliwell pasted onto the blatantly homoerotic cover of *Queen's Favourite* (Fig. 15) and Kathrine Sorley Walker's biography of openly gay ballet dancer and choreographer Robert Helpmann (Fig. 16). In this way, Orton and Halliwell queer Shakespeare, implicitly rebutting the prevailing view - exemplified by Douglas Bush in the Introduction to his Pelican edition of the sonnets - that Shakespeare's work expresses the Renaissance ideal of platonic love between men rather than sexual desire (1961, 8).⁵

Insert Fig. 14, 15, 16

Recognition of the irreverence of the Arden covers renders dubious Hornsey's assertion that Orton and Halliwell were endorsing 'cultural elitism' by 'attacking' popular or middlebrow writers like Agatha Christie and Dorothy L. Sayers whilst 'revering' Shakespeare (2003, 52). Indeed, Orton and Halliwell's sole focus on Shakespeare plays published by Arden indicates a calculated challenge to cultural hierarchy. Launched in 1946, the second series of The Arden Shakespeare produced new, scholarly volumes of the plays that came to be regarded as the ultimate critical editions: 'the gold standard'.⁶ Lengthy, rather dry, introductions written by eminent critics discuss Shakespeare's sources and influences, the date of composition, questions of textual integrity, and variant punctuation, using copious footnotes and appendices. As Ann Thompson notes, these editions are aimed at a well-educated, academic readership 'with a good knowledge of British culture and institutions' and editors 'often assume

⁵ For further information about the debate about sexuality in Shakespeare, see Stanley Wells, *Looking for Sex in Shakespeare* (2004).

⁶ See the Bloomsbury website: <http://www.bloomsbury.com/uk/academic/academic-subjects/drama-and-performance-studies/the-arden-shakespeare/>, accessed 8 August, 2016.

that there is no need to translate French, Latin, or even Greek' (1992, 23). Readers are confronted with 'the most technical aspects of textual editing at the outset', editors use professional abbreviations, which they fail to explain, and the annotations on the page often take up more space than the play (Thompson 1992, 23). All this makes The Arden Shakespeare 'off-putting to non-specialist readers' (Thompson 1992, 23). As well as being 'coy' about Shakespeare's obscenities, another aspect of the Arden editions likely to annoy Orton and Halliwell as trained actors is the lack of attention paid to stage history and 'the specifically theatrical potential of the plays' (Thompson 1992, 23).

Confirming Gabriel Egan's point that modern editions 'based on the same raw materials - Shakespeare's work - are constructed by differing principles and offer distinctly different texts' (2016, 32), the expensive Ardens stand in marked contrast to the inexpensive Everyman editions beloved by Orton. In his unpublished teenage diary, Orton writes, 'Saw some books in Midland Educational only 4/6 each (Everyman library). I've never noticed them before. They are lovely' (22 September, 1950). Orton's teenage diary describes the struggles involved in growing up in poverty in postwar Leicester. Although money is short, even he can afford an 'Everyman copy of Shakespeare's Tragedies' (30 September, 1950). The teenage diary makes the effect of this clear. When young Orton misses a radio production of a Shakespeare play because he is forced to run an errand for his mother, his aggrieved response reflects the capacity of Everyman to endow the working class with a sense of intellectual ownership: 'I had to miss *my* "Midsummer Night's Dream"' (19 June, 1950, emphasis added).

With the rise of Arden, Shakespeare no longer belongs to Everyman but becomes the property of the educated elite in mid-century Britain. Gary Taylor explains that in

the first half of the twentieth century Shakespeare scholarship grew 'exponentially', resulting in the emergence of a 'community of specialists' as critics, experts and connoisseurs sought to distinguish themselves from 'the masses' (1991, 256). Although Halliwell was capable of snobbery, he and Orton both repeatedly express contempt for class hierarchy. Halliwell may complain about 'riff-raff' at the airport (Orton 1986, 97), but he shares Orton's scorn for the 'lousy gin-drinking class' and 'the chinless wonders from our noble houses' (1986, 124; 240). Their disdain for elitist critics can be inferred from their Shakespeare covers. Although Lahr asserts that they 'respectfully restored the name of the editor as well as the play' (1980, 96), the removal of the editor's name from eleven of the sixteen Shakespeare covers constitutes a direct challenge to critical authority. Likewise, the excision of Shakespeare's name from every single one of the altered Arden covers suggests Orton and Halliwell's resistance to the appropriation of Shakespeare by critics as an emblem of cultural prestige and distinction. According to Michael D. Bristol, scholarly editions (like Arden) situated Shakespeare in the 'serious cultural regime of high-school classrooms, university seminars, and legitimate theatres' (1996, 72). As Bourdieu notes, although schools and universities appear to offer equal opportunity and to reward merit, the education system plays a key part in 'mediating relations between status hierarchies associated with different tastes and cultural preferences, on one hand, and organisation and reproduction of class structure on the other' (2013, xx). Bourdieu's point is exemplified by Orton's own education. As an aspirational working class boy, he embraced Shakespeare's cultural capital with enthusiasm as part of a programme of self-improvement. Orton frequently chose to recite lines from Shakespeare in the elocution lessons he undertook with Madame

Rothery in preparation for his Royal Academy of Dramatic Art (RADA) entrance exam.⁷ However, Orton soon felt disillusioned and alienated by the overwhelmingly bourgeois environment of London's leading drama school. Since 'Shakespeare was always foremost at RADA' in the 1950s (Lewisohn 2013, 367), Orton protests bourgeois norms and values by delivering the Buckingham speech from *Henry VIII* in 'a parody of the RADA manner' (qtd. Lahr 1980, 117). Anticipating the defacement of the Arden editions, Orton simultaneously scorns RADA's reverence for Shakespeare and the social elitism signified by the Bard.

Orton and Halliwell's defacement of the Shakespeare covers attacks the public library, as well as schools and universities, as a 'site of the production, dissemination and appropriation of cultural capital' (Goulding 2008, 236). Alistair Black observes that in the late 1950s, the public library service underwent an expansion inspired by the postwar principles of egalitarianism and universalism. Although reformers sought to make the library 'a truly popular institution', middle-class use 'exploded' from the late 1950s onwards and new resources - such as The Arden Shakespeare series - 'nourished middle-class confidence' (2003, 201; 210; 208). According to Jerry White, in the 1950s Hampstead, where Orton and Halliwell first began stealing library books, was 'an up-and-coming area for middle-class owner-occupiers', and Islington was attracting 'well-to-do middle-class buyers' (2008, 63; 64). Thus Hampstead and Islington lend support to Black's conclusion that the postwar library 'became thoroughly middle class' (2003, 209). This suggests that, unlike the popular and middlebrow books they doctored, Orton and Halliwell's Shakespeare covers specifically address middle-class readers. In

⁷ Orton's teenage diary records that he recites a Gloucester soliloquy from *Henry VI* (26 April, 1950) and a speech by Ariel in *The Tempest* (10 May, 1950). He also recites a speech by Arthur in *King John* at the Nottingham Festival of Music and Drama (23 July, 1950).

Bourdieu's terms, their Shakespeare covers invite the engagement of subjects already in possession of the cultural competencies and aesthetic taste to appreciate literature and fine art whilst simultaneously altering well-known plays and paintings in ways that mock or contest social distinction.

If the university and public library were predominantly middle-class spheres in the late 1950s, so too was theatre. In *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes*, Jonathan Rose shows that in the nineteenth century, ordinary people crowded into theatres to watch Shakespeare plays (2002, 123). Likewise, in *Highbrow/Lowbrow*, Lawrence Levine observes that during the Victorian period 'Shakespeare was not the exclusive preference of educated elites' but part of a common culture that incorporated a wide variety of theatrical forms including farce, vaudeville, and innumerable parodies of Shakespeare (1988, 9). However, as Rose explains, in the twentieth century, Shakespeare's proletarian following 'melted away', and a cultural gap opened between the classes (2002, 124). Similarly, Dominic Shellard and Siobhan Keenan note that although drama was part of popular culture in the Elizabethan era, in the twentieth century Shakespeare increasingly became a cultural icon and a brand associated with high art (2016, 3). Film versions of Shakespeare also widened the divide between elite and popular culture in the period. Although Olivier's highly acclaimed films *Henry V* (1944), *Hamlet* (1948) and *Richard III* (1955) made Shakespeare accessible to the masses in mid-century Britain, Taylor argues that the rise of Shakespeare on screen simultaneously rendered live theatre 'a minority taste' (1991, 274).

Shakespeare's increasing alignment with high culture is epitomised by Olivier's decision to open the National Theatre with *Othello* in 1963. Orton and Halliwell loathed

Olivier's 1965 film based on this production: 'should be called "Butcher Olivier" ...although he looked Othello...he couldn't play Othello. He mangled the verse...And Olivier's costumes were just fashionable beachwear and lounging clothes. A selection of shortie nighties and dressing-gowns' (Orton 1986, 109). However, Orton's contempt is reserved for the production rather than the play: 'I found myself cursing Shakespeare for his stupid plot. And then, with a feeling of guilt, realising that the production and acting were at fault and I was blaming the play...I've started to re-read Othello just to assure myself that it is a work of genius. It is' (Orton 1986, 109-110). His 1967 diary expresses similar contempt for Franco Zeffirelli's *Much Ado About Nothing* at the National Theatre, which he and Halliwell watched 'with increasing aggravation...the play mangled, the verse butchered' (Orton 1986, 80). The image of Shakespeare 'mangled' and 'butchered' by dominant culture contrasts the skilful and intricate cuts that Orton and Halliwell make to reshape the authorised image of Shakespeare through collage.⁸

Orton and Halliwell's distaste for the gentrification of Shakespeare epitomised by the opening of the National Theatre is reflected in their mocking treatment of books about bourgeois Shakespeare actors such as Sybil Thorndike and Alec Clunes. On the cover of J. C. Trewin's biography of Thorndike, a distinguished black and white professional portrait of the eminent actress is replaced with a photograph of a primitive bronze sculpture of a bare-breasted woman. Since Thorndike was not known for 'sexual allure' (Croall 2008, 2), the image is clearly parodic. Her status as a serious actor is also ridiculed by pasting her photograph onto the cover of *The 3 Faces of Eve*, a sensational

⁸ Images of the book covers reproduced with kind permission of Islington Local History Centre and Museum.

pop psychology 'true story' of 'a housewife who was three women in one body - told by the doctors who helped her to find her real self'. Featured in *Tatler* (Croall 2008, 475), a magazine devoted to high society, and made a Dame in 1931, Thorndike was closely linked to the acting elite of her day: *Sir* Laurence Olivier, *Sir* Ralph Richardson (both knighted in 1947), and *Sir* John Gielgud (knighted in 1953). Orton's opinion of the honours system can be discerned from a diary comment about Henry Irving's knighthood: 'The theatre started going downhill when Queen Victoria knighted Henry Irving...Too fucking respectable' (Orton 1986, 74). The conversation between actors Coral Browne and Vivien Merchant that Orton recorded in his London diary illustrates that he was keen to challenge this respectability, and the idea that Shakespeare signals refinement: 'You're playing Lady M, aren't you dear? What are you going to do with that fucking candle?' (Orton 1986, 233). Nonetheless, the social and artistic chasm between the theatrical elite and working-class Orton, who declared himself 'from the gutter' (Orton 1986, 54), is clear from their response to his plays. Gielgud rejected the script of *What the Butler Saw*: 'All the cast say the most awful things to one another. I wouldn't touch it' (Croall 2012, 61).⁹ Likewise, Thorndike dismissed Orton's first stage play, *Entertaining Mr Sloane* (1964), as 'amusing but vulgar and dirty' (Croall 2008, 475). Clunes, who appeared alongside Richardson and Gielgud in Olivier's film version of *Richard III* (1955), was another target of attack. Orton and Halliwell's treatment of Trewin's biography of Clunes conveys hostility: a studio portrait is replaced with an image of a crushed skull. Also, Clunes' status as a serious Shakespearean actor is mocked when his head, cut from a photograph of his role in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, is attached to the body of a ballet dancer and pasted onto the cover of John Rhode's

⁹ Despite his initial distaste for Orton, Gielgud later appeared in the BBC Radio 3 adaptation of *Up Against It* (1997).

thriller *Death Takes a Partner*. Despite Orton's claims, the doctored dustjackets are clearly far more than a remonstrance against 'rubbishy' writing. They creatively protest class difference and social privilege.

The plays that Orton wrote following his release from prison for the defacement of library books develop his complex engagement with Shakespeare. Orton's fondness for Shakespeare is clear throughout his teenage diary. Having joined various amateur dramatic groups, he took the role of Dorset in *Richard III*, a spirit in *The Tempest*, and Lucio in *Measure for Measure*. He recites Ariel's lines in *The Tempest* and practices Arthur of Bretagne's speech to Hubert in *King John* as well as 'the Boys speech' ('as young as I am, I have observed these three swashers') from *Henry V*. Shakespeare remains a major reference point for Orton once he becomes an established playwright. He draws on Shakespeare to justify his use of violence in *Entertaining Mr Sloane*: 'to go back to the old cliché about Shakespeare, you can't have certain scenes in *King Lear* without having Gloucester's eyes put out...' (qtd. Lahr 1980, 208). Discussing black comedy, he once remarked: '*Loot* takes a farcical view of things normally treated as tragic...Farce is higher than comedy in that it is very close to tragedy. You've only got to play some of Shakespeare's tragedies plain and they are nearly farcical' (qtd. Lahr 1980, 225). According to Orton, at the end of *What the Butler Saw*, all is forgiven 'just as in the later Shakespeare plays' (qtd. Lahr 1980, 328). Orton quotes the Prologue to *Romeo and Juliet* when he asserts that farce makes the most of theatre's 'two-hour traffic' (qtd. Lahr 1980, 314). He compares himself to Shakespeare in terms of his penchant for mixing linguistic registers: 'Shakespeare and the Elizabethans did the same thing' (qtd. Lahr 1980, 185). Orton also likens himself to Shakespeare when, professing 'little Latin and less Greek', he quotes Ben Jonson's poem 'To the Memory of My Beloved, the Author Mr

William Shakespeare' (qtd. Lahr 1980, 29). Responding to a letter from Peggy Ramsay about the troubled first production of *Loot* in 1965, he replies, 'I felt like Richard III receiving the messengers' and quotes *Hamlet*: 'When sorrows come not single spies but in battalions' (qtd. Lahr 1980, 259). Finally, Orton directly acknowledges Shakespeare as a source, influence and inspiration: 'Reading Othello, I found a quotation for *The Erpingham Camp*' (Orton 1986, 110).

Given that he persistently aligns himself with Shakespeare, it is no surprise that critics have linked the two writers, identifying kinship in parallels, echoes and allusions. For William Hutchings, Orton's plays are 'surprisingly congruent twentieth-century counterparts' to a number of Jacobean plays (1988, 228). He compares *Hamlet* to *What the Butler Saw* in terms of the theme of feigned madness. Maurice Charney links the same two plays through the motif of the missing father (1984, 103) while Manfred Draudt considers *Hamlet* and *Loot* 'closely related' in terms of plot: both plays centre on murder and remarriage (1978, 203). Draudt sees 'significant links' and 'affinities' in relation to the treatment of social hypocrisy and the pretence of mourning, as well as parallels between Hamlet's handling of Polonius' dead body and Hal's mistreatment of his mother's corpse (1978, 202-203). Charney likens *The Erpingham Camp* to *Twelfth Night* when he describes the puritanical holiday camp manager as a 'latter-day Malvolio' (1984, 64). Susan Rusinko compares it to *Richard III*: 'With falling plaster and blood around them, Riley, as he calls for the night porter's bicycle, recommends flight in the manner of Shakespeare's *Richard III*' (1995, 51). It has been suggested that *Funeral Games* parallels *Othello*: Tessa is a faithful wife but an anonymous letter gives rise to the rumour that she has committed adultery, causing the central male character to doubt

the fidelity of the woman he loves.¹⁰ In *The Good and Faithful Servant*, Ray's explanation of the social prohibition on sex before marriage - 'Because you should save it up, shouldn't you? Make it go further. Thrift, thrift' - echoes Hamlet's bitter denunciation of his mother's quick marriage to Claudius (Charney 2008, 147): 'Thrift, thrift, Horatio. The funeral baked meats/ Did coldly furnish forth the marriage tables' (1.2.179-80).

However, Shakespeare also occupies a central position in the Establishment against which Orton's plays rage. The 1951 Festival of Britain, which sought to support postwar recovery and reconstruction through a celebration of British culture, included a cycle of History plays (*Richard II* to *Henry V*) at the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre in Stratford and featured a Shakespeare first folio in an exhibition titled 'Autobiography of a Nation'. As Graham Holderness explains, rather than looking to the future, these events embodied 'reactionary hopes for re-establishing past glories' (2016, 92). Similarly, founded in 1961, the RSC quickly became 'the guardian of Shakespeare' (Shaughnessy 2013, 24). Robert Shaughnessy notes that director Peter Hall employed 'young, university-trained directors' and aimed productions at 'young, university-trained audiences' (2013, 24). Thus, though driven by 'a degree of middle-class radicalism', the RSC was a 'bourgeois arts corporation in a market economy' and its 'dominant modes of Shakespearean production' were 'liberal or conservative' rather than 'revolutionary' (2013, 15; 7).

Aligned with the counterculture rather than the Establishment, Orton's relationship with Shakespeare is thus far from straightforward. He may declare his

¹⁰ See <http://www.literaryramblings.com/1000-books-in-10-years-vol-332-funeral-games-by-joe-orton>, accessed 8 August, 2016.

predecessor a 'genius', but he also resists Bardolatry, once asserting that 'I hope I've never written anything as bad as some of the early Shakespeares'.¹¹ This ambivalence bespeaks a disidentification with the figure of Shakespeare authorised by dominant culture. Judith Butler defines disidentification as 'the experience of *misrecognition*, the uneasy sense of standing under a sign to which one does and does not belong' (1993, 219). In *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics*, José Esteban Muñoz employs this concept to consider the way that sexual and racial minorities negotiate mainstream culture through the performative arts. An alternative to identification (which entails assimilation, acceptance of the status quo, and the denial of difference) and counteridentification (which can reify and reinstate the very discourse opposed), Muñoz proposes that disidentification denotes a partial identification with, and subversive reworking or rearticulation of, hegemonic culture. Thus disidentification involves working 'on, with, and against' the mainstream to 'resist and confound' it (Muñoz 1999, 28). It is a strategy that enables minorities to navigate and transform dominant culture by reinventing or 'recycling' cultural forms, practices and discourses experienced as oppressive (Muñoz 1999, 31).

Orton disidentifies with Shakespeare as a working class queer and recycles his precursor's plays to alter their representation of social status and to amplify their gender and sexual dissidence. Orton's recycling strategy is distinct from conventional forms of adaptation, defined by Linda Hutcheon as 'an announced and extensive transposition of a particular work or works' (2006, 7). His use of appropriation and reinvention renders Shakespeare's plays at once fundamental and unfamiliar. A blend of

¹¹ BBC interview with Roland Orton, August 1967. Listen here: <https://soundcloud.com/scribblinggin/joe-orton>, accessed 8 August, 2016

imitation and transformation is reflected in his classification of *Loot* as a ‘comedy of horrors’ (qtd. Lahr 1980, 225), a phrase that combines Shakespeare’s *Comedy of Errors* with Madame Tussaud’s ‘Chamber of Horrors’, a collection of waxworks of notorious murderers. Orton follows Shakespeare in merging comedy and tragedy, but intensifies the dark humour of the problem plays. Though Daniel Fischlin and Mark Fortier do not include Orton in their critical anthology of Shakespeare adaptations, his plays could be counted, like Djanet Sears’ prequel to *Othello*, *Harlem Duet* (1997), as those in which Shakespeare forms ‘a barely visible (but nonetheless significant) backdrop’ (2000, 287).

Orton’s interest in revision is indicated by his (grudging) admiration for Tom Stoppard’s *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* (1966), which retells *Hamlet* from the perspective of two peripheral characters. Though he deemed the play itself ‘undergraduate and juvenile’, Orton is forced to concede that it is a ‘wonderful idea’ (Orton 1986, 135). In his own plays, Orton shares Stoppard’s interest in marginal characters, but moves away from his focus on gentlemen and nobles. As he comments in his diary, ‘*The Erpingham Camp*, of course, is simply *Hamlet* without the Prince’ (1986, 181). Orton’s central characters are working-class, and more complex and unsettling than members of the lower orders in Shakespeare’s plays. In comedy, figures such as the Mechanicals in *A Midsummer Nights’ Dream* are affable but absurd. In tragedy, characters like the Porter in *Macbeth* or the gravediggers in *Hamlet* provide light relief. In contrast, Orton’s characters are often simultaneously comic and tragic. In *Entertaining Mr Sloane*, social respectability has demanded that Kath give up the baby she had out of wedlock and Eddie forsake his ‘special friend’ Tommy. McLeavy in *Loot* and Geraldine in *What the Butler Saw* are cruelly exploited and manipulated, the innocent victims of other people’s self-interest. Also, whereas the audience laughs at

working-class clumsiness or stupidity in Shakespeare, one of the central targets of Orton's satire is social aspiration and pretence. In her pursuit of a wealthy husband, Fay in *Loot* resembles Helena in *All's Well That Ends Well*. Both women employ deceit and trickery to achieve their ends, though Orton stresses Fay's criminality through excess: she resorts to extortion and mass murder. The end of *What the Butler Saw*, which sees twins separated at birth reunited and socially elevated by the discovery that they have a bourgeois father, blends plot devices in *Cymbeline* and *The Comedy of Errors* (siblings reunited with their father) and *The Winter's Tale* (lowly child reunited with a rich parent). However, Orton employs farce to undermine rather than affirm the normative kinship ties and class hierarchy that ensure social stability in Shakespeare.

According to Taylor, Shakespeare's plays present 'nobility' as a feature of the social elite, not ordinary citizens (1991, 403). In contrast, characters who occupy an elevated social position in Orton's plays, like the middle-class psychiatrists Rance and Prentice in *What the Butler Saw*, are exposed as disreputable liars and hypocrites. In addition, Orton undermines social hierarchy by recasting Shakespearean heroes in working class roles. Hal in *Loot* is a lower class version of Prince Hal, a son in conflict with his father and a wayward youth who enjoys the society of petty criminals and engages in riotous behaviour. Orton's note on *The Erpingham Camp* suggests a similar strategy in terms of staging: 'Changes of scene are suggested by lighting and banners after the manner of the Royal Shakespeare Company's productions of Shakespeare's histories' (Orton 1988, 278). Orton erodes social and artistic boundaries by shifting a Shakespeare History play from court to holiday camp. As Shepherd notes, as chaos ensues in the play 'the solemn staging becomes increasingly a joke, a joke that subverts the theatrical taste and decorum of the audience' (1989, 91). Parallels between *The*

Erpingham Camp and *Henry VI, Part II* invite comparison: both texts feature a peasants' revolt, a rebel who loses control of the uprising he leads, and anarchic scenes of looting and drunkenness. Yet Henry is a weak and ineffectual king whereas Erpingham is a tyrant. Thus, where Shakespeare suggests that strong leadership is needed to maintain the social and political order, the more radical Orton intimates that dictators must be overthrown. Order is re-established at the end of *The Erpingham Camp* but, in contrast to Shakespeare, who emphasises the need for social order, Orton's use of farce renders his dénouement deeply ironic.

If Orton reconfigures the social class of Shakespeare's characters, he simultaneously amplifies their queerness through gender and sexual ambiguity. According to Meron Madhavi, 'hyper-canonical Shakespeare' is 'the opposite of queerness' (2011, 12). While James Bromley identifies queer potential in plays such as *All's Well That Ends Well* and *Cymbeline*, he acknowledges that they 'temporarily posit alternate forms of embodiment, pleasure and affection' and ultimately foster 'the disavowal of anality' (2012, 50 emphasis added; 64). Homoeroticism is 'deflected' (Bromley 2012, 74) and alternatives to marriage and reproduction are 'briefly intelligible' only when the plays are read 'against the grain of their narratives' (Bromley 2012, 78 emphasis added). Orton augments the queer dissonances and resonances that form the 'underbelly' of Shakespeare's plays (Madhavi 2011, 21). Like *Twelfth Night*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Measure for Measure* and *Cymbeline*, *What the Butler Saw* employs transvestism to revel in the instability of gender. Like the sexual slang that lurks beneath Shakespeare's dialogue (Taylor 1991, 403), in Orton's plays *double entendre* is employed to sexually suggestive effect. The erotic triangles between a man, his female lover and male friend that Marjorie Garber (1993) sees in *Othello*, *Much Ado*

About Nothing and *The Winter's Tale* are echoed in the relationship between brother, sister and male lodger in *Entertaining Mr Sloane*. Here, as in Shakespeare, homosexual desire is masked by heterosexual relations, though sexual perversity is intensified through the implication of incest in Orton. Bringing the subtext of incest in *Hamlet* to the fore, Kath positions Sloane as both son and lover. Similarly, Shepherd notes that the conclusion of *What the Butler Saw*, which features 'the rediscovery of kinship and familial relations', is 'Orton's version of the ending of a late Shakespearean comedy' that parodies tradition through the revelation that 'sexual liaisons have in reality been incestuous' (1989, 47). Orton spotlights the same-sex desire masked in Shakespeare's plays. Eddie's attraction to the young male lodger is blatantly clear in *Sloane* even if his use of innuendo indicates inhibition; in *Loot*, Hal calls Dennis 'baby' and, complaining about his debauchery, Fay tells Hal 'Even the sex you were born into isn't safe from your marauding' (Orton 1988, 200).

The striking continuity between the subversive treatment of Shakespeare on the collaged library book covers and in Orton's revisionary plays is echoed in Julie Sanders' equation of adaptation and appropriation with collage. As she explains, intertextuality can be equated with bricolage, the assemblage of a range of quotations, allusions and citations from other works of art (2005, 4). The consistency of Orton's rebellious attitude to Shakespeare across his work is significant as it casts doubt on the attribution of the redesigned Arden dust jackets to Halliwell alone. Critics typically accredit the Shakespeare covers to Halliwell, who studied Classics at school, 'was expected to have an academic career' (Colsell 2013, 30), possessed a 'more moderate sensibility' (Colsell 2013, 29) and pursued collage when he gave up writing. Outrageous Orton, who failed his Eleven Plus exam, is thought to have produced the cruder, coarser, more 'slapstick'

artwork on the middlebrow and popular books (Colsell 2013, 29). The attribution of the Shakespeare covers to Halliwell, along with his representation as a jealous, mentally unbalanced failure, is one reason for their neglect.¹² However, the cheeky humour of the doctored Shakespeare covers challenges the prevailing view of Halliwell as a 'grave' man who 'could never unclench' (Orton 1986, 25) just as much as a deep interest in Shakespeare that pre-dates his relationship with Halliwell challenges Orton's reputation as an ignorant ruffian prior to meeting the man who became his mentor. Furthermore, it is clear that Orton and Halliwell were close. Their lives were 'inseparable' (Hoare 2013, 12), they shared each other's clothes and could impersonate one another perfectly (Colsell 2013, 36). Both men stressed that their partnership was based on unity and collaboration. Halliwell referred to them as 'a genius like us' (qtd. Lahr 1980, 5) and Orton called *Entertaining Mr Sloane* 'our play' (qtd. Lahr 1980, 37). This personal and artistic intimacy, in conjunction with Orton's persistent interest in Shakespeare (evident from his teenage diary to his death), strongly indicates that the Shakespeare collages deserve to be recognised as the product of a creative partnership.

Overall, Orton's treatment of the Bard confirms Shaughnessy's assertion that 'Shakespeare (as both body of work and cultural myth) has acted as a conduit for current aspirations and anxieties, and as an arena wherein ideologies of nation, state and selfhood are legitimated, negotiated and occasionally contested' (2013, 3). In the 1950s, Shakespeare became 'thoroughly institutionalized' (Taylor 1991, 385). Orton and Halliwell responded to the bourgeois appropriation of Shakespeare by redesigning the covers of Arden editions of the plays to subvert their cultural capital. Orton's later

¹² See John Lahr, *Prick Up Your Ears: The Biography of Joe Orton* (1978).

plays recycle Shakespearean plots, lines, themes and motifs to articulate his working class and queer sensibility. Orton's reshaping of Shakespeare presages attempts to reimagine his work from alternative perspectives, exemplified by texts such as Ann-Marie MacDonald's *Goodnight Desdemona (Good Morning Juliet)* (1988), a lesbian adaptation of *Othello* and *Romeo and Juliet*; Jane Smiley's *A Thousand Acres* (1991), a feminist revision of *King Lear*; and Marina Warner's *Indigo* (1992), a postcolonial reinterpretation of *The Tempest*. Anticipating these resignifications of Shakespeare, Orton's redesigned library book covers and his plays parody 'Shoxbear' (bourgeois emblem of cultural elitism) to reclaim Shakespeare from a working class, queer perspective.

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