Shakespearanity:
Macbeth's Third Murderer and the Evolution of Shakespeare's Pop Culture Status

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Abstract:

Shakespeare's immense cultural value can be seen by the numerous book, movie, and internet references to his work which populate modern society. However, this was not always the case: for hundreds of years Shakespeare remained the almost exclusive property of the aristocracy and academia. Scholars have noted how this perception of Shakespeare shifted during the Victorian era, but have not yet explored how this influences contemporary interactions with Shakespeare. This paper, through a case study on the third murderer of *Macbeth,* argues that the Victorian Era changed the way modern people conceptualize and interact with the playwright by beginning the legacy of engaging with Shakespeare as a pop culture icon.

Shakespeare was not always the legendary pillar of English language, literature, and culture he is today. In the more than 400 years since Shakespeare began writing his now world-renowned plays, his cultural value and the methods of interacting with his work have constantly evolved. Such an evolution would not have been possible without both high and low culture interacting with his texts in numerous ways.[1] The Victorian era marked a turning point in the changing perceptions of what Shakespeare means to society. His pop culture status expanded and became more prevalent because of a obsession with his life and works. The explosion of conversation about the mysterious 'third murderer' character in *Macbeth* presents a specific case to examine Shakespeare's shift from a beloved playwright for aristocrats and academics to the epitome of English literature.

Many of Shakespeare's plays were not published until after his death. From edition to edition inconsistent dialogue, character names, and settings indicate the disconnect between Shakespeare writing for performance and when those words reached print. The situation of an entirely new character appearing out of nowhere intrigued and excited the Victorians, engaging a litany of people outside of academia from famous actors to conspiracy theorists. In Act III of *Macbeth,* Macbeth's old friend Banquo has now become a major obstacle in Macbeth's quest for power because the witches prophesied that it would be Banquo, not Macbeth, who would father the new line of Scottish kings. Macbeth once again takes fate into his own hands, and hires two mercenaries - called murderers - to assassinate Banquo, saying: "Both of you know Banquo was your enemy… so he is mine, and in such bloody distance / That every minute of his being thrusts against my

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[1] Numerous scholars address this point, including Robert Shaughnessy (ed.) *in The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare and Popular Culture*, Stuart Sillars in *Shakespeare and the Victorians,* and Kathryn Prince in "Shakespeare in the Periodicals."

near'st life."[2] The mystery of the third murderer is that at the appointed time – Act III Scene 3 – there are three murderers there to accomplish Banquo's assassination, not two. This situation is unique among the many inconsistencies in Shakespeare's texts because the wording in Act III Scene 1 makes it clear Shakespeare did not forget to mention there was a third man there when Macbeth hired the murderers that went unmentioned or a line was later accidentally omitted from the scene where Macbeth first meets the murderers. Macbeth in the above quote speaks to "both" of the murderers, implying two, and in Act III Scene 3 the first words from the first murderer to the third murderer are "But who did bid thee join with us?" demonstrating that the other two murderers do not know who the third murderer is, or at least did not know he was coming.[3] The introduction of this mysterious character presents multiple questions to Shakespeare's audience: How did he know to meet the other murderers there? Who sent him? Who is he?

The purpose of this paper is not to suggest a new theory about the identity of the third murderer. Instead, I discuss the new community of Shakespearean enthusiasts who emerged due to and debated this mystery, and the implications of their discourse. By examining this single minor character one can begin to unpack how communities centered around an interest in Shakespeare developed and continue to influence modern understandings of what interacting with Shakespeare's works entails. The Victorian era, as demonstrated in the growing and changing conversations around the third murderer, reveals a shift in society's understanding of and relationship with Shakespeare. The theories about the third murderer's possible identities represent the beginning of a cultural genealogy of Shakespearean enthusiasts, who by introducing their own ideas and opinions to editorial questions about Shakespeare's works connected with Shakespeare in an entirely new way. By studying the intersection of *Macbeth's* editorial genealogy and Shakespeare's cultural status in the Victorian era one can examine how Shakespearean enthusiasts' new community was positioned between academia and popular culture. This study reveals how our modern understanding of Shakespeare and his works have been shaped by the values of those who have interacted with Shakespeare throughout history.

Editorial Interactions with Shakespeare

Before the Victorian era, the intentions of those interacting with Shakespeare was to preserve his works for posterity. While analysis and entertainment were encouraged, they were not the main endeavor of Shakespeare's editors. The First Folio was printed seven years after Shakespeare's death in 1616 and was the first place *Macbeth* was printed, along with 17 of Shakespeare's other plays. It was commissioned by John Heminge and Henry Condell, actors with the King's Men and Shakespeare's friends while he was alive.[4] In their foreword to the text, Heminge and Condell encourage the readers "to read, and

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[2] Shakespeare, William. *Macbeth.* (eds. Stephen Orgel and A.R. Braunmuller. The Pelican Shakespeare, General edition: New York, 2016), 3.1.114-118. Text compared to the Folger Shakespeare Library's digitized First Folio, copy 68.

[3] Ibid, 3.3.1. (First Folio copy of this scene pictured on the left.)

[4] LoMonico, Michael. "Teaching Shakespeare's *First Folio* and the Instability of the text." (*CEA Critic* 78, no. 2, Summer 2016), 149.

censure. Do so, but buy it first… whatever you do, Buy."[5] Heminge and Condell encouraged early modern readers to relate to Shakespeare's text, but only after protecting the longevity of his words through commercial means. The First Folio presented Shakespeare's plays in a way never before seen - in 1623, a folio collection consisting entirely of plays was a rare commodity in opposition to plays printed in quarto format.[6] Publishing in folio format had economic advantages because it enabled large amounts of text to be printed while also being an efficient use of expensive paper. Additionally, folio form had a high status, affiliated more with "religious, topographical or historical contents than the down-market products of the London theatre."[7] In the early modern world playwrights were not held in high esteem, but by publishing a collection of his plays - and particularly by publishing in a folio format - Heminge and Condell introduced Shakespeare to scholarly interest. By authorizing his plays through commercial means and disseminating his work through a sufficiently scholarly medium, Heminge and Condell began the legacy of preservation which characterized scholarship's interactions with Shakespeare for hundreds of years.

Many of Shakespeare's plays were printed after his death, and depended on print shops' outsourcing to prepare the text for print. Despite their endeavor to authorize Shakespeare's plays, Heminge and Condell's First Folio – and the following Second (1632), Third (1663–64), and Fourth Folios (1685) – were left to be set by compositors in the print-shops where human error lead to variance within the texts.[8] Eighteenth century scholars saw themselves as combating these inconsistencies in their attempts to create an authoritative Shakespeare text. While modern scholarship has contested the point, when editors in the eighteenth century accessed Shakespeare they considered most early printed editions as not 'pure' Shakespeare, but rather corrupt and degenerate versions of the great playwright's words.[9] Eighteenth century scholars sought to recreate an original Shakespeare in an effort to protect the legacy of Shakespeare's words, and Shakespeare's words alone.

Shakespeare's inconsistent publication history provided plenty of opportunities for eighteenth century scholars to engage in traditional textual bibliography. Bibliographic scholar D.F. McKenzie refers to this as studying the "composition, formal design, and transmission of texts by writers, printers, and publishers."[10] These scholars endeavored to correct the mistakes made over the last hundred years and create authoritative Shakespearean texts for future

[5] Wayne, Valerie. "The First Folio's Arrangement and Its Finale." (*Shakespeare Quarterly* 66, no. 4, Winter 2015), 389, 391.
[6] Smith, Emma J. *Shakespeare's First Folio: Four Centuries of an Iconic Book,* (Oxford University Press, 2015, kindle version), 5. Steven K. Galbraith in "English Literary Folios 1593-1623" and Valerie Wayne in the aforementioned article discuss this trend further.
[7] Ibid, 6. Chapter two "from folio to quarto; or, size matters" of David Kastan's *Shakespeare and the*

Book also argues publishing Shakespeare's collection of plays in folio format lent it prestige.
[8] Referenced in Halliday, F.E. *A Shakespeare Companion 1564–1964.* (Baltimore: Penguin, 1964), 319.
[9] See Sonia Massai, *Shakespeare and the Rise of the Editor* (Cambridge, Cambridge UP: 2007).
[10] McKenzie, D.F. "The Book as an Expressive Form." (in *The Book History Reader, 2e.* eds. David Finkelstein and Alistair McCleery. New York: Routledge, 2006), 36.

generations to study and enjoy.[11] In 1710 the Statute of Anne changed copyright law in England, allowing compositor Jacob Tonson to gain the rights to the Fourth Folio of Shakespeare's plays and make this scholarship legally possible.[12] Editors such as Lewis Theobald, Edward Capell, George Steevens, and Edmond Malone dedicated their entire professorial lives to editing Shakespeare's works. The endeavors of these scholars moved beyond Heminge and Condell's focus of creating an economically successful and therefore long lasting text. They made conjectural emendations, added stage directions and lists of dramatis personae, collated the quartos, and researched Shakespeare's source texts. Edward Capell, for example, spent three decades studying Shakespeare in order to publish a corrected version of Thomas Hanmer and William Warburton's poorly researched editions.[13] According to recent scholarship, Edmond Malone's ten-volume edited text of Shakespeare's plays (published in 1790) became the foundation on which later editions of *Macbeth* were dependent and is still considered an authoritative text in modern Shakespearean studies.[14] Modern scholarship utilizes Malone's work in addition to the earliest texts, beginning of the separation between scholarship and popular culture, textual authority and the reader's creative authority. The concepts of historical analysis, authenticity, textual biography, and an emphasis on the chronological development of Shakespeare's writing - which contemporary Shakespearean scholarship still concerns itself with - developed in Malone's era.[15] The concern with performance and the introduction of new ideas and perspectives without a textual basis developed later.

As scholars' main endeavor was to create and guard an authoritative Shakespeare, the third murderer had no place in academia. Prevalent Shakespearean scholars in the eighteenth century did not explicitly address or try to alter the third murderer scene in the works they edited, much less create theories to explain the scene. These scholars undeniably admired Shakespeare's works: they did not seek to dispute a text's authority on the situations it detailed by suggesting their own solutions to textual inconsistencies. The focus was on textual authenticity. For a scholar who spent 30 years trying to ascertain the precise wording and order of Shakespeare's texts, the prospect of changing or giving a personal explanation for the third murder seems inconceivable. However, the Victorians diverged from this mentality towards Shakespeare by reintroducing him to society at large.

The Victorians and Shakespeare

The resurgence of popular interest in Shakespeare during the mid-nineteenth century was part of a broader fascination

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[11] For more examples, see the work of Carlton Hinman and W.W. Greg.
[12] Feather, John. "Copyright and the Creation of Literary Property." (*Companion to the History of the Book*. Eds. Simon Eliot and Jonathan Rose. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 521.
[13] Chisholm, Hugh, ed. "Capell, Edward." (Encyclopædia Britannica online 11th ed., 1911, Cambridge University Press).

[14] Sherbo, Arthur. "Restoring Malone" (The Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America 101, no. 2, June 2007), 125
[15] De Grazia, Margareta. *Shakespeare Verbatim: The Reproduction of Authenticity and the 1790 Apparatus*. (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1991).

with the Elizabethan era. Victorians thought of Elizabeth's reign (1558-1603) as a time of great artistic expression, military success, and growing civil rights: England's Golden Age. The Encyclopedia Britannica maintains that "'Merry England' in love with life, expressed itself in music and literature…" a modern definition which is the product of the Victorian Era's conferral of "Golden Age" status onto Elizabeth's England. For the Victorians, no one represented this Golden Age more than William Shakespeare. Encyclopedia Britannica continues, "William Shakespeare, poet and dramatist, mirrored that age in verse that lifted the English language to its fullest beauty."[16] Influential essayists and critics such as Matthew Arnold tended to think of Elizabethan life as robust and expressive as opposed to the stifling Puritanism that was pervasive during the Victorian Era. Arnold states in *Poems: A New Edition* that "They [the Elizabethans], at any rate, knew what they wanted in Art, and we do not."[17] Shakespeare was for the vast majority of Victorians *the* representative of Elizabethan culture and language, and as such his popularity grew exponentially in the Victorian era. For example, Shakespeare was proclaimed "poet of the people" during the 1864 celebration of the playwright's birth, a mentality which was reflected throughout Victorian society.[18] *Punch*, a British humor magazine, coined the term "Shakespearanity" to describe the combination of reverence and familiarity with which majority of Victorian society

regarded Shakespeare's works.[19] This term can retrospectively be used to characterize the changing mentality the Victorian's had in regards to Shakespeare because of their familiarity. I use Shakespearanity throughout the remainder of this paper to describe this phenomenon. Because of the Victorian's obsession with Elizabethan culture, Shakespeare became one of the most pervasive intellectual, artistic, and ideological social forces of Victorian society, influencing numerous aspects of life in a range social classes and situations.

Due to Shakespeare's enormous importance to the Victorians, his works were performed to an extent exceeding when he was alive. In 1843, the Theatre Regulation Act disbanded the distinction between patented - legitimate - theaters and unpatented ones, which allowed theaters that previously did not have access to Shakespeare's work to perform his plays, leading to an explosion of Shakespearean performances unparalleled in hundreds of years.[20] From London's West End to minor neighborhood theaters, Shakespeare was performed at such high volumes that the *Theatrical Journal* remarked even Shakespeare could be too much: "What an amazing folly to assume that Shakespeare is sufficient for all purposes!"[21] But the numerous performances of Shakespeare's works in London are not only the most obvious example of his importance to Victorian culture.

Shakespeare's prevalence was also seen in how his works were included in Victorian

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[16] "England." (Encyclopedia Britannica Online. 25 April 2016).

[17] Arnold, Mathew. *Poems: A New Edition.* (*Culture and Anarchy and Other Writings.* Ed. Stefan Collini. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993), 31

[18] Sillars, Stuart. (*Shakespeare and the Victorians.* Oxford, UK: Oxford UP, 2013), 25.

[19] Ibid, 1.

[20] Ibid, 51.

[21] Prince, Kathryn. "Shakespeare in the Periodicals." (*Shakespeare in the Nineteenth Century.* Gail Marshall, ed. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2012.), 72.

primary education no matter the student's socioeconomic class. A common educational practice during the Victorian era was to memorize large chunks of classic literature and then be able to recite them on command.[22] During the mid-nineteenth century, Shakespeare became commonplace material for this kind of instruction in addition to the classics of the Christian world, such as the Bible and Book of Common Prayer.[23] This was a controversial move, however, due to the strongly held Puritan beliefs of many Victorians. Shakespeare was seen by some as offensive. For example, an associate of Mary Ann Hearn begged Mary to give her personal copy of Shakespeare's works to her and "let her burn it, as she was sure it was an offense in the sight of God."[24] But despite this controversy, Shakespeare's prevalence was still incredibly powerful because both working class and educated people were interacting with Shakespeare in theatrical and educational contexts. This educational aspect of Shakespeare allowed the masses to understand his works from more than just an audience's perspective, and introduced the concept of non-scholarly interactions with physical texts.

Paton: The First Third Murderer Theorist

Allen Park Paton was introduced to *Macbeth* through the Victorian obsession with Shakespeare. In September 1869, Paton published a theory that Macbeth is the third murderer in the periodical *Notes and Queries*. *Notes and Queries* is a periodical "devoted principally to English language

and literature, lexicography, history, and scholarly antiquarianism," but primarily answers readers' questions.[25] Through the asking and answering questions Paton proposes his theory. Paton states, "I do not remember having seen this suggested by any Shakespearean commentator. Yet I think there are grounds for believing that it was a part of Shakespeare's design that he purposefully left it untold in words, and, as it were, a secret to be found out…"[26] By publishing this theory, Paton utilized the inconsistency as an avenue to introduce his own ideas into the play, rather than responding to the third murderer mystery as if it was a problem in establishing the authority of *Macbeth's* text. While Shakespeare's official words were paramount for eighteenth century academics, Victorian Shakespeare fans began to concern themselves with what Shakespeare did not write. They built stories rather than search for historical facts to fill the gaps in Shakespeare's writing.

The eight points of Paton's theory of revolve around a combination of observations about the events surrounding Banquo's murder in Act III Scene 3 and a character analysis of Macbeth. The first three of Paton's points consider timing: though Macbeth's banquet began at seven, he did not arrive there until nearly midnight and right after Macbeth entered the banquet room the first murderer arrived to announce Banquo's death. Thus, Macbeth had four or five hours alone, and, as Paton suggests, "with such a dreadful matter at issue, he could not have been resting or engaged in any other business." Paton here illustrates

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[22] Murphy, Andrew. *Shakespeare for the People: Working-class Readers, 1800-1900*. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 2008.), 32.
[23] Ibid, 34.

[24] Ibid, 97.
[25] "Notes and Queries Description." (*Notes and Queries*. Oxford Journals, 1 Mar. 2016. Web. 25 Apr. 2016.)
[26] Paton, Allan Park. "Macbeth." Notes and Queries 4.102 (11 September 1869). Web. 29 December 2016.

how Victorian Shakespearanity changed the mentality people regarded Shakespeare's texts with: he assumes his familiarity with the texts enables him to understand what Shakespeare meant a character to do and feel without the text ever actually expressing it. The fact Paton thought to address Macbeth in this context reveals how Paton (and, later, the others who subsequently published theories) responded to Shakespeare's newfound pop culture status by treating his stories and characters as if they existed in the real world, where they *could* have motivations and experiences outside what Shakespeare wrote. The point is not that Paton may or may not be wrong about Macbeth's off-stage activities, but to even ask that question at all indicates a fundamental change from the way eighteenth century scholars thought about the Shakespeare's texts. Paton's assumption he could understand Shakespeare's intentions without any strong textual evidence to support his reading is indicative of the new environment Shakespearanity established and the difference between Victorian readings of Shakespeare's work and those earlier academics.

Paton next analyzes the actions of the third murderer, noting how he recognized Banquo and Fleance immediately, was familiar with the surroundings and the first two murderers' orders, and committed "twenty mortal murders" to Banquo's person (stabbed him twenty times), which Paton argues is all far beyond the work of a mere mercenary. Paton, in his last two points, analyzes how "there was a levity in Macbeth's manner in his interview with the first murderer… which might well be if he personally knew that Banquo was dead" in

contrast to his terror with he sees Banquo's ghost – a terror that Paton claims could only have come from a personal knowledge of Banquo's demise. Again, Paton explains the reason for Macbeth's emotions without having any more knowledge or reasoning for his theory than the lack of evidence to the contrary. There may have been a "levity in Macbeth's manner" for any number of reasons, as well as his terror at seeing Banquo's ghost. These reactions address Macbeth as if he were a real person with independent motivations and fears. By inventing theories to explain what is not assuredly known Paton constructs a possible reading for *Macbeth* which had never been considered – or, at least, published – and in doing so, creates an alternative method for interacting with Shakespeare's plays. Paton's reading of *Macbeth* – and its publication – would not have addressed Macbeth's unwritten motivations without the established familiarity with Shakespeare common for the Victorian era.

Near the end of the article where he outlines his theory, Paton claims that "to anyone accepting such a view, the tragedy will be found, I believe, deepened in effect." This implies that what matters to Paton is not how objectively correct his theory is, but how knowing the third murderer's identity allows readers to connect with *Macbeth* in a different, more meaningful way. Finding meaning in a reading, no matter its objective accuracy, is part of McKenzie's characterization of the history of text as a history of misreadings. Each misreading constitutes part of the text's informative history: "each reading is peculiar to its occasion... becoming a historical document in its own right."[27] Paton's theory is not

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[27] McKenzie, D.F. "The Book as an Expressive Form." (in *The Book History Reader, 2e.* eds. David Finkelstein and Alistair McCleery. New York: Routledge, 2006), 40-41.

technically an incorrect reading, but it is not correct either, and it is peculiar to its time. Without Shakespearanity, Paton would not have been able to make the claims like he did, and those claims would certainly not have received the same response. Paton, in publishing his theory, became a part of *Macbeth's* cultural history.

Part of what makes the third murderer a singularly interesting and important aspect of Shakespeare's cultural history is how the changing Victorian mindset was driven by opinionated dialogue rather than the addition of new information. Paton, closing out his article, states "I would like to hear by whom a similar opinion has been held, and if on the same grounds." This statement serves two functions: an invitation for Paton's contemporaries to engage with him about his theory – which they did without reservation – and also as a means of authorizing his own theory. Paton specifically extended an invitation to people with "similar opinion," not those who disagree. However, as with Paton, the only requirement to having a viable theory on the third murderer was a familiarity with *Macbeth* and the ability to articulate one's opinion, so alternative theories inevitably – and quickly – appeared.

Expanding Conversations on the Third Murderer

The third murderer was one of the first topics of conversation the non-scholarly Shakespearean enthusiasts discussed and a conversation which grew exponentially. Paton's theory provoked an immediate response: in *Notes and Queries* alone, seven articles were published responding to

Paton's theory within the year. Some of these responses, such as Erato Hills's, were rebuttals to Paton's arguments. Hills points out that in giving evidence for his theory Paton misquoted *Macbeth,* stating "Mr. Paton seems to have written from memory. The third murderer neither gives or repeats orders at all."[28] Furthermore Hills argues that Macbeth may have acted happy at the banquet for the benefit of the other nobles present, not because he was present at the assassination as Paton suggests. Alternatively, responses such as John Addis's were not direct rebuttals to Paton, but afford him thanks "for a quite original suggestion" before presenting their own theories.[29] Additionally, others such as E.L.S. argue that there could not be a secret identity for the third murderer. Instead, they argue the scene was written by someone other than Shakespeare, because Shakespeare would not have accidently made a character appear out of nowhere: "I can almost suppose the original assassination scene to have been dropped out of the prompter's book, and its *hiatus defendus* bridged over by some hurried scribe…" an answer they freely admit is rather unsatisfactory.[30]

These examples of enthusiasts interacting with Paton illustrate how third murderer theories spread throughout Shakespeare enthusiast's dialogue in the Victorian era and began to gain a pop culture status. It began with Paton's theory in *Notes and Queries,* then when responses, arguments, and alternative theories were presented the question of the third murderer became more prevalent outside of academia.

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[28] Hills, Erato. "Was Macbeth the Third Murderer of Banquo?" (*Notes and Queries* 4th S. iv. 211), 282.
[29] Addis, John. "Was Macbeth the Third Murderer of Banquo?" (*Notes and Queries* 4th S. iv. 211), 283.

[30] E.L.S. "Was Macbeth the Third Murderer of Banquo?" (*Notes and Queries* 4th S. iv. 211), 284.

Later, big names in the Shakespearean community such as Henry Irving began writing about the third murderer and the mystery became common knowledge. As these events happen, it is important to note that Paton's theory and the third murderer mystery itself were provocative enough to actually cause all this conversation. The third murderer, unlike other Shakespearean mysteries, did not require knowledge beyond the play itself: the enthusiasts did not have to concern themselves with Shakespeare the author, just the product of his writing. Additionally, Banquo's murderer scene is a climactic moment of the play and by changing the third murderer's identity one can twist the fundamental questions of the play, like whether Macbeth is fundamentally evil. Later, people such as M.F. Libby utilize the third murderer as the cornerstone for theories about the play as a whole. From two short scenes, people were able to extrapolate numerous situations, conspiracies, and character analyses, feeding off each other and enabling the debate to grow into a pop culture phenomenon.

Shakespeare's New Pop Culture Status

As Paton, Hills, and other theorists' dialogue continued to expand, the idea of viewing and interacting with Shakespeare's works through a more creative lens became common outside of scholars' work with Shakespeare. Since the third murderer theorists were some of the first to introduce this new perspective, the question of the third murderer's identity was discussed throughout Victorian society outside of academia. Evidence of the third murderer developing a pop culture status can be seen in a famous actor and a humor magazine's interest in the mystery.

Henry Irving was a predominant Shakespearean actor during the Victorian era. He took complete responsibility for the Lyceum Theatre in London, and under his direction the company performed numerous Shakespeare plays to great commercial success.[31] Irving was the first actor to receive a knighthood, the ultimate indication of acceptance by higher British society.[32] Irving published his theory on the third murderer as part of his series "An Actor's Notes on Shakespeare" in 1877, arguing that the character labeled 'Attendant' who is seen bringing in the first two murderers in Act III Scene 1 is the third murderer. Irving utilizes the stage direction he would be intimately familiar with as both an actor and the Lyceum's stage manager in addition to the dialogue as a basis for his claim. Irving notes that before Macbeth calls in the first two murderers "all exeunt but Macbeth and attendant," which becomes the basis for Irving's argument that Macbeth trusts the attendant enough to have him help with Banquo's murder.[33] Additionally, Irving argues that despite the fact that the first two murderers do not recognize the third, the second assumes he is trustworthy, meaning they probably vaguely recognized him, stating "My theory would account for this familiar acquaintance on the part of the third murderer without recourse to any such violent probability as that the third murderer was Macbeth himself."[34] This particular theory speaks to the theatrical community - Irving notes that the third murderer does not

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[31] Richards, Jeffery. *Sir Henry Irving: A Victorian Actor and His World*. (A&C Black, 2007), 15.
[32] Ibid, 109.

[33] Ivring, Henry. "An Actor's Notes on Shakespeare." (*The Nineteenth Century: A Monthly Review* 1.1, April 1877), 327.
[34] Ibid, 330.

appear in any dramatis personae "of any edition which I bear in mind" - and illustrates Irving's prominence in the acting community[35] The fact Irving's opinion on this matter was sought and subsequently published speaks to both his reputation as an actor and the non-academic nature of the third murderer mystery.

Interestingly, Irving claims that since the question of the third murderer's identity was introduced by Paton in 1869, no one has thought to identify him as the attendant: "A theory on this subject has struck me, which has not, so far as I am aware, been hitherto advanced."[36] A reason why Irving was the first to introduce the attendant as a possible candidate for the third murderer is a continued adherence to 'official' Shakespeare, even as enthusiasts began to separate from academia in their interactions with his works. Moy Thomas in his rebuttal of Irving's theory states "Mr. Irving attempts to arrive at the identity of the third murderer, but utterly fails through mistaking interpolated stage directions in the play for Shakespeare's."[37] Even as the dialogues between enthusiasts and scholars became increasingly separated, the history of scholars trying to determine what is authentically Shakespeare's content still influenced enthusiasts' theories. However, even as Irving's theory was rebutted by Thomas, it proves an important point: one did not have to be Shakespearean scholar to have a valid and interesting perception of Shakespeare's works, and the theory did not need to depend on Shakespeare's 'authentic' words.

Beyond individuals, publications also interacted with the Shakespeare enthusiast community by presenting their own theories. *Punch* was a weekly British humor and satire magazine which began in the 1840s and grew in influence throughout the Victorian era.[38] *Punch* recognized enough people would be familiar enough with the third murderer mystery they only explained the situation they were addressing in the title "How the Third Murderer Came to be Introduced to Macbeth," illustrating the pop culture status *Macbeth's* third murderer gained during the this time. In April 1877, it issued its own explanation for how the third murderer came to be through a sketch written by Francis Burnand about a behind the scenes moment at the Globe. An actor for the King's men, named Tymkyn, complains to Shakespeare about his part of the attendant is too small: "One line, Sir; only one line and that [with inexpressible contempt] a mere feeder for Macbeth."[39] As Tymkyn continues to argue his point, Richard Burbage notes to Shakespeare, "You do know you want to a good man in the attendant's part, Tymkyn'll do it for you, if you just give him a line or two more…" thus pushing Shakespeare to include extra lines in *Macbeth* for Tymkyn. Shakespeare initially considers making Tymkyn a fourth witch, but after Richard Burbage's appeal for "no more of your arointed witches!" Shakespeare decides to make the character of the attendant double as a third murderer. "Then next day at rehearsal, Master Ralph Tymkyn was present with a part carefully written out in the largest and roundest hand,

[35] Ibid, 328.
[36] Ibid, 327.
[37] Thomas, Moy. "Mr. Ivring on Shakespeare." (*The Anthenaeum,* 5 May 1877), 21.

[38] Young, Alan R. *Punch and Shakespeare in the Victorian Era.* (Peter Lang: Oxford, 2007), 133.
[39] Burnand, Francis. "How the Third Murderer Came to Be Introduced Into Macbeth." (*Punch,* April 1877), 160-161.

extending for over three pages, and containing several additional lines for the Attendant, who henceforth doubled as the character of the Third Murderer.”

Though the skit was short and intended for humor, *Punch's* utilization of this mystery shows the magazine's audience would have been familiar with the third murderer, indicating its widespread prevalence and popularity. In addition to demonstrating the Victorian's familiarity with the subject of the third murderer, *Punch's* utilization of it in the magazine introduces another reason for the third murderer's popularity: it's economic viability. *Punch* is an example of how the third murderer was intriguing enough to sell, and considering how *Punch's* circulation and influence expanded during the Victorian era, the third murderer mystery sold well.[40] Economic forces are never absent from a text's cultural history, and the third murderer's evolution into a popular question is no exception. However, the economic viability of the third murderer mystery which *Punch* capitalized on only existed because of Paton's initial article, which demonstrates how once Paton began a new legacy of interaction with Shakespeare's texts, the "misreadings," to quote McKenzie, built on each other to create a cultural community.[41]

After the introduction of third murderer theories in the 1860s, Shakespearean enthusiasts expanded their theories to *Macbeth* as a whole and other Shakespearean texts. Many of these

enthusiasts receive no economic reward for their theories, which they paid to be published. An example of this expansion is the growing complexity of the third murderer theories, and how enthusiasts began to consider the relative importance of the third murderer to *Macbeth's* text.

M.F. Libby published in 1893 a book called *Some New Notes on Macbeth,* in which he argues the Thane of Ross is the third murderer and the orchestrator of all the tragedy in the play. Libby suggests that Shakespeare was using a spy-system of sharing information in *Macbeth* by refusing to give the name of the true villain, the third murderer. "It should be remembered that Shakespeare does not merely neglect to name the third murderer, he emphasizes the mystery in every possible way to arouse our curiosity."[42] Libby references Paton's arguments that the third murderer was Macbeth, but explains how his points better apply to Ross: in particular, Libby claims that it was the waiting to hear the news of Banquo's murderer that unhinged Macbeth's mind, rather than his direct involvement with the murder, which is the opposite of the argument Paton made.[43] Such theories about *Macbeth* as a whole and the third murderer specifically were only possible outside scholars' research and guardianship of 'official Shakespeare.' Low culture enthusiasts such as Libby were the people who introduced creative interpretations of Shakespeare's plays, enabled by the theories begun by enthusiasts such as Paton.

[40] Appelbaum, Stanley and Richard Michael Kelly eds. (*Great Drawings and Illustrations from Punch, 1841–1901:*), 14.

[41] McKenzie, D.F. "The Book as an Expressive Form." (in *The Book History Reader, 2e.* eds. David

Finkelstein and Alistair McCleery. New York: Routledge, 2006), 41.

[42] Libby, M. F. *Some New Notes on Macbeth.* (Forgotten Books: New York, 2013. Web. 19 March 2016), 15.

[43] Ibid, 57.

Theories such as the third murderer were pushed outside the realm of scholarship and created a divide between high and low culture. As the divide widened throughout the Victorian era, each realm developed a separate purpose for their interactions with Shakespeare. Some, like Oscar Wilde, argued that the low culture enthusiasts were interacting with Shakespeare in the correct way: "Shakespeare was a charming college. He was not an icon, a genius, or a king, not one of the authorities."[44] But whatever Wilde's preference, Shakespeare was both an authority only for academics and not. This divide evolved into dual conversations about Shakespeare from the Victorian era forward – on one side the scholars, on the other enthusiasts. While previously all scholars were enthusiasts and all enthusiasts were scholars, in the Victorian era there began to be very clear limits as to what was acceptable for Shakespearean scholarship, and what was a mere enthusiast's theory. Without the context of Victorian era Shakespearanity, Paton, Irving, Libby, and *Punch* would not have been able to take advantage of the new, second community of conversations about the Shakespeare, for it would not have existed. In this way, one can see how a text's cultural history is influenced by people operating within a particular historical context.

Legacies of Victorian Shakespeare Enthusiasts: The Third Murderer Today

Similar to the Victorian era, modern scholarship has not discussed the possible identities of the third murderer at any great length. However, continuing the separate conversations about Shakespeare's works, people outside scholarship have continued to interact with the possibilities the third murderer presents. Shakespearanity has evolved since low culture's introduction to Shakespeare in the Victorian era as social structures and modes of communication have changed, but the mentality is still prevalent. Blog posts, movie adaptations, and more show the vibrancy of the Shakespearean enthusiast community, who are continually discussing and deriving meaning from details as small as that of the third murderer. Meanwhile, Shakespearean scholarship still grapples with the questions of authority Malone addressed.[45]

The possibilities for interactions with Shakespeare's plays expanded with the introduction of film into popular culture. Rob Batarla directed a film adaptation of *Macbeth* in 2009 in which he expanded the possibility of who the third murderer could be by casting the three witches as the three murderers. By making the witches the murderers as well, Batarla added an interesting dynamic to the play: the witches could normally be considered neutral outside forces, with no direct influence to Macbeth's actions besides providing information. However, the witches as the murderers involves them more directly in Macbeth's downfall and lends them much greater malicious intent.[46] This can, in Paton's words, "deepen the effect" of the tragedy. Directors such as Batarla's interactions with the third murderer mystery reveals how the Victorian's cultural obsession with Shakespeare and his works

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[44] Poole, Adrian. *Shakespeare and the Victorians.* (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2004), 235.
[45] It has become a trend in recent scholarship to address and problematize this perspective. See De

Grazia and Stallybrass, "The Materiality of the Shakespearean Text."
[46] Batarla, Rob, Dir. *Macbeth* (At Cramer Center, October 9-25, 2009).

created a legacy of interaction with his plays still present today.

Shakespearean enthusiasts outside academia have particularly continued to address *Macbeth*'s inconsistencies. Like the theories about the third murderer developed by Paton, Irving, and more, blogs develop theories about *Macbeth* and the third murderer's identity. The example which most clearly demonstrates this is the Fan Theories Reddit thread "Macbeth is the Third Murderer."[47] The people posting on this thread address the details of why Banquo needed to be murdered, Macbeth's paranoia and mental state, and the possibility of older versions of the play casting Macbeth or a servant as the murderer. The points the Redditors make reflect back to the purpose of Paton publishing *Notes and Queries,* hundred and fifty years prior: he, similarly, wanted an answer to a question Shakespeare presented, so made up their own. The line between a modern reader or viewer of Shakespeare and the playwright himself is not direct - each enthusiast's work is a result of previous conversations and scholarship. Just as Paton depended on Malone, Libby and Batarla depended on Paton. Each scholar or artist produced their work in the context established by the work of those who came before them. The dual conversations about Shakespeare developed in the Victorian era continue to the present day: the legacy of Shakespearean enthusiasts and scholars thrives in both the blogosphere and academic journals.

Conclusion

Modern concepts of Shakespeare have been built by the aristocracy and scholars and later by enthusiasts over four hundred years of discourse. The Victorian era's obsession with Shakespeare's life and works created the environment necessary for low culture enthusiasts to interact and enjoy Shakespeare separate from academia. These dual conversations still exist today, and shape the way modern culture understands and values Shakespeare. The familiar and worshipful Shakespearanity of the Victorian era was essential to this evolution: without it, Shakespeare would not have reached the lower classes and therefore could not have become the modern epitome of English language and literature. Shakespeare created his plays for all facets of society, writing for the groundlings and Royalty alike. His legacy belongs to people of all classes as well, and no fact demonstrates this more than the zeal the entirety of Victorian society embraced his works. More important than their ardor, however, is the new ways enthusiasts interacted with Shakespeare's works without the traditions of scholarship to limit them. The legacy of enthusiasts such as Paton, who dared introduce their own ideas into Shakespeare's plays, fundamentally changed the way we interact with Shakespeare in the modern day.

Bibliographic scholars have historically struggled with the idea that an author has a right to not be misread.[48] It was a concept Malone and the other eighteenth century scholars supported, evidenced by their endeavors to create a text which followed Shakespeare's words as closely as possible. However, the interactions after the Victorian

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[47] "Macbeth: Macbeth is the Third Murderer : Fan Theories" (*Reddit*, 2016).

[48] McKenzie, D.F. "The Book as an Expressive Form." (in *The Book History Reader, 2e.* eds. David

Finkelstein and Alistair McCleery. New York: Routledge, 2006), 43.

era demonstrate an indication towards valuing the public's consumption of Shakespeare above retaining the purity of Shakespeare's words: fan theories, fan fiction, and modern reinterpretations of Shakespeare's works exist in a variety of forms. These interactions are a part of low culture and are antithetical to eighteenth century scholars' determination to create an authoritative Shakespearean text, but inevitable in that people begin to create their own meanings within a text as part of understanding their personal experiences.[49]

Paton's opinion that Macbeth is the third murderer is as much a part of *Macbeth*'s - and therefore Shakespeare's - history as the texts Malone exhaustively edited and scholars used for decades. Each indicates a different era of history, and each era valued Shakespeare differently. By examining how the mindset of the Victorian era changed the way people thought about *Macbeth's* editorial questions, one can understand how Shakespeare's cultural value shifted during the mid-nineteenth century, influencing modern Shakespearean readership. By studying Malone to Paton, Paton to Libby and Batarla - their work, values, and context - one can "resurrect authors in their own time, and their readers at any time."[50] Shakespeare was and is a poet for the people and in our interactions we contribute to a four hundred yearlong legacy of cultural and scholarly interaction.

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[49] Ibid, 40.

[50] Ibid, 45.

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