

Artists as Profiteers:
Understanding William Shakespeare's and Walt Disney's
Literary Remixes
As a Product of Their Businesses

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I. Introduction

Scholars are turning to the idea of remix and adaptation to soothe the long-held anxiety of not being able to create new original works due to the overpopulation of authorship in our digital society. Some even believe that there are only a handful of storylines any narrative could ever follow (e.g. Frye's archetypes). Someone with a discerning business mindset, however, might think of opportunities to capitalize on these new renditions: "borrowing" an idea from the past and repackaging it for widespread distribution. Though not at first obvious, this is exactly what William Shakespeare and Walt Disney both did, making them not only artists, but also savvy businessmen.

Business acumen and a humanitarian mind are not typically thought of as complementary traits, yet these two artists who continue to permeate our culture with their enduring appeal, were endowed with both. While often only noted in retrospect, merit is attained through the approval of the audience as well as time; yet prior to opening night and the heralded success they achieved, there must have been financial motive for their work. Shakespeare most definitely did not write plays to become genius literary pieces meant to outlast his lifetime, but to have these performed in his time as a means to improve upon his modest standing in society and to put food on the table. Likewise, Disney was one of the most prominent businessmen and creative geniuses of the last century whose body of work delighted both the young and old. Neither of these men were "starving artists" by the time they made their mark and gained recognition. In fact both were known to be fierce profiteers and micromanagers. Both reworked stories and narratives; both borrowed, retold, and remixed those stories that were enjoyed or heralded before.

For my Canterbury project, I will review the lives and practices of both Shakespeare and Disney in terms of the value that they added by basing success on the environmental factors a business would keep tabs on. I will compare the two men by studying the specific environmental factors — the politics, competition, the culture and needs of the audience (external factors) as well as personal goals of each man (internal factors)— influencing each of these artists. I hope to understand the nature of the businesses from a literary standpoint as they both exemplify the notion of how can literature be commoditized. Although I do not expect to find Shakespeare and Disney's explicit business plans, I hope to piece together a cohesive picture of their business practices and therefore, understand the competitive environment that their products were sold in and highlight the advantages (or disadvantages) they handled in their respective periods.

My primary research question is: how did William Shakespeare and Walt Disney optimize their art while keeping the rhetorical structures of the industry, the world, and their customers in mind in order to turn a profit?

Framing their work as products for consumption does not belittle the merits of the art they created, but to further understand how these two disciplines, business and literature, can go together. Legacy may in fact simply be a humanistic term for branding. Being a retail studies minor has always kept me aware of bottom lines (i.e. net profit) as the most important measure of success; however, I wonder about the transitional power of literature to become a product of consumption. The declining interest in the humanities may be attributed to the perceived lack of potential profit or gains. Yet of all disciplines, the humanities are the furthest reaching and

longest lasting — resonating still as we continue to examine the writings of classical philosophers — which underline the importance of literary and artistic artifacts.

II. Purpose

This project seeks to better understand these artists as profiteers through the products they created and the use of their brands during their respective time periods. Shakespeare's and Disney's choices and the final productions must have been influenced by more than the pressure to create masterpieces, but the pressure of an audience and a market, the rhetorical constraints that these artists produced in.

Too often, we look to the final product to provide the final say in success and disregard the process and circumstance in which the product is created. In most instances, we are told to take art as it is, analyze as the "grecian urn," and then link it back to the artist and the times. However, by doing the opposite and reverse engineering the intentions and times, I believe a new appreciation can be developed not only for the humanities, but also for a business' constant consciousness of their consumer. Business and capitalism is often villainized and the reading and analyzing of literature is viewed as not as important as pragmatic skills; yet if these two disciplines were partnered, maybe we could realize the value in both simultaneously.

I understand that this project is a dense and huge endeavor, but I believe receiving support from the Canterbury scholarship will enable me to at least begin and complete a segment of a project that I am very much invested in. The scope of the project is about answering several questions tying Shakespeare's and Disney's lasting success to the profitability they sought from the creation of adaptations.

III. Process

a. Research Questions

By understanding the motives of Disney and Shakespeare as well as the common themes highlighted or changed in the versions that captivated the public for so long, the end goal of my project is to develop and write a thesis. In order of priority, these are questions I will use to historicize the genres, the industries, and the audiences that these men created their remixes for:

1. What were the histories of these industries, plays in England and animation in America, that allowed these businessmen to succeed in that point in time?
2. What were the business environments that these artists worked and thrived in?
 - a. Who were their competitors?
 - b. How much profit did they make?
 - c. What advantages and disadvantages did they have over competing "products"?
3. What personal motivators did these artists have?
4. Finally, how did those business factors manifest themselves in the renditions

created? What was changed, added, highlighted, or eliminated in their versions as compared to the original?

As preliminary research for this project, I will attempt to find business records of London theaters during Shakespeare's time. I will have to understand the conditions and technologies from which the "Golden Age of Animation" emerged from as well as how the first World War may or may have not highlighted/changed Disney's audience's needs. Keeping in mind that animation was a depiction of "America" parallels the issues of England as represented on stage in the Bard's plays, I believe that there is much to be said of the viewer in any reinvention whether it be of life, or of a novel, play, or folklore.

b. Methodology

In a way, I am "humanizing" Shakespeare and Disney from the shadows of their legacy by understanding their life's work as well conceived products of their businesses and not just as art injected with morals that they believed would survive the passage of time. Thus, I believe that by understanding each individual's motives (personal and professional) via biographer's accounts (WS: Greenblatt, Shapiro; WD: Bryman, Barrier) as well as their own writings, constraints of their time periods, business practices and the competitive environment they flourished in, I will better understand the value that is attributed to their work as a result of audience preference.

Having read authorship arguments and reader-response literary theory (Barthes' "The Death of the Author"), I understand that it is commonplace that the "author" does not have any control over the interpretation or reception of their work. Thus, I argue that reused narratives that enjoy longevity owe their creators, these "remixers" for the proliferation of continued reincarnations. Looking at these businessmen, Shakespeare and Disney, as producers of commodities may change how we view the purpose of their interpretations of old stories. Robert Bearman's new book describes how Shakespeare made a profit and the Disney's empire which began in the 1930s still plays into our society today with many investing in their brand and method of storytelling. The author may have no responsibility over the interpretation of a piece with the audience empowered to define the merits and/or success of a work; yet, there remains something to be said about the motives of the author when evaluating a piece that is an adaptation.

The following are some trains of thought I want to pursue when reimagining Shakespeare and Disney as more than artists of critical acclaim and instead as people who had to depend on their craft for sufficiency keeping in mind that their sustenance relied on the successful entertainment of audiences:

William Shakespeare lived in a time where morality plays were the norm and when troops traveled from one city to the next hoping to entertain and delight. Of course, he also produced plays in the time of the female monarch and the Protestant imperative of the time. How did Shakespeare then, in choosing to go to London and be a part of this industry, support his wife, Anne Hathaway, and two children? How did he eventually retire with the money he made from this career choice as an actor/playwright?

After a fall out with a business partner over losing the rights to Oswald the Lucky Rabbit,

Walt Disney tightened control over his business leading to the enterprise we now recognize which controls almost every facet in their creative and productive supply chains. Following the Oswald incident and success with his *Adventures of Alice* series, Disney began work on *Snow White and The Seven Dwarfs*, his first full fledged motion picture, choosing to micromanage most of the creative decisions as well as operations.

Aside from personal motivators, outside influences on their practices are an important aspect to investigate. These businessmen did not only play to the direct consumer of their products, but had to appease and live up to the expected standards dictated by the wider audience of stakeholders. For Shakespeare, this did not only include paying customers who came to watch his plays but also his patrons, initially the Lord Chamberlain and then later, Queen Elizabeth herself. Disney, a personification of the American dream to many, must have had financial backing as well.

Additional lines of inquiry include:

Did Shakespeare premeditate the order upon which he released his tragedies and comedies? Would certain plays have been more profitable as comedies or not? Were certain plays written as crowd pleasers/"cash cows" (i.e. Midsummer's Night Dream) while others were designed to push the acceptable limits and boundaries set by Shakespeare's audience?

How did the hostile takeover of Disney's success with Oswald shape his ideologies and inspire the creation of a somewhat secretive but highly successful film studio? Why did Walt Disney choose to reimagine Snow White and why was it not as comical as it could have been?

d. Additions

Remix: Towards the end of the project, I will utilize my close-reading skills to identify alterations or emphasize in the "products" recreated and decipher the intended purpose/message these men wished to convey to their audience as business people as well as artists. I will choose the works I wish to inspect after I finish historicizing their work in order to find the best examples. While I understand that reader-response criticism is the more valid analytical approach used in the world of English literary academia today, I believe that variation in the creator's intentions then and the modern audience's reception now will yield a different interpretation and a new understanding of literary merits. Retracing and understanding each artist's perspectives would mean reaching out to Shakespeare scholars and Disney historians for mentoring and advice regarding their body of work and approach.

(Re)Branding: Aside from answering those questions this project could be extended to explore how that audience preference pervades today and how it will or won't continue to last. Examples being the image of women in both men's works becoming antiquated and unrealistic; the technology (in Shakespeare's case, the English being Early Modern, and thus may become unintelligible to the average audience; in Disney's case, the evolution of animation into virtual reality with talking animals not being a part of true life) being outdated, or Shakespeare's hold on education and the attraction to the modern Disney brand, including theme parks and the Marvel brand.

IV. What do I hope to learn and take away from this project?

Main goals:

- Investigate, understand, and contrast the business models of William Shakespeare and Walt Disney.
- Focus on scrutinizing the profitability and successful production of their remixes.
- Experience in depth research on a much broader and wider platform; learn to use archives.
- Reach out to experts and scholars in order to network and gain more insight on this discussion of remix.
- Practice writing and refining an extended thesis.
- Develop a scholarly voice that remains approachable and readily understandable.
- Present my ideas and conclusions to a scholarly audience and becoming a part of the discussion revolving merits of literature in various modes.

I have had the opportunity to do extended textual research on Shakespeare in the classes I've completed so far; however, I endeavor to work on a comprehensive topic for an extended period of time in order to emulate actual research rather than being confined by the constraints of an academic quarter. I often find myself craving more time to discover and read different secondary sources to further broaden the scope and depth of the topic I've chosen and to further my understanding before declaring a definitive conclusion. I realize the ambitious nature of this plan for a thesis and know that the support of this scholarship will make a significant difference in my ability to complete this vision of linking Disney and Shakespeare, merits and profits. This award will allow me the opportunity to immerse myself in a research topic that I curated from scratch.

V. Outcomes

My Canterbury project will result in the final product of a written thesis; however, as the project values and examines the process and decision making these artists underwent while taking the liberty of remixing stories, I too will record my process and findings throughout my project.

In the Spring of 2017 I will write and complete my thesis, but the whole project will be a learning experience new in the sense that I will work over an extended amount of time on one project, instead of the usual ten weeks that the quarter system lends itself too.

Over the school year I intend on collecting artifacts, reflecting on my experiences, and analyzing sources, the records I produce will either take the form of a process blog hosted on a platform such as Wordpress or a Wiki sub-sectioned into the various linked pages, both of which I would use to write and probably display my final paper.

VI. Personal Experience

As an English major, I have the discipline and preparation that is necessary for research. In

Professor Jeffrey Bracco's Shakespeare and Cinema class, I wrote a number of short research papers — which were supposed to be 2-3 pages, however, ended up being more on the 5-10 page range — where I demonstrated various aspects and depictions of womanhood such as Princess Katherine's English lessons in *Henry V* as manifest destiny, Rosalind's discrepancies in physical stature in comparison to her cousin Celia in *As You Like It*, and analyzing Queen Cordelia as a chess queen in *King Lear*. In an advanced writing class about the body with Professor Maura Tarnoff, I wrote a paper on the aural and ocular imagery present in *Othello*. In Dr. Diane Dreher's class focusing on Shakespearean Tragedy, I wrote an analysis on women settling for "lesser" men in *Twelfth Night* particularly Viola, who is hopelessly in love with the lovesick Duke Orsino. I am well versed in the resources available to me in our library and have the ability to write papers with fifteen or more sources.

As stated above, I have covered an extensive variety of course material and in class research work on the topic of Shakespeare; however, these were based on analyzing the final product Shakespeare created and then relating them to the times. In this project, I will be analyzing the historical context first in order to gain a better understanding of a viable product, a play that would sell in Shakespeare's time, and then looking at his plays to see how they were changed to fit those circumstances.

I will come out of this project with a thesis of my own, shaped by the archives, texts, and interviews I attain. The sites that I hope to visit will enhance my project by giving me the ability to immerse myself within the contexts that I am working to construct.

I hope to immerse myself in understanding Shakespeare, his world, and the contextual history in order to see how these directly and indirectly contributed to and affected his work. While the hope is to visit London or at least, reimagine it from accounts and other sources, I believe that a lot of work has been done in this line of inquiry and that it will be an interesting endeavor to trace through those lines. In lieu of London, there is also the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington D.C. which constant heralds the Bard through an array of exhibits and workshops. I honestly have not done any scholarly work on Walt Disney and it is proving to be quite difficult an undertaking to find critics who've done so with an eye on Disney himself, but I hope to be able to be early to this party of understanding the businessman, his approach, and how his business's consumer influenced decisions in plot (e.g. the "Disneyfication" or scrubbing clean of original stories). I will begin by visiting the Disney Family Museum in San Francisco and reaching out to biographers as well as insiders in the animation industry.

Finally, I hope to be able to present my work in a professional fashion at the Sigma Tau Delta convention and practice sharing my findings with my peers.

This project will allow me to work in the discipline of film studies, while still focusing on the idea of narrative. Although I have taken several English literature and film classes, I have not had a chance to fully invest myself in film, but hope to do so as I continue my studies. This award will give me a chance to understand an era of film that gave life to a genre that still thrives today (e.g. Pixar's yearly box-office hits) and which I am very interested in, as animation is one of the clearest forms of reality recreation/remix. I believe that there is a natural, yet ironic (because at times, novels may already attempt record reality) progression of novels into film, which is more accessible to the audience of today. It is not to say that people today are lacking in literacy, but instead the very opposite, that they are a customer segment whose literature needs

include visualization (yet not all the time, especially in horror films with off-screen moments of suspense, which is a tactic often used in Shakespearean plays as well) and crave more than a word on a page. My goal is to promote literacy in new forms, because I believe that literacy not only sustains but connects us as “humanity.”

For my own personal narrative, I see myself continuing my studies in English literature in graduate school with a focus on Shakespeare, due to his fascinating storytelling abilities, as well as a understanding the possible relationship between novels and films that demonstrate how literature can be commoditized and preserved for generations to come.

VII. Conclusion

Narratives are the language by which we understand one another. Even in the retailing business, we are taught of customer journeys or the importance of creating a narrative that will bring the customer back. Too often business is forsaken as simply profit making selfishness; yet, the humanities are too often perceived as unprofitable. A career goal of mine is to bring the customer, our civilization, back to the importance of enhancing literacy.

William Shakespeare and Walt Disney fulfilled their consumers', the audience's needs, in their respective times and beyond. By understanding these artists as businessmen who created in order to fulfill their needs and consumers' wants, we can begin to see them as more holistic entrepreneurs. While I do understand that the motives of business are to generate a profit, these men were able to do so and change the way the world thought and inspired generations.

Because these men wrote incredible stories, it is important to view their contributions and lives as a complete story as well: these people were not only skilled in one aspect or another, but as whole people whose lives and stories of life thrilled audiences of their days and inspire creation today. Power is lost in having binary terms be applied to these men, just as the war between humanities and business merits diminishes the interest and presumed significance in either.

Timeline

Summer 2016

- Find and read sources on the business environment and personal backgrounds.
 - Understand the environment — factors that worked for and against starting an animation studio in the 1930s — and come to a hypothesis of why Disney achieved success.
 - Research the historical background to the theatre atmosphere as well as audience tastes during Shakespeare’s time.
- Hypothesize a framework to understanding the business practices and motives of Disney and Shakespeare.
- Reach out to experts with questions about how specific business needs may have influenced the final products created by these artists.

Fall 2016

- Continue to research and write the part introducing the business environment and personal motives of these two men to use as a reference moving forward.
- With the framework of each artist’s brand set up, choose works to analyze for the criteria delineated.
- Understand the differences from the original works to the adaptations created by Shakespeare and Disney and how that fits into the business framework developed.

Winter 2017

- Continuing with the comparison between “originals” and adaptations.
- Compare other readings of works to the interpretations done with a business-focused lens.
- Research how criticism of the pieces as pertains to the audience reception and business motives is different or the same as what these works are known for in merit today.

Spring 2017

- Write thesis on findings and possibly refine beginning framework.
- If accepted, I hope to present the first part of my thesis at the Sigma Tau Delta convention in Louisville, Kentucky from March 29, 2017-April 1, 2017.
- If I have extra time, I want to begin to understand how their brands pervade today – e.g. Folger’s hunt for the first folio and the big business of Walt Disney’s empire today – and possible challenges to their legacy.

Budget

Books	\$400
<p>Most books I will try to borrow from the library; however, certain books may prove hard to find or vital to my research. With the current working bibliography only reflecting an initial step in the research to be done around the nature of the businesses involved, the amount of works cited will grow exponentially as I move forward to analyzing works created. Bearman's new book, <i>Shakespeare's Money: How Much Did He Make and What Did This Mean?</i>, is a newly released source which I will probably have to purchase and retails for \$31.25.</p>	
Films	\$70
<p>When spending time analyzing Disney's films, it would be helpful to have copies on hand that I can review multiple times, pause, and rewind. A digital copy of <i>Snow White and The Seven Dwarfs</i> retails for about \$19.99.</p>	
Printing	\$100
Sigma Tau Delta Convention	\$500
<p>I intend on entering my work to present at the Sigma Tau Delta convention in Louisville, Kentucky from March 29, 2017-April 1, 2017. If accepted, I will attend the convention and go to various workshops that will enhance my learning as well as present my paper. This money will pay for the flight as well as accommodations.</p>	
Travel	\$250
<p>I will want to go to the Disney Family Museum in San Francisco as well as various libraries, such as the Green Library at Stanford, around the Bay Area in order to find sources. This money will go to gas and admissions with tickets for the Disney Family Museum costing \$15.00.</p> <p>I wish to visit the Huntington Library in Southern California to see a first folio edition of William Shakespeare's collected plays from 1632 that they have in their collection. I am allocating \$175 to this trip.</p> <p>I may also want to visit the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, D.C. If not accepted to read at the Sigma Tau Delta conventions, I will reallocate the funds for that trip to visit this collection instead.</p>	

Total: \$1,320

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