Gretchen E. Minton and Mikey Gray

The Ecological Resonance of Imogen's Journey in Montana's Parks

In this article Gretchen Minton and Mikey Gray discuss an adaptation of Shakespeare's tragicomedy *Cymbeline* that toured Montana and surrounding states in the summer of 2021. Minton's sections describe the eco-feminist aims of this production, which was part of an international project called '*Cymbeline* in the Anthropocene', showing how the costumes, set design, and especially the emphasis upon the female characters created generative ways of thinking about the relationship between the human and the more-than-human worlds. Gray's first-person narrative at the end of each section reflects upon her role of Imogen as she participated in an extensive summer tour across the Intermountain West and engaged with audience members about their own relationship to both theatre and the natural world. This is a story of transformation through environmentally inflected Shakespeare performance during the time of a global pandemic.

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Key terms: William Shakespeare, *Cymbeline*, eco-feminism, Anthropocene, environmental theatre, Covid-19 pandemic, tragicomedy.

A PERENNIAL question about Shakespeare's *Cymbeline* is whether the final scene can ultimately be effective in performance, for it is filled with so many revelations, so much awkward standing around, so much information that the audience already knows. However, when the Montana Shakespeare in the Parks production opened in Bozeman in June 2021, the audience was manifestly *present* not only during the entire performance but especially during the last scene. They seemed to be hanging on to every word, enjoying every resolution.

Part of this reaction may have been a sort of self-congratulation that comes from realizing that they had indeed followed the complex plot. Additionally, Brandon Burditt played King Cymbeline with a perpetually astonished expression; it was infectious to look at his wonderment as he pieced together everything that had happened (Figure 1). Most of all, during this premiere, there was a sheer delight in the unbridled joy of revelation itself. Seven hundred people sat on a lawn at Montana State University together, releasing built-up tension that had come from not being in public or seeing performances for over a year. Each resolution brought with it an exhalation of relief. Each revelation brought a life-giving inhalation of air. We were breathing again, together. It was no longer dangerous to share an outdoor space or to experience art as a community.

A tragicomedy such as *Cymbeline* was perfect for the summer of 2021. No one wanted more tragedy, and comedy ran the risk of not being profound enough. This production of *Cymbeline* acknowledged the darkness of the

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https://doi.org/10.1017/S0266464X22000227 Published online by Cambridge University Press



Figure 1. Brandon Burditt as Cymbeline. Photo: Adrian Sanchez Gonzalez.

past, the difficulties of arriving where we had, indeed, arrived, and the great cost of forgiveness. Imogen, that 'piece of tender air' whose journey lies at the heart of *Cymbeline*, was the final character onstage in this production, standing against the moon-like backdrop, arms outstretched, looking in wonder at what had befallen. Imogen's journey in the play, and Mikey Gray's journey through embodying this role and then performing it thirty-seven times across the northern Rocky Mountain region of the USA, are the subject of this article. This is a story of transformation, which, although inherent in the play, pertains to this particular ecologically inflected adaptation and its historical moment as the world was beginning to emerge from the Covid pandemic. In the sections that follow, we will be alternating between voices, moving from Minton's information about the production and its aims to first-person accounts by actress Mikey Gray, who portrayed Imogen in this eco-feminist adaptation and interviewed audience members after many of the performances.[1]

Apart

By January 2020, the cast was set for the forty-eighth season of Montana Shakespeare in the Parks (MSIP), a professional theatre company based at Montana State University that runs two shows in repertory every summer. The tour begins in Bozeman and then travels to sixty-two communities across Montana and into parts of Wyoming, Idaho, North Dakota, and Washington. The mission of the organization is 'to engage and enrich both rural and underserved communities with professional productions of Shakespeare and other classics and, through educational outreach, to inspire creative expression and appreciation of the arts in young audiences'.[2]

The prospect of the 2020 season was especially exciting because one of the shows was slated to be *Cymbeline*, and MSIP's production was part of a global project called '*Cymbeline* in the Anthropocene', founded by Randall Martin of the University of New Brunswick, Canada. '*Cymbeline* in the Anthropocene' is an

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0266464X22000227 Published online by Cambridge University Press

intercontinental network of nine site-specific productions of *Cymbeline*, and the project encouraged each creative team 'to uncover past and present ecological values in the play's vibrant range of stories, emotions, and terrains, and to adapt them creatively to local environmental conditions in the hope of opening audiences' imaginations to new biocentric and biospheric horizons'.[3]

That January, MSIP artistic director Kevin Asselin and I (in my role as the company dramaturg and script adaptor) attended a workshop in Santa Barbara, California, where participants from the USA, Canada, Australia, Kazakhstan, and Georgia gathered to share our creative, ecologically inventive approaches to *Cymbeline*. Inspired by this conference, Asselin and I met with the designers and shared further ideas about how best to approach the adaptation for Montana's audiences.

By March 2020, of course, the world had shut down, and all proposed *Cymbeline* performances were put on indefinite hold – a familiar story across the globe. On 24 April, Asselin wrote a letter to the company announcing the postponement of the season, but he expressed optimism about the following year:

> We are so saddened to not be able to spend this upcoming season together, but this is not a goodbye, it is a 'see you soon'. All of you are welcome to join us for 2021 when we can reconvene together to bring *Cymbeline* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* to rural and underserved communities in and around Montana. Our design teams have worked all year to bring to life their designs and we cannot wait to share them with you and our communities.

As the months of pandemic shutdowns and isolation wore on, however, it seemed too much to hope that there would be a season in 2021.

Mikey Gray *I had received the offer to play Imogen on a subway platform in Chicago in December of 2019 and was absolutely overwhelmed with excitement about this dream job and role. Within months, as the pandemic swooped in with full force, the MSIP job, the theatre industry as a whole, the urban environment of Chicago, along with so much life, had vanished. We had all been stripped of safely engaging in community. Instead, we were isolated into apartments, bracing the waves of the virus, together and yet apart. Like Imogen betrayed by her father Cymbeline, banished from her husband Posthumus, living under deeply unsettling circumstances, I was exiled from the joys of life that I had taken for granted before the world shut down. Trying to find solace in the forced silencing of society as we knew it, I empathized with Imogen's need for a moment of peaceful solitude while also struggling through the forced isolation* (Figure 2).

Upon the banishment of her beloved Posthumus, Imogen utters the lines 'There cannot be a pinch in death / More sharp than this is' (1.1.131–2),[4] *which encapsulates the terrifying feeling of not knowing when she might see her husband again. In that first scene of our adaptation, it is the messenger Pisanio who gives a sense of hope to a foggy future of reconnection. Similarly, the 'see you soon' in Kevin Asselin's letter was light at the end of what felt like an infinite tunnel. As 2020 faded and the 2021 summer approached, embarking upon Imogen's and my personal journey of cultural, environmental, and artistic transformation filled me with apprehension and hope alike.*

Fairy Tales

The unifying design concept for the MSIP *Cymbeline* placed the play not in a specific geographical location or time period but in the imaginative world of the fairy tale. Shakespeare's play itself draws upon such archetypal stories, thus designers sought to evoke these generic conventions in order to explore what such stories can teach us about our relationship to natural and unnatural environments.

Costume designer Denise Massman created three different 'worlds' in relation to the setting: Britain (decay and corruption); Rome (urban wealth); and Wales (nature and reconciliation). The Queen's garish costume of harsh lines with hot pink and orange tones, like her son Cloten's lime-green neo-Jacobean ruffs, epitomized the madness and decadence of the British ruling class (Figure 3). In stark contrast, the cave-dwellers – two female characters named Belaria and Cadwal in this adaptation – wore muted tones. Their accessories included fur pelts, animal bones, herbs, and other evidence of subsistence in the wild.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0266464X22000227 Published online by Cambridge University Press



Figure 2. Mikey Gray as Imogen. Photo: Adrian Sanchez Gonzalez.



Figure 3. Rachel Cendrick as Queen. Photo: Adrian Sanchez Gonzalez.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0266464X22000227 Published online by Cambridge University Press



Figure 4. Mikey Gray as Imogen disguised as Fidele. Costume inspired by Little Red Riding Hood. Photo: Adrian Sanchez Gonzalez.

Imogen looked like an innocent fairy-tale princess, with a mauve dirndl over a yellow cambric dress. When she disguised herself as a boy named Fidele, she wore a faded yellow hooded cape, suggesting the silhouette of Little Red Riding Hood (Figure 4). That story in particular inspired the design; special emphasis was placed on the motif of a young woman wandering alone in the wilderness, walking through a dark unknown land and pursued by the wolflike figure of Cloten. Other fairy-tale princesses such as Snow White and Sleeping Beauty offered inspiration for Act 2, Scene 2, when a sleeping Imogen is visually assaulted by Iachimo. This scene is charged with the threat of molestation and rape that underlies the older versions of these fairy tales.[5]

In *Cymbeline*, Imogen is a stand-in for Britain itself, and threats to the princess from various unwelcome men parallel the threat to the country through Roman invasion – an invasion sexualized through its references to the 'narrow lane' that the Britons defend against the Roman soldiers (5.3.52). It is a short step from the woman/land parallel to a broader ecological context, for the attempted invasions and abuses of Imogen also apply to the repeated abuses of the natural world. The Queen poisons 'lower' creatures, whereas Belaria and Cadwal treat them with respect; Cloten runs roughshod over the court and is disgusted by the woods, whereas Imogen learns the virtues of cave-dwelling and listening to the sounds of the natural world.

In *Digging the Past*, Frances Dolan notes that fairy tales 'gather together found materials, inspire ingenious combinations, and feed the future'.[6] The eclectic design of the MSIP production embraced found materials and ingenious combinations, including not just the costume design that lay somewhere between steam punk and the Jacobean, but also the set's features, such as a giant tree built from PVC pipes that dominated the right side of the stage (Figure 5). The fairy-tale

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0266464X22000227 Published online by Cambridge University Press

framework proved to be a generative model for addressing contemporary environmental problems in the MSIP production because it fostered an imaginative immersion into a story that was, at its very core, about the quest to recover the lost connection between nature and culture.

Furthermore, this orientation encouraged the audience to lose themselves in the bizarre and magical world of these tales. Recognizing that in fairy tales readers never question elements that are uncanny or even unrealistic, Asselin directed the actors to 'touch the ceiling of the surreal'. The production thus reached a register that allowed audiences to take delight in the machinations of an over-the-top wicked Queen/stepmother, to laugh at the dark antics of Cloten, and to believe in the most unlikely coincidences. Like stories from the Grimm brothers, this *Cymbeline* was enchanting.

In her analysis of how fairy tales impact audience consciousness, Rita Felski notes that, 'Even as we are enchanted, we remain aware of our condition of enchantment, without such knowledge diminishing or diluting the intensity of our involvement'.[7] The almost-surreal tenor of the MSIP production elicited the welcome release of laughter and enchantment, while also opening up a place for heightened awareness. In the summer of 2021 it was apparent that the audience needed to laugh, but they also needed to reflect upon what we had all been through. It took the kind of magical thinking that Shakespeare's late tragicomedies provide to move forward, given the dark clouds that lay ahead, from the pandemic to the climate emergency.

Mikey Gray *When the production finally began rehearsing in Montana in late May 2021, Covid loomed over our newfound community of fellow actors and artists who were gathering for in-person work for the first time in over a year. During those weeks our weather ranged from a bright and sunny big sky to a frigid snow storm. As we persevered through the process, so did the forces of nature and the virus. Even as the rehearsal room seemed to expand with energy from pent-up actors*



Figure 5. Riley O'Toole as Cloten. Photo: Adrian Sanchez Gonzalez.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0266464X22000227 Published online by Cambridge University Press

finally being reunited to in-person collaboration, the walls of the Black Box rehearsal space in Bozeman protected our work from these outside forces. Although I ran the risk of being diverted by the news of the Covid Delta variant, and the ominous prediction of heavy wildfires through our tour ahead, I was living a fairy tale of my own. I was frolicking through the beautiful Bozeman mountains and elated by renewed collaboration and creativity. However, like Imogen, who was continually threatened in one way or another, I was still conscious of the danger posed by Covid, a manifestation of nature itself. Every day from start to finish, I could have prayed, as Imogen does before she sleeps, 'From fairies and the tempters of the night, / Guard me, beseech ye' (2.2.9–10). *I felt stronger collectively navigating these threats, as there was a heightened level of group care, caution, trust, and protection as we faced the goal of regathering with audiences.*

Throughout the tour, I connected with many audience members from vast and varying backgrounds. After most performances I would interview individuals or groups, asking open-ended questions about their relationship to nature and how they perceived the eco-feminist approach of Gretchen Minton's adaptation. Questions I posed to many members of the audiences across the five states included:

- *What is your relationship to nature?*
- *What was the experience of the pandemic like for you in this part of the country?*
- *What did you glean, if anything, from the themes of the Anthropocene, the forces of nature, and the eco-feminist perspective presented in our production?*

When asked about his experience of witnessing themes of nature in our performance, an audience member named Daniel Bishop wanted to talk about the legacy of fairy tales. He had travelled an hour over a state line just to see this performance of Cymbeline *in Afton, Wyoming. Bishop explained: 'As a storyteller, I love and hate the Grimm brothers, because while they wrote all this stuff down so I can have it, they ended the oral storytelling tradition of it and made that the set story rather than the growth of the story.' Although it was a subtle gesture, the prop book that I read as Imogen before she sleeps in 2.2 was in fact the Grimms'* Fairy Tales. *Each performance, I would open to a new page and silently read a section of a fairy tale before closing the book and my eyes with Imogen's bedtime prayer. Like a metadrama for myself, Imogen, and audience members like Bishop, the presentation of a fairy tale directly added to the fantastical nature of our story.*

Through the exercise of rehearsals, the triumphs, trials and tribulations, we let Cymbeline *grow naturally within the structure of the written words, the environment of each new day, with every new development and discovery of depth. In fact, after performing* Cymbeline *thirty-seven times over the course of the summer, I can confidently say that the story blossomed with live interaction between the illusory fourth wall and each mountain range within view every night. Bishop concluded our conversation with: 'This* [motioning to nature] *is what makes this* [motioning to the stage] *wonderful.' Nature itself was the redeeming partner and source of energy for our fairy tale.*

Nature

The MSIP *Cymbeline* production eschewed the notion of pushing a particular 'message' about the Anthropocene. Instead, the aim was to create a work of art that taps into a widely shared love of, and concern for, the natural world. The production offered its audience a story about moving from a wasteful, toxic existence to one founded upon harmony, reclamation, and reconciliation. To this end, the adaptation was rooted in the events of Act 3, when the setting changes from the British court to the wilderness of Wales. The movement from cities to the country, so common in Shakespeare's plays, provided a touchstone for engagement with the largely rural environments where *Cymbeline* was performed.

MSIP's two-hour productions necessitate some cutting and re-shaping of the plays, especially given the small cast (in 2021 that number was eight, down from the usual cast of ten). In addition to adapting the script to suit these practical needs, I re-imagined some elements of the play in order to frame the Anthropocene concept. The most significant changes involved the characters who reside in Wales. Belaria was not just a female version of

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Figure 6. Rachel Cendrick as Cadwal and Chelsea Dàvid as Belaria. Photo: Adrian Sanchez Gonzalez.

the play's Belarius, but the former wife of Cymbeline who had been wrongfully banished and had fled to the wilderness, where she gave birth to their child Cadwal (based on Arviragus and Guiderius in Shakespeare's original). This character, also played as female by Rachel Cendrick, was strong and charmingly naive, eager to prove herself in exploits of hunting and war.

Belaria and Cadwal were, in the words of costume designer Denise Massman, 'mighty hunters and sort of eco-warriors' who have chosen to 'lead lives which disrupt the denatured, extravagant consumption of the court'.[8] The props and accessories worn by Belaria and Cadwal reinforced these ideas (Figure 6). As props designer Nova Castile notes: 'They go foraging as well as subsistence hunting. That suggests regeneration, recycling, and renewing, of which Wales is the centre in the play.'[9]

The idea of recycling proved especially useful throughout the production – not just in costumes and props, but in the set design, which displayed the wasteful excesses of the urban court while also featuring a cave and tree at stage left that were themselves built from repurposed materials. This aesthetic was appropriate for staging *Cymbeline* because Shakespeare himself seemed to be recycling many of his characters and plot-lines in this late romance, refashioning his own words in order to tell a new story infused with supernatural elements. On another level, the recycling of Shakespeare's plays as practised by contemporary theatre companies such as MSIP provides important lessons in sustainability. Speaking on this subject, Randall Martin observes that Shakespearean recycling 'offers today's audiences a metacritical commentary on the current shift away from older green readings of Shakespeare as the poet of cosmic and natural harmonies, towards evolutionary models of ecology based on sustainable adaptation to natural and human-generated forms of change'.[10] The MSIP adaptation's scenes with Belaria and Cadwal embraced this sort of ecological

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sensibility, for they showed women who were able to live with minimal negative impact on their environment precisely because of their respect for the lessons that non-human nature imparted to them.

Belaria inevitably emerged as a sort of Mother Nature figure in the production, but the creative team worked to avoid clichéd representations of that kind of figure. Instead, the eco-feminist orientation of the adaptation created a different model for women in a biospheric environment. I encouraged Chelsea Dàvid, who played Belaria, to think of herself as Rachel Carson, or as a skilled biologist who is able to survive in the wilderness and is eager to pass on her knowledge to the next generation.[11] When Belaria and Cadwal appeared in the play for the first time, they emerged from the audience, squatted on the grass, pointed to trees and birds, and picked up dirt, encouraging the spectators to see what they saw in a handful of earth. As these women's actions and words insistently referred to the physical environment not just within the play but in the particular parks where the stage had been set up, it became impossible to ignore the overlay between human and non-human elements of each ecosystem (Figure 7). Like the PVC-pipe tree of the set, this production as a whole pointed to the fundamental lesson of the Anthropocene: there is no aspect of the planet devoid of human influence.

In their contribution to a volume titled *Beyond Nature Writing*, Adam Sweeting and Thomas Crochunis note that 'If we understand space not as an inert given condition but as something called into being by human and more-than-human performance, the interconnectedness of seemingly disparate gestures, places, and times will be visible'.[12] Wales is far removed from Montana, yet the scenes that took place in the Welsh mountains built an uncanny connection between local and imaginative space. One of the most rural states in the USA, Montana is known for its access to a variety of outdoor activities, from skiing to hunting and hiking to flyfishing. Access to non-urban spaces and public recreation areas thus unites Montana residents across a political divide. *Cymbeline* tapped into this shared love of the land, seeking a common ground for understanding our position in relation to the precious yet fragile ecosystems such as the one presented in the Welsh scenes.

Mikey Gray *The experience of the tour literally placed me at a higher elevation of existence. From the low-elevation city of Chicago to the mountains of the West, I was challenged physically and emotionally in a vast part of the country I had never charted. Similarly, the search for a safe and common ground was essential for Imogen as she escaped to nature to find her beloved Posthumus and in the process discovered more sides of her character through the unfamiliar, rural environment.*

When Imogen receives the letter from Posthumus, pleading, 'What your own love will out of this advise you, follow' (3.2.44–5), it releases in her an unwavering courage that propels her forward. I used Imogen as inspiration for my own journey and was lucky to live vicariously through her. As she shifts from woman to man, from court to the wilderness, from separation to new communities, Imogen follows a moral compass that acts as a loyal guide. The trusty Pisanio assists by sending her off with 'Safe mayst thou wander, safe return again' (3.5.105). This parting line was used by costume designer Denise Massman, who 'cut out and appliquéd [*Pisanio's words*] *as bold trim on* [*Imogen's*] *skirt and the neckline', reminding me every day as I put on my costume that there was a perilous yet promising path ahead.*[13]

As we set off on this grand tour through the state of Montana and the Intermountain West, each day entering a new town, the ritual of getting into a costume with the bold message of a safe journey sustained me through the work and the many miles covered. I was entering communities with which I would have never otherwise engaged, in the most rural corners of the north-west part of the country in a politically charged pandemic. Following a particularly gorgeous performance in August in Chico Hot Springs, Montana, perceptive audience members spoke with me about their experience of witnessing Cymbeline *and the themes of the Anthropocene. Marya Grathwohl explained: 'All the power came out of the cave for this play. Really.' The cave in our production acted as a gateway into the wild unknown. As Imogen confronts the cave, she draws a knife, fearing not*

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Figure 7. In Charlo, Montana. Photo: Mikey Gray.

just nature itself but the danger of uncivilized humans. 'The power of nature will prevail,' Grathwohl continued, 'as fire, drought, and heat as we wake up. So you all did something so important to help wake us up through the arts. Look at all the people who discover who they really are in the play. Imogen, her sister, her mother, and even the king is converted.'

Grathwohl was accompanied by her two female friends, Sister Helen Prejean and Denny. I stood with these three, sharing ideas and in awe of how these women intuited the power of our eco-feminist adaptation (Figure 8). I felt comforted by these Mother Nature-like figures in the middle of rural Montana. Similarly, after Imogen enters the cave in desperate need of comfort, support, sleep, and food, her experience is broadened by her warm interaction with the women she meets in Wales.

Likewise, I was met with many encounters that gave me solace and shifted my preconceived notions of people in rural North America, through words and action. During a dramatic drive on tour where our truck (hauling the trailer containing our entire set) broke down, a man in a MAGA hat ('Make America Great Again' – a signature slogan of Donald Trump) pulled over and took the time to check on us as well as our engine. His generosity to help a travelling theatre troupe actively blurred a political line that seemed not to matter on that road in the middle of Lewis and Clark National Forest as we all worked together to get the wheels rolling again. Although daunting at first, the tour offered a glimpse into the honesty and care of the people and their homeland in the Intermountain West. The people co-existing with Montana's natural environment taught me how to live in a more rooted relationship with the landscape.

Rebirth

The most bizarre, and perhaps most challenging, scene of *Cymbeline* is the supposed death

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0266464X22000227 Published online by Cambridge University Press



Figure 8. Mikey Gray with audience members Marya Grathwohl and Sister Helen Prejean. Photo: Denny.

and resurrection of Imogen next to the headless corpse of Cloten. Yet this is only the nadir of a much longer arc requiring that Imogen surrender to the earth and then rise again, not just reborn, but forever changed. In the MSIP staging, this metaphorical death and rebirth were integral to the production's investment in an ecological reading of *Cymbeline.*

When Cadwal and Belaria discover the apparently lifeless body of the boy they call Fidele (really Imogen in disguise), Belaria notes the peaceful appearance of the body and says, 'Why, he but sleeps' (4.2.214). Although Belaria did not mean to be literal, this, as the audience knows, is in fact true – Imogen is merely in a deep, deathlike sleep brought on by the Queen's potion. Importantly, this is the second time that Imogen has fallen asleep. In the first instance (2.2) she is sleeping while Iachimo creeps around her chamber and observes both the artwork and her body. Such a moment can be read in the light of the Sleeping Beauty tradition in which a defenceless princess is subject to the male gaze (and in some versions of the legend not just kissed, but raped).[14]

Even more suggestively for this Anthropocene-themed production, there are strong links between the Sleeping Beauty stories and the botanical world.[15] The princess is surrounded by hedges with thorns in which many unwelcome suitors are entangled, some meeting their deaths. The Sleeping Beauty motif thus provides a precedent for considering the intertwining of the ecological with the somnolent in *Cymbeline.*

The artworks that Iachimo notes in the bedchamber are of course static, lifeless images, describing an Ovidian botanical world. In contrast, in Imogen's second sleep, this time truly the 'ape of death' (2.2.31), the earth and the flora are real because the scene takes place in nature. In the MSIP production, Cadwal carried Imogen's body, retrieved from the river bank where she was found, as if resting with her cheek upon the ground. In this staging, the power of Imogen's second sleep came from her yielding to the earth. Immersion in death, earth, and the more-than-human world released her from the unnatural constrictions of the court and prepared her to absorb the worldview of her mother and sister.

The well-known funeral dirge 'Fear no more the heat o'th' sun' (4.2.257–80) is a song that articulates the peace of death. This peace derives from full integration between human and non-human environments. As Randall Martin notes, Belaria and Cadwal's 'theory of burial is naturally metabiotic: it presumes that [Imogen] will live beyond death not by transcending physical nature but by becoming biologically reintegrated into its perpetually renewing cycles and evolutionary adaptation'.[16] The MSIP performance of this song emphasized the ritual nature of this belief system as Belaria played on her wooden flute. Then she and Cadwal sang and danced while placing flowers and herbs on the corpses, ending in a mirrored series of gestures while kneeling upon the ground (Figure 9). The ceremony acknowledged the continuity and even reciprocity between life and death.

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Imogen, reposing on a bed of flowers, had thoroughly rejoined the generative earth – *humus* – from which she came. It was therefore her destiny to rise again, but only after she discovered herself in a nightmare through which she had to walk on her way to a renewed life on the other side. In the agony of her belief that it was Posthumus's body over which she mourned, Gray's Imogen painted herself with this corpse's blood and then collapsed upon it, as if she were also devoid of life. This is how the Roman commander Lucius found her, until he realized she was not in fact dead but sleeping. Like her husband, Imogen was now *post-humus*, marked by tragedy and death, yet carrying an enduring knowledge gained from that experience. Lucius ended the scene with the line 'Some falls are means the happier to arise' (4.2.401). This sentiment informed the regenerative momentum for the rest of the performance.

In his reading of this scene, Martin notes that Imogen's 'adaptive and regenerate body symbolizes the ecological reclamation of Cymbeline's Britain'.[17] These powerful moments in the MSIP production invited audiences to consider what it would mean if Britain (and by association their own country) embraced systems of ecological renewal. Once the Queen and Cloten had disappeared from the play, so did interactions with the environment based on extraction and violence. Instead there was a movement toward restoring, not cannibalizing, our ecosystems and communities. The results were bound to bear fruit, as they would in the last scene with Posthumus's exclamation that Imogen should 'Hang there like fruit, my soul' (5.5.262). Yet restoration is a gradual process, for a heritage of slow violence can be repaired only by patient cultivation.

Mikey Gray *On 16 August 2021, in Seeley Lake, Montana, Rachel Cendrick* (*as Cadwal*) *carried my sleeping body on to the stage on a clear, warm and gorgeous day. When I* (*as Imogen, as Fidele*) *awoke, my eyes watered at the sight that*



Figure 9. Chelsea Dàvid as Belaria performing 'Fear no more'; Mikey Gray as Fidele. Photo: Adrian Sanchez Gonzalez.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0266464X22000227 Published online by Cambridge University Press



Figure 10. Seeley Lake, Montana. The audience disperses. Photo: Erik Paul Pearson.

was a mirror to the haze of Imogen's waking. In the monologue over Cloten's dead body, Imogen says, 'The dream's here still. Even when I wake it is / Without me as within me, not imagined, felt' (4.2.305–6). *I awoke from a clear backstage to the darkened world of a huge wall of smoke that had pushed into the valley and towards the stage as the blood-red sunset grew gloomy in its fumes* (Figure 10). *It was an unavoidable sensory reminder that the nightmare of the Anthropocene is indeed here and seems to be here to stay. As my tears mixed with the smoke, the threat of wildfires, global warming, natural catastrophe, life and death felt 'Murd'rous to th' senses'* (4.2.327).

Echoing this experience, a Native American man of the Blackfeet tribe, Alan Racine, who had stumbled on our performance in Cut Bank, Montana, declared that 'Mother Earth is really upset with us. Her revenge is going to be . . . I don't know . . . It seems like every day, goodness, like down south the hurricanes are happening, Haiti had the earthquake, the fires are burning and . . . I'm heading for the hills!' His impulse was to escape from the catastrophes of the Anthropocene by returning to the natural topography of his homeland. He continued with passion: 'I think we have to make our own magic nowadays . . . Nobody can create that for us, we have to create it for ourselves.' I felt fortunate to have been graced by an Indigenous perspective of Mother Nature's rage and to see that his words of hope were rooted in his beliefs. His confident and compassionate energy ignited the question in me: what magic can we create on this ever-changing earth? Imogen's response to this moment in the journey of Cymbeline *is to ensure the proper burial of the person whom she presumes is her dead Posthumus 'With wildwood leaves and weeds'* (4.2.389). *Imogen's instinct is to heal through the recycling of the life process – to work with nature instead of against it.*

In Ekalaka, Montana, a town of just 400 people, I had the opportunity to speak with a group of

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friends made up of a biologist, a geologist, and a barista. One scientist, Claire Jorgensen, profoundly noted: 'Nature and ecology as a whole is an impartial force. It's either gonna chew us up and spit us out, or we can learn to utilize it properly. We like to imagine it as our mother, but it's an impartial caretaker. It does not care about us the way we need to care about it.' Through the haze of confusion and deadly poison, Imogen learns to care for, and work with, the healing powers of the natural world. Eva Grimes, a member of this group in Ekalaka, in particular opened up about her experience of working with the turmoil and trauma that hit her family during the pandemic. 'In an odd way,' she said, 'Covid caused the rebirth of me. I lost my mother to Covid in October.' With help from the community, she now owns her mother's business, gracefully growing a local café. 'It changed me completely,' she shared, with a sincere smile.

With the help of these conversions and unexpected connections in rural Montana, I was fortunate to foster moments of personal rebirth and rejuvenation by engaging with individuals across the wide make-up of our audiences. Imogen refers to her new cave-dwelling companions Belaria and Cadwal, saying: 'These are kind creatures. What lies I have heard. / Our courtiers say all's cruel but at court. / Experience, O thou disprov'st report' (*4.2.32–4; Minton's adaptation*). *As the summer season swelled, the change in my perception of the people of this country was palpable, and expanded in each evening's exchange of art and conversation under the big sky. Together we shared brief yet moving moments of revelling in the rebirth of community through the ritual of theatre.*

War

Cymbeline's turn to war directly after Cloten's death and Imogen's metaphorical resurrection is in one sense surprising, almost out of keeping with the dominant elements of its plot. However, throughout the first three acts the Roman-British conflict is in the background, and the Roman invasion of Wales through the port at Milford Haven in Act 4 is the climax of a story that is largely about nationalism and its discontents.

As the war erupts, Britain is under siege, fearing all is lost, but the intervention of the Welsh mountaineers is the key factor in victory. In the MSIP production, these female characters (Belaria and Cadwal) possessed an ability to fight for their country that was a by-product of their love for its land. Unlike the other soldiers, who wore nondescript coveralls, these women maintained their signature costumes, which bore witness to life in the wilderness (Figure 11). The impulse to fight was also governed by a connection to family. As Belaria yielded to her daughter's urge not to retreat higher to the mountains, her key lines were 'Have with you, child: / If in your country wars you chance to die, / That is my bed too, dear, and there I'll lie' (4.4.50–2; Minton's adaptation). She and Cadwal engaged in a ritualized 'howl' at that point. This endearing moment brought an ecological and feminine dimension to the otherwise male-dominated destruction that is typical of war.

The unexpected acquiescence of King Cymbeline after the battle, as he agrees to pay the Roman tribute despite his victory, makes it clear that the British success in this war is not measured by a nationalism that asserts superiority and dominance (as in, for example, *Henry V*). The lessons learned are of a different kind, gesturing towards 'the sustaining value of local and global relationships'.[18] The isolationist philosophy of the Queen and Cloten is in fact part of what makes them evil, for they voice a misguided British exceptionalism that refuses to understand the value of wider communities and shared interests that can bring peoples together rather than tear them apart.[19]

The play's message about the dangers of isolationism became one of the key elements of the MSIP production's environmental orientation. Insularity is, after all, an enemy to ecology. This fact has been made painfully clear by the failure of powerful nations such as the USA to remain with the Paris Climate Accord or to agree to more stringent carbon restrictions during the COP26 climate summit in November 2021. By contrast, Cymbeline learns how to move away from the compartmentalized and suppressed biological and cultural diversity that was asserted by his Queen. In this adaptation Belaria was his first wife, so by returning to her at the end,

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Cymbeline was embracing a sustainable model of governance and a holistic understanding of biosphere embodied by this Mother Nature figure.

In Montana, attitudes toward isolationism are politically fraught due to widespread libertarian outlooks that mistrust the federal government and prioritize state and individual control. Without engaging in this kind of political commentary directly, the *Cymbeline* production nonetheless demonstrated the dangers of insular political structures. The presented alternative was to think holistically, valuing all human and more-than-human agents, from Roman soldiers to Welsh mountaineers, and rats to eagles.[20] Even Posthumus's repeated change of clothes and sides during the battle reinforced a message about hybridity, for he learns the same lesson that Cymbeline does: separation between nationalities, classes, and histories is impossible as well as destructive. The message about national hybridity extends to the ecological dimension of the play, for just as demarcation between 'Roman' and 'British' is unhelpful, to insist upon categories that separate and exalt the human species is ill-advised. As Shakespeare's Ovidian sources suggest, cross-species integration and co-evolution offer an alternative to human exceptionalism.

MSIP's ecological orientation was fully grounded in the local as well as the global; understanding the former required full immersion in the environmental warning signs of the 2021 summer. During this time, the war in question for residents of the Western USA was not about enemy armies, but about raging wildfires. The fire season broke records on the west coast, sending waves of smoke to the Rocky Mountain West. In combination with dozens of Montana fires, these widespread events resulted in hazardous air quality. Several times, MSIP moved the performances indoors to the 'rain' location because of smoke, while drought and extreme heat validated the grim reality of continued and increasing climate emergency. The gravity of health concerns was compounded by the



Figure 11. The battle. Photo: Adrian Sanchez Gonzalez.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0266464X22000227 Published online by Cambridge University Press

threat to lungs that both wildfire smoke and Covid posed. As an article from the *Montana Free Press* noted in July:

> The smoke and unrelenting heat pummelling the state have driven people to seek refuge at libraries, movie theatres, museums and other indoor venues. In areas with low Covid-19 vaccination rates where people have largely abandoned masks and physical distancing, health officials are concerned the result will be Covid outbreaks.[21]

As environmental factors impacted the audiences throughout the summer, the cast found themselves increasingly aware that *Cymbeline* was a story not just about a distant or mythical past, but about the present as well.

When the smoke of Cymbeline's war clears, a path for regeneration is offered, even in the midst of a ruined landscape. During the '*Cymbeline* in the Anthropocene' conference in January 2020, project participants had lengthy discussions about messages of hope that can arise out of ruin. Georgian director Levan Tsuladze equated the decimation of landscape caused by war with the bushfires that Australia had recently experienced. He noted some photos that he had seen following the fires:

> And one photo is beautiful, and I think it is a symbol of *Cymbeline*, black burned body of this tree, and in this black there is a pink flower. And then I saw another photo [of the burned trees], and I saw green, not leaves, but something green. And I understand that all cataclysms are terrible, they are terrible, but they have [something] inside, because nature can be regenerate.[22]

Bozeman had also experienced a local fire in September of 2020, and, during the *Cymbeline* rehearsal period the following May, the actors went on a hike that took them through the burned-out areas of the Bridger Mountains. There, too, flowers were growing and spreading over the previously charred ground (Figure 12). After the trauma of 2020, and during the continued challenges of 2021, it was a profound statement to bring war and environmental disaster to the stage and yet to challenge audiences to see the regenerative power of nature as embodied in the flowers.

Mikey Gray *The environment tendered us constant obstacles to enjoying any given performance safely. In extreme cases, the smoke concealed the mountains outdoors, the audience masked up to remain safe against Covid indoors, and the beauty of the tour was similarly masked by our daily struggles. It was a running joke with my fellow cast-mates that we were 'Montana Shakespeare in the Smoke' as these extreme days became the norm.*

Our late-summer challenges brought to mind the conflicts in Cymbeline. *Imogen's strength in these circumstances was her survivalist disguise as a page boy in the middle of a war. In the same way that isolationism is an enemy to ecology, Imogen had to blend in and collaborate with the men of war to fight with resilience. Lucius, who takes Fidele under his wing, shouted to me in the middle of the battle sequence, 'Let's reinforce, or fly'* (*5.2.18*). *In response, I would then leap from high on the stage platform on to the earth, using Imogen's Little Red Riding Hood-inspired cape as my wings, and soar swiftly offstage. There were some fleeting moments when my impulse was to fly from this gruelling tour, but, although embattled by the hard physical work, the wildfires, and the threat of Covid, I was constantly compelled to reinforce my resources. There was no choice but to strengthen and soldier on.*

Towards the end of July, we travelled to Hamilton, Montana, for what we thought would be a smooth two-day stop. Instead, we were met with an unhealthy Air Quality Index (AQI) of around 170.[23] *The smoke made the mountains that were on the outskirts of town completely invisible in the thick grey sky. Not only did we move the stage inside the fairgrounds those days due to smoke, but we were also met with a severe and unexpected thunderstorm in the middle of the performance, which created a cacophony of natural forces circling and pounding against the windows and roofing of our indoor venue.*

After that performance, I stepped outside and spoke with many audience members as they scurried through the smoke back to the protection of their cars. I got to converse with a minister and his wife at length. Pastor Tim explained: 'I believe that all the stuff going on with Covid and the fires has all been predicted. The events spoken about in Daniel and Revelation are coming alive before our eyes. It's good versus evil.' Although I don't hold the same religious beliefs as Pastor Tim, the

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Figure 12. Flowers among the charred trees of the Bridger Mountains. Photo: Gretchen E. Minton.

battle between two forces of nature, humans and the environment, felt undeniable, considering that we were speaking together in the literal thick of it all. 'I believe in the Bible,' he continued, 'and I believe the world was created perfectly, and because man has sinned, nature has been corrupted, as well as all mankind. What we see now is the result of sin and thousands of years of man being selfish and doing what he wants to do.' I was challenged to reconcile with the idea of selfish sin being the cause of such destruction of a 'perfect world'. He equated the ending of the play with the notion that, in the end, God is going to make everything right. Even through the tension of our differing beliefs, I was left questioning what collective power could cure the earth and all its troubles.

As I stood in the heavy Hamilton smoke, speaking with the audience as they exited the world of our performance, costumed as Fidele, unveiled as Imogen, and revealed as an individual, I got a glimpse into how these people existed and fought their own battles, even through the haze. There were many places like Hamilton, where the unpredictability of nature dictated our experience; where iconic hikes were ill-advised; where freezing rain pelted us on stage in the middle of a show in Yellowstone National Park; where our drives were re-routed to avoid the epicentre of wildfires eating up the arid landscape; where we dipped in fresh water from the mountains and towns where water was not drinkable; where whole mountain ranges would never be seen by our eager eyes, due to the curtain of smoke hiding the natural landscape. Our lack of control in these natural environments was a reminder of how little we understand the biosphere, and this loss of control sometimes generates fear and fortification. This fierce fight would soon resolve, bringing to a conclusion both Imogen's journey and my own.

Pardon

In *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable*, Amitav Ghosh calls for an imaginative literature that can allow future generations 'to transcend the isolation in which humanity was entrapped in the time of its derangement' and thus 'rediscover their kinship with other beings'.[24] 'This vision,' he writes, 'at once new and ancient, will find expression in a transformed and renewed art and literature.'[25] Such transformational possibilities existed in the past as well, and one such example is Shakespearean tragicomedy.

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This genre's hybridity, and its infusion of unlikely, even supernatural, elements, prove fertile ground for imaginatively repairing the brokenness of ecosystems.

Embracing the wonder of the final scene was thus part of the MSIP production's environmental focus. This adaptation omitted some of the supernatural elements of the play, most notably Posthumus's dream and the prophecy that Jupiter bestows on Posthumus in a written tablet, promising Britain's restoration (5.4.63–83; 108–15). Nonetheless, the imagery of the tablet's prophecy informed the staging of Act 5, giving meaning based on ideas of 'rediscover[ing] kinship with other beings', as Ghosh puts it.

The prophecy in Shakespeare's *Cymbeline* is dependent upon the common metaphor of grafting: '*from a stately cedar shall be lopped branches which, being dead many years, shall after revive, be jointed to the old stock, and freshly grow*' (5.4.110–13). Writing about grafting in *Cymbeline*, Jean Feerick notes that Cymbeline's lost sons are 'strange shoots' of their father because of their time in the wilderness, and when they return to court they 'smuggle back into Britain the . . . tinge of that soil'. Shakespeare uses the motif of grafting disparate trees and bodies to underscore 'an equation of hybridity with Britain, defining its mingle-mangle body as the key to its imperial future'.[26]

The MSIP adaptation was not concerned with imperial futures, of course, but the grafting motif allowed an emphasis upon other kinds of hybridity. Like the image of the pink flower growing on the charred landscape after a fire, grafting gives hope by its merging of plants, allowing life in the branches that would otherwise wither and die.

As a human-generated practice, grafting offers a model for anthropogenic intervention that is positive and regenerative. Drawing upon the central role of humans in grafting, the production showed that renewed life requires not divine intervention, but the very human work of repentance and forgiveness. The cuts in my script helped to centre the play on human concerns, since I had deliberately omitted the vast majority of the references to the gods, sidelining the play's pious overtones.

Despite the range of characters who do wrong in the play, only two of them – the Queen and Cloten – never ask for forgiveness. Not surprisingly, these are the two characters who do not survive. Others are left in the fifth act to admit their errors and to kneel in supplication. Iachimo is defeated on the battlefield, and then kneels before Posthumus in the final scene, saying he is 'down again' (5.5.411), but Posthumus's mercy ('Live, / And deal with others better'; 418–19) is a by-product of his own repentance and the miraculous fact that Imogen forgives him.

In an echo of this gesture, Brandon Burditt's Cymbeline knelt before Belaria, asking her forgiveness and re-establishing her as his queen. Picking up on his own sense of guilt and his power to forgive, Cymbeline declares that 'Pardon's the word to all' (421). Burditt addressed this line to the audience, drawing them into both the responsibility of guilt and the hope of being pardoned. Given the eco-inflection of the production, the guilt was associated with the greed and destructive behaviour that have resulted in catastrophic damage to our planet. The operative word for reconciliation here is *atonement*, for the reparations come in the form of making things whole – of recognizing that ecological health requires being 'at one' again.

The pleasure of *Cymbeline*'s final scene comes from the need to peel back the layers of deceit, disguise, and trauma. This unveiling gets to the heart of this fiction's revelatory consummation. In Shakespeare's play the Soothsayer declares that 'The fingers of the powers above do tune / The harmony of this peace' (465–6). In the MSIP production the line was adapted and spoken by Belaria in what came to be the key words of the company's staging: 'The powers of the natural world do tune / The harmony of this peace.' In the role of Belaria, Chelsea Dàvid used the opportunity to gesture towards each performance location's non-human elements, sometimes touching trees, indicating mountains, or registering an awareness of bird-calls. Harmony could be achieved only through breaking

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down artificial barriers between genres, species, and political factions.

Mikey Gray *My journey paralleled the breathtaking journey of Imogen in* Cymbeline, *for I woke up from the reality of a bad dream to the revelation and revitalization of love and nature. Accepting, forgiving, and transforming the past as we all returned to the joys and power of theatre and community in the summer of 2021 are not so far from the feelings of the final scene in* Cymbeline, *with the exhilaration of a rebirth and return from a long and hard journey. By addressing environmental conflicts,* Cymbeline *offered me the powerful message of forgiveness and intentional co-existence.*

A collection of students from Montana State University invited me to sit on their blanket after a show in Bozeman, Montana, on one of our last days of the tour. Two students argued about the meaning of this final scene. One articulated her feelings on Belaria and Cadwal, saying, 'A lot of their femininity and power came from being on the margin in the forest, and then we pull them right back into the court in the end to tie up the story, which is a beautiful sort of redemption but maybe pulls apart some of their [*power*]*.' And in response another said, 'I've never really liked the whole "man is separate from nature" bit. At the end of the play Belaria and Cadwal are not removed from nature so much as the court and them are integrated once again.' Through reconciliation, Imogen helps erase those hard lines of the court's structure. Kin and nature are finely and finally fused.*

Kevin Asselin directed the last scene so that the characters were caught up in the reconciliations, and all exited happily, until Imogen was alone centre-stage. In this moment each night, I shed some layers of Fidele and Imogen, leaving a part of myself standing on stage in awe as I reflected upon where we had all come from, and naturally shedding a tear of pure elation. Night after night, I got to inhale the collective air of communities as the sun set behind an often brilliant backdrop of nature. And alone, together, we all exhaled.

Shakespeare's 'piece of tender air' (*5.4.110*) *was an inspiration for my character, both in my breath work and in her essence of grit and grace. Through the rapid short breaths of each emotional beat and the story's overall climax, I discovered ease and expansion while exhaling. The same part of our brain controls both our heartbeat and respiration, a central system vital to survival. The reunion of art-making with Montana Shakespeare in the Parks was a form of resilience, survival, and sustainability for me as an individual. I had the incredible opportunity to embrace art and synchronize with communities and the earth throughout the Intermountain West. Through Imogen's epic journey, I have found myself personally transformed, and continue to revel in the recognition that there is a breathtaking symmetry between the conservation of art and nature.*

Conclusion

As the season concluded, we were all inspired by the success of this production and the impact it had made on audience members across the wide geographical expanse where the actors had performed it. Randall Martin, the project director of '*Cymbeline* in the Anthropocene', attended MSIP's final two performances of this play in September. In his review of the production, Martin characterized the performance as an 'eco-theatrically recreated *Cymbeline* [which] presented an alternative ethos to modernity's entrenched masculinist systems of exploitation in the form of active moral and ecological responsibility'.[27] The focus of this production on the intersection between Covid and the Anthropocene made the theme of responsibility especially pertinent.

This moment in the twenty-first century urges a consideration of the destruction we have caused to both human and more-than-human life-forms, asking us to acknowledge our culpability. This is a necessary first step in moving beyond guilt and trauma. The discussions about pardon, reciprocity, and forgiveness that Mikey and I have highlighted in this article are only a piece of a much larger discussion in which the actors, production crew, and audiences engaged. In order to fully capture how Imogen's journey, and our own journey through *Cymbeline* in 2021, provided ecological resonance, I conclude by evoking not Shakespeare, but Seamus Heaney:

> . . . hope for a great sea-change
> On the far side of revenge.

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Believe that a farther shore
Is reachable from here.
Believe in miracles
And cures and healing wells. . . .

If there's fire on the mountain
And lightning and storm
And a god speaks from the sky

That means someone is hearing
The outcry and the birth-cry
Of new life at its term.[28]

Notes and References

1. We would like to thank Randall Martin for his helpful feedback on this article, as well as Kevin Asselin and the cast and crew who worked to create this inspiring MSIP *Cymbeline* production; and Maria Shevtsova for her editorial guidance.

2. See <http://shakespeareintheparks.org/about/overview>.

3. See <https://www.cymbeline-anthropocene.com/>.

4. Quotations from *Cymbeline* are taken from the Arden 3 edition, ed. Valerie Wayne (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), unless otherwise stated.

5. See the discussion of the French prose romance *Perceforest* (1528), as well as the version of the story by Gianbattista Basile (1634), in David Roberts, 'Sleeping Beauties: Shakespeare, Sleep, and the Stage', *The Cambridge Quarterly*, XXXV, No. 3 (2006), p. 231–54 (p. 233–4).

6. Frances E. Dolan, *Digging the Past: How and Why to Imagine Seventeenth-Century Agriculture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020), p. 12. On a related note, Amitav Ghosh notes that the Anthropocene 'consists of phenomena that were long ago expelled from the territory of the novel – forces of unthinkable magnitude that create unbearably intimate connections over vast gaps in time and space'. Ultimately, argues Ghosh, surrealism and magical realism are genres that offer hope in the improbable. This desperately needed hope is exactly what is enacted in the final act of *Cymbeline*. See Amitav Ghosh, *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2016), p. 63.

7. Rita Felski, *Uses of Literature*, quoted in Dolan, *Digging the Past*, p. 148.

8. See <https://www.cymbeline-anthropocene.com/article/18089-denise-massman-on-her-costumes-for-montana-shakespeare-in-the-park-s-cymbeline>.

9. See <https://www.cymbeline-anthropocene.com/article/18187-montana-cymbeline-interview-with-props-designer-nova-grayson-casillo>, where Castile also notes that Belaria is 'a mother nature figure. She has learned to see powers in all those small things, and the way that everything is useful and has its purpose'.

10. Randall Martin, *Shakespeare and Ecology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 133.

11. Chelsea Dàvid echoed this perspective in an interview: 'I spoke with Gretchen, who gave me the wonderful suggestion that Belaria is the cool, biologist mom who takes her kid out into nature, and says, "OK, let's see how many different kinds of leaves we can find. Let's go to the pond and see if we can see fish and identify them." That made all the difference. It took away the caricature. It was a perspective change. I found that my confidence did come from nature. That I could find inspiration from outside of me as opposed to manufacturing it with my body language.' See <https://www.cymbeline-anthropocene.com/article/18439-montana-shakespeare-in-the-parks-interview-with-chelsea-david-as-philaria-and-belaria>.

12. Adam Sweeting and Thomas Crochunis, 'Performing the Wild: Wilderness and Theatre Spaces', in *Beyond Nature Writing: Expanding the Boundaries of Ecocriticism*, ed. Karla Armbruster and Kathleen R. Wallace (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2001), p. 325–40 (p. 331).

13. See <https://www.cymbeline-anthropocene.com/article/18089-denise-massman-on-her-costumes-for-montana-shakespeare-in-the-park-s-cymbeline>.

14. See above, p. 303.

15. See Dolan, *Digging the Past*, Chapter 4.

16. Martin, *Shakespeare and Ecology*, p. 130–1.

17. Ibid., p. 128.

18. Ibid., p. 121.

19. The perils of isolationism have made *Cymbeline* seem like a 'Brexit play', and this angle was emphasized in the 2016 Royal Shakespeare Company production, directed by Melly Still.

20. The hierarchical nature of the animal kingdom is evident throughout Shakespeare's plays. For example, Rebecca Ann Bach notes that 'eagles and the higher-level hawks were associated with nobility, and, likewise, commoners were associated with domestic geese and chickens': *Birds and Other Creatures in Renaissance Literature: Shakespeare, Descartes, and Animal Studies* (London: Routledge, 2018), p. 12. Yet in *Cymbeline*, the Queen's poisoning of 'lower' animals and her desire to kill people 'as [she] would a rat' (5.5.247) complicates the hierarchy by suggesting that only a villain would believe that such animals have no value.

21. *Montana Free Press*, 22 July 2021.

22. See <https://www.cymbeline-anthropocene.com/article/15963-finding-the-pink-flower-in-the-scorched-landscape>.

23. AQI numbers above 151 are designated 'unhealthy', and above 201 'very unhealthy', posing a health risk for everyone. See <https://www.airnow.gov/aqi/aqi-basics/>.

24. Ghosh, *The Great Derangement*, p. 162.

25. Ibid.

26. Jean E. Feerick, 'The Imperial Graft: Horticulture, Hybridity, and the Art of Mingling Races in *Henry V* and *Cymbeline*', in *The Oxford Handbook of Shakespeare and Embodiment: Gender, Sexuality, and Race*, ed. Valerie Traub (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), p. 211–27 (p. 225). See also Vin Nardizzi's insightful piece on grafting at <https://arcade.stanford.edu/content/grafting>.

27. See <https://www.cymbeline-anthropocene.com/article/18336-habitable-natures-in-two-performances-of-montana-shakespeare-in-the-parks%E2%80%99-cymbeline>.

28. Seamus Heaney, 'Voices from Lemnos' (from *The Cure at Troy*), in *Opened Ground: Poems 1966–1996* (London: Faber, 1998), p. 330–1.

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