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Posthumanism in the Early Modern Period: Jonson, Marlowe, and Shakespeare

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis examines the existence of posthumanism in the dramas of Ben Jonson, Christopher Marlowe, and William Shakespeare – the three most prominent playwrights of the early modern period. Posthumanist theory, which gives scholars the opportunity to look at past works in a new and unique way, attempts to re-locate the human in the diverse creatures and objects in the world we inhabit. By applying posthumanist theory to older works, we can better understand the early modern period and its writers as well as their relevance to the present. Their plays' messages serve as warnings that work to guide humanity in the right direction if we are willing to listen. Current events show us the dangers of continuing down the path of our present course. In short, by looking to the past I hope to chart the course of posthumanist interpretation on literature and our own species in the future.

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

This thesis examines the existence of posthumanism in the early modern works of Ben Jonson, Christopher Marlowe, and William Shakespeare – the three most prominent playwrights of the early modern period. The ideas brought forth in posthumanism are presented through posthumanist theory, which gives scholars the opportunity to look at past works in a new way. In its application to older works, we can better understand the early modern period and its writers as well as their relevance to our present time and future. In short, by looking to the past, I hope to chart the course of posthumanist interpretation on literature in the present and the future.

Posthumanism is often confused with transhumanism; therefore, in this brief introduction, it will be beneficial to note the key differences between posthumanism, transhumanism, and humanism. Because both posthumanism and transhumanism are a reaction against humanism, it is important to define humanism first. Humanism places the highest importance on the human and sees the human at the center of the universe or more explicit, "man is the measure of all things" (Protagoras). It focuses on human needs and wants and looks at ways to solve human problems. Posthumanism requires a radical mental change from humanist thinking, and this theory can be considered anything that questions humanism. The human is no longer at the center of the universe in posthumanism, and it places importance on the vibrant world outside of the human, considering both the living and the object world. These ideas are proposed by some of the leading theorists in posthumanism such as Katherine Hayles and Jane Bennet, whose ideas will be referenced frequently throughout the thesis.

Transhumanism, on the other hand, keeps the human as central in a technological world. R.L. Rutsky explains this further, "Transhumans continue to rely on, and in fact reinforce, a

humanist conception of the subject, defined by its instrumental mastery over the object world" (190). Transhumanism sees humans as enhanced by their ability to master technology and technological tools, which can be seen in the usage of artificial limbs or hearts that allow humans to prosper. In doing this, transhumanism still ignores the importance and interconnectedness of the world aside from the human.

The first playwright of the early modern period that I examine in my thesis is Ben Jonson. Jonson's birthday is believed to be on June 11, 1572, but there are no contemporary records that confirm this date (Riggs 9). We do know, however, that Jonson wrote throughout the late 1500s and into the early 1600s at the same time as Shakespeare. Much to his dismay, he was often compared to Shakespeare, and many people of his time saw Jonson as slightly inferior to him (Sanders 2). This attitude has transferred to modern readers because, as Sanders explains, "Jonson is frequently held up as a social documenter, the man whose work is less for 'all time' than embedded, sometimes inextricably, in its own time" (2). Jonson's writing seems much harder to decipher than that of his rivals and, ultimately, more difficult to make meaningful connections for the modern reader. Sanders further suggests, "More than anyone, perhaps, he is linked to the space and site of the expanding capital itself in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries" (2). Looking at posthumanist elements in Jonson's plays provides the reader with a background to begin to create meaningful connections in the present and, also, better understand the context in which they were written.

Ben Jonson's play *The Alchemist* is possibly the most relevant to our current time since it is set during an outbreak of the bubonic plague. Modern readers have a unique opportunity to understand the setting of this play and the effects of lock down because of our current predicament with the COVID-19 pandemic. This play also seems like an ideal place to begin the

search for posthumanism in the early modern period simply because of its title; however, it is seemingly more difficult to find these elements in this comedic play because Jonson takes a complicated stance in relation to alchemy as a science. According to Mark S. Morrison, although Jonson's *The Alchemist* ultimately reduces and criticizes the practice and practitioners of alchemy during the early modern period, scholars argue that the play also captures a realistic image of the future of science under modernity (3). Alchemy has proved to be one of the key factors in the development of modern-day chemistry and, more specifically, in the understanding of matter. Using Jane Bennett's book *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*, I examine Jonson's characters and their inventive thought patterns and how these patterns are related to the practice of alchemy in the period and ultimately to the more modern, posthumanist understanding of the "vibrant matter" Bennett presents throughout her book.

After the master of the house flees the country to escape the plague, his butler, Face, takes advantage of his absence and decides to make a profit for himself through schemes with the help of his friends, Subtle and Doll. The victims of Face, Subtle, and Doll in *The Alchemist* are presented as naïve and gullible; however, I believe they represent the early modern fascination towards magic and the interconnectedness of the world around the characters, the same globe we still inhabit. Additionally, Jonson was one of the earliest playwrights to produce a modern stage. Henry S. Turner explains that Jonson's awareness of classicism made him more aware and concerned with spatial arts in his plays (217). These spatial elements were applied throughout his plays, creating a stage that was unlike others that came before him, which Turner suggests is evident in the composition of *The Alchemist*, and which I believe are connected to posthumanism.

I next examine Christopher Marlowe. Marlowe's output was short-lived and he was portrayed as a scandalous figure as an atheist, a hot-head, and sometimes a violent man. Regardless of his personal life, he accomplished great feats in his writing during the short course of his career, and these works live on today. Ironically, he was born in the same year as Shakespeare, and his writing is also relevant to modern readers. While modern readers may more easily find connections within Marlowe's work in contrast to Jonson's, looking at his work through a posthuman lense allows the reader to find new meaning and purpose in Marlowe's writing that may be even more relevant to our current times.

In the Marlowe chapter, I first explain the close relationship between science and magic in the early modern period. I then use James Robinson Howe's idea of magic to understand the interconnectedness of the universe. He explains that magical systems are, "a way of explaining how the many parts of the known universe fit together and interrelate" (9). Interconnectedness is a key component to posthumanism, as Katherine Hayles suggests in *How We Became Posthuman (1999)*, which I will be referencing frequently throughout the thesis. In addition to Hayles, I will use the writings of Howe as well as Timothy Francisco's notion of cyborgs to examine the character and actions of Tamburlaine. This chapter also contains a section on Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* and Faustus's role as an engineer. Faustus takes on the role of "engineer" in the play when he attempts to create a servant network of demons to fulfill his selfish desires. As Kevin Lagrandeur suggests, this proves to be unsustainable for him because he never completely controls or understands the power within the system (23). He fails to find balance because he is only concerned with his own well-being and self-improvement. I also examine the use of the word "engine" in both play to explain the problematic tendency of humans to use machinery for selfish, destructive purposes.

Last, the thesis turns to examine the works of William Shakespeare. Shakespeare is the most well-known of the early modern playwrights as well as the most relevant. Many of Shakespeare's works are ubiquitous because readers throughout different times have found meaning and purpose in his works. Posthumanism, however, allows the reader to look at his works in a new way. In looking for posthuman elements in his plays, the reader can better understand the interconnectedness of the world as far back as the late 1500s – which is one of the main goals of posthumanism. Shakespeare, arguably more than Jonson or Marlowe, seems to recognize and understand how the world is intertwined, which can be seen in the way he constructs his characters and plays.

Intelligent machines take on an important role in posthumanism; therefore, in examining the roles that machines play in early modern works such as those of Shakespeare, it enables scholars and readers to better understand the long existing connections between human life and machines. For centuries, humans have relied on what Jane Bennett terms, "The Machine model of nature" (in her book *Vibrant Matter*). People tend to look at machines as a materialistic "other" that can be controlled and used for human destruction and power, rather than a construction on an equal playing field with humans (91). This is also how some of the characters in Shakespeare's plays view machines; however, these ideas about machines and engines are presented negatively by characters who possess many flaws. Shakespeare seemed to understand that machines used in a destructive way were inhumane and unnatural and, most importantly, machines by themselves do not have the same destructive capacity as when they are controlled by a human. Using Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* to look at the human tendency to use machines for destructive purposes, I show how Titus intends to use machinery for violence, and the results of this are apparent in the deaths of the majority of the characters in the play. This

chapter will also look at the construction of an "assemblage" through the character of Lavinia and the deconstruction of gender and the human and animal binaries seen in the numerous character descriptions of Tamora.

I also use Shakespeare's *The Tempest* to examine Prospero's role as an engineer for the servant network he has created on the island. Unlike Faustus, Prospero has a better understanding of the delicate relationship between the engineer and the system and is able to create a sort of balance that prevents his system from falling apart. I also look at the way the word "engine" is used in the play. In contrast to Faustus, Gonzalo, the wise counselor in *The Tempest*, believes that humans should be able to accomplish human actions without the use of machines. I also use the character Caliban, from the same play, the half man and half beast, to show the boundaries between animals and humans in the play, another central aspect of posthumanism.

Above all else, these early modern writers show us that human life, science, animals, and machines have always been interconnected and that this idea is far from absurd or even new. The plays serve as evidence of posthuman thought long before the theory was prominent. Since my thesis looks at the role of machines, machinery, and engineers, I think it is important to look at the potential outcomes of equality between humans and technology (or machines). As Marlowe and Shakespeare show us, humans can either exist with machines harmoniously or use them for the destruction of other humans. This is even more apparent and urgent for modern readers to understand because of technological advancement and achievements. Ultimately, we as humans either learn to coexist with technology and intelligent machines to create a promising future for our world, or we allow these intelligent machines to reach a highly destructive limit and perhaps face even the consequences of human extinction.

CHAPTER 2. BEN JONSON'S *THE ALCHEMIST*

Because of our current situation with the COVID-19 pandemic, Ben Jonson's farcical play, *The Alchemist*, is possibly the most relevant today. This play is set in 1610 during an outbreak of England's bubonic plague. The setting influences all the actions that take place within the play, because without the existence of the plague, the main characters' scheming would not be possible. Contemporary society has a unique opportunity to understand the times of Jonson's *The Alchemist* because we too have experienced the traumatic effects of a plague-like illness and lock down. The setting is revealed quickly within the first two lines of the play: "The sickness hot, a master quit, for fear, / His house in town, and left one servant there" (Jonson "The Argument" 2-3). During this time, wealthy people in London fearfully fled the plague and possible death – like the wealthy today who can vacation in remote locations while others suffer through the illness at home. The servant, Face, is left at the house alone, and during this time, he figures out how to manipulate the fear and insecurities of others in order to make a profit, which the reader can see in the following lines: "Cozeners at large; and only wanting some / House to set up, with him they here contract, / Each for a share, and all begin to act" (The Argument 7-9). Face and his friend, Subtle (who plays the part of the alchemist), attempt to make the most out of a desperate situation, and plan to do this using the early modern concept of alchemy and those who embraced this pseudo-science.

The Alchemist details the schemes of Subtle, Face, and Doll during a breakout of the plague. Face (also known as Jeremy the Butler) takes advantage of his Master of the house fleeing from the plague. When the owner of the house leaves, Face and his friends begin to operate their schemes out of the abode. Subtle, Face, and Doll, their female accomplice, begin to trick gullible members of their community into paying for services that are illegitimate, including

most importantly, alchemy. Subtle takes on the role of an early modern alchemist in this play, but he does not truly understand the science. Many of Subtle's victims are intelligent and even wealthy; however, they succumb to their fascination with the practice of alchemy and the possibility of fulfilling their often unrealistic but always personal desires.

The Alchemist seems to be a key play in which to begin the search for posthumanism in the early modern period, since alchemy is one of the key factors in the advancement of modern-day chemistry and ultimately our understanding of matter. Knowing that Ben Jonson's writing is often highly reflective of and lodged in its time, it is somewhat more difficult to find these elements within his play because, in addition to these facts, he also takes a complicated stance in relation to alchemy as a science. The characters in *The Alchemist* who practice or are associated with alchemy are frauds and schemers, which reflects Jonson's thoughts on alchemists of the time. He seems to reduce and criticize the practice during the early modern period; however, some scholars argue that his play captures an image of alchemy that is much more complex (Morrison 3). Katherine Eggert argues that Jonson uses alchemical language throughout the play and that this language resembles alchemy itself. In her book *Disknowledge*, she explains this idea further:

> Language in *The Alchemist*, like alchemy itself, demands a continuous engagement of belief in the unbelievable; the grounds of humanistic endeavor are posed as simultaneously sound and illegitimate. Rather than thus simply labeling the play's attitude toward humanism "ambivalent," I would argue that Jonson at the end of *The Alchemist* is mounting a prolegomenon to an analysis of humanism's diminished function in the early seventeenth century and beyond. He does so by continuing to associate

> alchemy not only with language but also with literature and by restricting the domain in which the conjoined activities of alchemy and literature make sense. (224)

Jonson's image of alchemy in *The Alchemist* is complex because he captures both its inadequacy and its mysticism and magical qualities through the language he produces. Even though he is seemingly anti-alchemy at surface level, he also reveals how fascinating the practice is and how the people of his time were drawn towards it.

An example of the mixing of early modern alchemy and literature can be seen in the lines of Subtle when he mentions the Fairy Queen, which is a prominent character in mythical literature. In Act 1, Scene 2, Subtle insists that the fairy queen will help Dapper win all his card matches – after a number of "ceremonies" pass, of course. This is seen in the following lines:

> SUBTLE. O, good sir!
>
> There must a world of ceremonies pass,
>
> You must be bathed and fumigated first;
>
> Besides the Queen of Fairy does not rise
>
> Till it be noon. (1.2.145-146)

While this entire process seems utterly unbelievable, Subtle, Face, and Doll constantly fool their gullible prey because of their victims' personal desires. The people Subtle and Face con do not seem to fully understand the alchemical language used throughout the play, and because of this, the people trust them, because the two characters seemingly have profound knowledge on the subject. This is interesting, though, because the Fairy Queen is a mythical or fictional character rendering this entire scheme as illegitimate, yet Subtle's ideas are still considered sound by other

characters in the play because he mixes them with the alchemical language such as “fumigated” in this passage.

The practice of alchemy in the period was a phenomenon because there was a great attraction to the inventive thought patterns it produced. While Subtle, Face, and Doll are aware that none of the “science” they propose to practice is true, they are still extremely inventive in their schemes and conning, which attracts their many victims throughout the play. Epicure Mammon is a greedy man who falls into their trap in an effort to turn all the metal in his house to gold. Using Mammon’s greed, Subtle explains the process of granting his wish in the following lines:

> SUBTLE. For look, how oft I iterate the work,
>
> So many times I add unto his virtue.
>
> As, if at first, one ounce convert a hundred,
>
> After his second loose, he’ll turn a thousand;
>
> His third solution, ten; his fourth, a hundred.
>
> After his fifth, a thousand thousand ounces
>
> Of any imperfect metal, into pure
>
> Silver or gold, in all examinations
>
> As good as any of the natural mine.
>
> Get you your stuff here, against afternoon,
>
> Your brass, your pewter, and your andirons. (2.3.105-116)

In other words, Subtle makes Mammon believe he can transmute any metal he owns into gold or silver. In addition to this, he insists that with each item he gives to Subtle, more ounces of gold and silver will be produced. Subtle, Face, and Doll will obviously be the beneficiaries of this transaction, and regardless of how suspicious they sound, Subtle's promises might possibly grant Mammon's desires, and Mammon craves that possibility. Before alchemy, the possibility of turning a substance into something else was almost unthought of. Because of alchemy, we have a better understanding of chemistry – and most importantly for posthumanism, we have a better understanding of what Jane Bennett terms "vibrant matter," the idea that all matter and things, both living and nonliving, are interconnected.

Although the victims of Face and Subtle are most often presented as gullible, naïve, greedy, or a combination of all these traits, they more accurately represent the early modern fascination with magic and how the world around them was intertwined, the same world we still inhabit. This fascination is apparent in the character of Mammon. He refuses to find reason in his friend Surly's doubt, even though his doubt is justified (as well as accurate), as articulated in the following lines:

> SURLY. Yes, when I see't, I will.
>
> But if my eyes do cozen me so (and I
>
> Giving 'em no occasion) sure, I'll have
>
> A whore, shall piss 'em out, next day.
>
> MAMMON. Ha! Why?
>
> Do you think I fable with you? I assure you,

He that has once the flower of the sun,

The perfect ruby, which we call elixir [alchemy]

Not only can do that, but by its virtue

Can confer honour, love, respect long life. (2.1.40-50)

Surly is one of the only characters in this play who refuses to fall into Subtle's trap; however, the play also never reveals his personal wishes, which seem to play a key role in the desperate desires that encourages the victims to trust in the schemers. The language that Mammon uses in this passage is fictitious and illegitimate; however, it perfectly captures the fascination of the times with a science that could seemingly give desperate people the ability to improve and fulfill their desires.

Alchemy during this time was considered by many to be an occult science that dealt with magic and was, therefore, a sin against God. Some historians today still reject the idea that alchemy had a true impact on new science; however, there are many important figures in seventeenth-century science that played an important role in the Scientific Revolution including Robert Boyle and Isaac Newton, who contributed to the advancement of alchemical practice and theory which would eventually become chemistry (Morrison 1). This acknowledgement of alchemy's importance to modern science is essential because it also improved our understanding of matter. As Morrison explains, "Newman's and Principe's work on Boyle and on the American alchemist George Starkey has documented the many theoretical and laboratory contributions of alchemy to what eventually became the understanding of matter in modern chemistry" (2).

Posthumanism and posthumanist theorists (specifically Jane Bennett) take the modern concept of matter further in combining it with political ecology. The idea of vibrant matter

combines both the science and the old sentiment of fascination and magic that was present in the early modern period as well as in the characters of *The Alchemist*. Jane Bennett argues that there is a life in metal, and this is explained further in the following passage: "The desire of the craftsperson to see what a metal can *do*, rather than the desire of the scientist to know what a metal *is*, enabled the former to discern *a* life in metal and thus, eventually, to collaborate more productively with it" (60). While Face and Subtle in *The Alchemist* are not truly interested in their proclaimed practice, the people they fool are, even if for the wrong reasons. Because of the existence of this fascination in the early modern period, we have a real understanding of metal, or nonorganic matter. Further, posthumanism allows us to see how we are connected to both the organic and the nonorganic world around us.

The plague setting of *The Alchemist* also helps to reveal how the world is interconnected. Plagues show us that we are vulnerable to each other and to microbes. In a way, plagues prove to us that there is a vibrant world outside of the human, which we have no immediate control over, therefore, decentering the human. Plagues, like the Covid-19 pandemic, force us to change our ways of life and show us that there is nothing that makes us inherently special. In *The Alchemist*, the plague conditions seem to spur connections between characters from different social statuses, which would not have happened under preferable circumstances. Plagues do not discriminate, and all humans, regardless of social status, are at risk. Because of this, Face, Subtle, and Doll are able to fool numerous, wealthy men into their traps like the two pastors Ananias and Tribulation, as well as Epicure Mammon, a wealthy knight. They do this by insisting they can produce the Philosopher's Stone, which has the power to cure disease (like the plague) and transmute metals into gold. Both desires are seen in the following passage:

TRIBULATION. For the restoring of the silenced saints,

Which ne'er will be but by the philosophers' stone.

And so a learned elder, one of Scotland,

Assured me; *aurum potabilè* being

The only medicine, for the civil magistrate,

T'incline him to a feeling of the cause,

And must be daily used in the disease. (3.1.39-44)

These lines reveal that Tribulation intends to use the Philosopher's stone for its healing powers and for transmutation. Tribulation believes that the only way to cure the disease is by "aurum potabilè," which translates to drinkable gold. Ananias, Tribulation, and Epicure Mammon are all respectable members of their society; however, they easily fall into the traps of the schemers because they are desperate to find a cure to the disease and a way to fulfill their desires. Without this mythical stone, they are unable to control their lives as well as the world around them, which is a threat. Through the construction of these characters, Jonson shows audiences the desire we have for anthropocentrism to prevail, especially in desperate situations; however, he denies the characters this ability.

Another place where we can find posthumanist elements in *The Alchemist* is by looking at Jonson's stage. He is known to be one of the first playwrights to produce a modern stage. Henry S. Turner explains: "Precisely because Jonson was so acutely self-conscious of his classicism, it is all the more significant that we can trace throughout his work an active awareness of practical thinking and especially of spatial arts such as geometry, surveying, architecture, and military engineering" (217). Much of *The Alchemist* takes place within

Lovewit's home (the wealthy homeowner who flees in fear of the plague). As Eggert elaborates, "Jonson's demarcation of alchemical collaboration in this play is, first and foremost, a spatial one. Alchemy is confined to Lovewit's house, which facilitates the conartists' schemes through their brilliant use of its exits, entrances and unseen rooms" (224). This can be seen in the following scene in which Doll, Face, and Subtle fool Dapper:

> DOLL. Here, hard by. He's at the door.
>
> SUBTLE. [*to Face*] And you are not ready now? Doll, get his suit.
>
> [*Exit Doll*]
>
> He must not be sent back.
>
> FACE. O, by no means.
>
> What shall we do with this same puffin here,
>
> Now he's o'the spit?
>
> SUBTLE. Why, lay him back a while,
>
> With some device.
>
> [*Enter Doll with Face's disguise*]
>
> *Ti, ti ti, ti ti ti*. Would her Grace speak with me?
>
> I come. [*Aside*] Help, Doll.
>
> FACE. (*he speaks through the keyhole, the other knocking*) Who's there? (3.5.52-59)

Here it is apparent that the house is a major reason why these characters can execute their schemes secretly without discovery. Most of the house is not seen by their victims, which allows Doll, Subtle, and Face to operate and plan behind closed doors. Additionally, this scene shows them communicating with each other secretly through keyholes in the doors. They are also able to disguise themselves without being discovered while their victim is at the front door. Most importantly, Subtle's alchemy in the play is practiced in a secret room, which gives them the ultimate advantage over their victims until Lovewit's return.

Using Lovewit's home as the sole place where alchemy is practiced, Eggert suggests, limits the kinds of knowledge that *The Alchemist* produces, which is aligned with memory systems (225). Memory systems theory suggests that different types of information are stored in specific parts of the brain. Eggert argues that the house is used in a similar way. She explains "What *The Alchemist* adds to that familiar trope is the proposition that one of those spaces is the space of disknowledge: a space where false notions may be freely and knowingly entertained. The corollary of that proposition, however, is that disknowledge may be explored only within those bounds and not elsewhere" (225). Because the practice of alchemy is limited to one room in the house, that is the only space where it can be allegedly practiced. Eggert suggests that Jonson was aware of his audience's knowledge of this theory and would have noticed its usage and limitations within the play (225). This set up and awareness demonstrates Jonson's ability to create a practical spatial stage, which was unique to his time.

Although Jonson appears on the surface to be anti-alchemy in the early modern period, many scholars argue that his stance on alchemy is much more complex. Eggert argues that Jonson's use of alchemical language combined with literature creates a work that is a resemblance of alchemy itself – as it is "simultaneously sound and illegitimate" (224). In looking

at *The Alchemist* in this way, it becomes more apparent that Jonson was crafting a realistic image of science and the reactions toward it during his time. This is important because the early modern fascination with alchemy ultimately led to the advancement of modern chemistry and matter. Since then, it seems that posthumanists, such as Jane Bennett, have taken the wonderous, magical elements from the alchemy of the early modern period (which can be seen through the victims in *The Alchemist*) and combined them with the modern scientific knowledge we understand about matter to explain how the organic and nonorganic world is interconnected and that all matter is living. There are also posthumanist elements in the way that Jonson structured his stage. As one of the first playwrights of the period to produce a modern stage, Jonson utilized spatial elements with awareness of geometry, surveying, architecture, and engineering in order to create the most practical space for the story he wanted to tell. This is evident in *The Alchemist* because Lovewit's home caters to the needs of the schemers. It also plays with the idea of memory systems theory, which the audience of the time would have understood, suggesting that the inside of the home is the only place where disknowledge takes place. Although Jonson's work is sometimes considered to be more difficult to connect with for modern readers, it holds great insight for posthumanist studies. Through his alchemical writing style, the construction of the victims, and the production of the modern stage, the reader can see how Jonson's work contributed to the development of modern thought and understanding.

CHAPTER 3. CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE'S *DOCTOR FAUSTUS* AND *TAMBURLAINE, PARTS ONE AND TWO*

In both *Doctor Faustus* and *Tamburlaine, Parts One and Two*, Marlowe seems to construct a clear warning concerning the relationship among humans, science, machines, and technology. Faustus and Tamburlaine are both ambitious and intelligent men who are willing to do whatever it takes to obtain glory and wealth, and they reach their goals by using "magic" (which was closely related to science during their time) and machines. These two men, however, are unable to respect the power they have been granted. Faustus uses his power to manipulate and harass the people around him instead of using it for purposes that would improve his life in a meaningful way. Similarly, Tamburlaine uses his power to destroy any person and place that stands in his path, even when his actions are cruel and unnecessary. Faustus and Tamburlaine are too ambitious and greedy, and, ultimately, they die because of their inability to control the power that science and machines give them, which further allow their negative character traits and desires to expand; eventually both become self-destructively unhinged.

It is important to note that magic and science during the early modern period were closely related. Vickers notes that in the 1950s and 1960s, scholars determined that the occult sciences of the Renaissance, or hermeticism, had a greater impact on the scientific revolution than the mathematical-experimental sciences of the time (2-3). Hermeticism was a combination of astrology, alchemy, numerology, and magic, which appear frequently throughout early modern works such as Marlowe's. As James Robinson Howe explains, "Hermeticism asserted the potential unity of body and soul, world and spirit; Hermetic magic achieved this unity" (15-16). Howe explains that Hermetic magic was not used to manipulate people for selfish reasons, but rather to make the world more connected and harmonious (20). Hermetic magic was believed to

have the ability to unite the universe and to show how the universe was connected; however, in Marlowe's works, the characters use magic in a darker way for their own self-gain. *Doctor Faustus* and *Tamburlaine, Parts One and Two*, show the audience the negative consequences of dangerous people using magic, or science, for selfish purposes. Like many of the people who practiced magic or alchemy during the early modern period, Faustus and Tamburlaine only seek personal gain through their actions.

Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* portrays the tragic downfall of Faustus, a great scholar, who sells his soul to the devil in exchange for knowledge, power, and black magic. He tries to find fulfillment throughout his life by using the gifts given to him in this exchange, but he is never satisfied. He torments the people around him and eventually uses his power for silly pranks and even evil purposes, so when his time finally comes, he is forced to Hell by Mephistopheles and his other demon servants. This play highlights the problems of using magic for personal gain and sends a severe warning to its audience about nature and science, especially for modern audiences. Doctor Faustus is never fulfilled by his gifts because he does not understand them. He believes magic should be used with ill intent and for self-serving purposes. He is never able to work past this understanding, and, as a result, he cannot find satisfaction in his life. Kevin Lagrandeur suggests that Doctor Faustus can also be seen as an engineer within the play, and his servants can be seen as his network. Yet, Faustus is unable to find balance in his role as engineer of this servant network, and the servants overcome and control him instead of the other way around (23). Through Faustus, Marlowe sends the audience a warning about the problems that can be encountered when striving to fulfill greedy, human desires. If Faustus had been able to understand and respect the magic he obtained and the interconnectedness of the world around him, he may have been able to save himself by the end of the play.

Doctor Faustus's true character is revealed by the Chorus in the Prologue to the play. The audience can hear this in the following lines of the Chorus: "He surfeits upon cursed necromancy: / Nothing so sweet as magic is to him / Which he prefers before his chiefest bliss –" (23-26). From these lines, the audience learns that there is nothing as valuable to Faustus as black magic, not even his own salvation. Because hermetic magic is not to be used for self-gain, the magic that Faustus intends to use can only be understood as evil, which Marlowe appears to warn against. His character is further revealed in the following passage at the beginning of Act 1 when he reveals to the audience his intentions:

> FAUSTUS. I'll levy soldiers with the coin they bring
>
> And chase the Prince of Parma from our land,
>
> And reign sole king of all the provinces;
>
> Yea, stranger engines for the brunt of war
>
> Than was the fiery keel at Antwerp's bridge
>
> I'll make my servile spirits to invent. (1.1.94-99)

Here the audience sees Faustus's intention to have his servant network create engines for the purpose of war and conquest. He desires to be king of all provinces to gain as much power as he possibly can. Since Marlowe cautions the audience against Faustus's actions, it seems that Marlowe understands that the use of engines or machines in this way is, in fact, wrong, as a posthumanist such as Jane Bennett would also argue.

In *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*, Jane Bennett addresses the problems with using "the Machine model of nature." She declares that this model is no longer scientific,

explaining that the image of materialism as mechanistic still endures because it allows humans greater control over nature (91). The image of materialism as mechanistic is problematic because it promotes the belief that machines are a materialistic other only to be controlled by humans, which contradicts most posthumanist thinking. According to Katherine N. Hayles, the ideal posthuman "embraces the possibilities of information technologies without being seduced by fantasies of unlimited power and disembodied immortality, that recognizes and celebrates finitude as a condition of human being, and that understands human life is embedded in a material world of great complexity, one on which we depend for our continued survival" (5). The fantasies of unlimited power and immortality are both present in Marlowe's works, and the characters in his plays are seduced by the possibilities science and technology offer them. Because of this belief, it seems that Marlowe understood the interconnectedness of the world in the same way as the practitioners of hermetic magic. Faustus plans to use engines as well as magic and knowledge for self-gain and destruction, which is the opposite of the ideal posthuman and leads to his ultimate damnation. In the early modern world where science and technology were progressing, plays like *Doctor Faustus* served as a lesson for the audience of the time; and in a world today where the same advancement is taking place rapidly, modern audiences still have much to learn from the early modern playwrights.

After Faustus sells his soul in exchange for knowledge and power, Hell grants him a servant network to answer to his commands during the remainder of his life on Earth. Lagrandeur argues that this makes Faustus an engineer; however, Faustus is entirely unsuccessful. As Lagrandeur explains, "Faustus is a self-deluder, unaware that his shortsighted and selfish view of things makes him vulnerable to the system of demons he tries to fashion into an engine of opportunity for himself" (23). In fact, in many parts throughout the play, it seems

that Mephistopheles has more control over Faustus than the reverse. After he has signed his soul to Lucifer, Faustus thinks of repentance several times but is always stopped short, which Mephistopheles often causes. This can be seen in the following conversation from Act 2:

> FAUSTUS. Villain, have I not bound thee to tell me anything?
>
> MEPHISTOPHELES. Ay, that is not against our kingdom, but this
>
> is. Think thou on hell, Faustus, for thou art damned.
>
> FAUSTUS. Think, Faustus, upon God, that made the world.
>
> MEPHISTOPHELES. Remember this. [*Exit*]
>
> FAUSTUS. Ay, go, accursèd spirit, to ugly hell!
>
> 'Tis thou hast damned distressed Faustus' soul.
>
> Is't not too late? (2.3.70-77)

When Faustus signs his soul away, he believes he will receive all the knowledge he desires, but here he realizes otherwise. Coming to this realization, Faustus wants to redeem his soul; however, Mephistopheles reappears with Lucifer and Belzebub who convince him to reconsider his repentance, which suggests Faustus has no real control over his life after he concludes the deal by signing the contract in blood.

At the end of the play, Faustus's inability to control the network of demons becomes even more apparent when looking at his interactions with Mephistopheles. As his life is coming to an end and he is becoming more contemplative of the state of his soul, Mephistopheles is always there to lead him astray. Faustus always acts in a way that pleases Mephistopheles showing that he is seemingly incapable of making his own decisions. This is seen in the following lines:

FAUSTUS. Accursèd Faustus, where is mercy now?

I do repent, and yet I do despair.

Hell strives with grace for conquest in my breast.

What shall I do to shun the snares of death?

MEPHISTOPHELES. Thou traitor, Faustus, I arrest thy soul

For disobedience to my sovereign lord.

Revolt, or I'll in piecemeal tear thy flesh.

FAUSTUS. Sweet Mephistopheles, entreat thy lord

To pardon my unjust presumption,

And with my blood again I will confirm

My former vow I made to Lucifer.

MEPHISTOPHELES. Do it then quickly, with unfeigned heart,

Lest greater danger do attend thy drift.

[*Faustus cuts his arm and writes with his blood.*] (5.1.63-75)

These lines reveal that Faustus is easily manipulated by Mephistopheles to behave in a certain way, which results in Faustus never having true control over the network even though he thought the demons were serving him without their own agenda. Mephistopheles influenced his actions from the moment he signed his soul away, and his actions were carefully articulated to keep Faustus in the dark. As Lagrandeur articulates, "So although Faustus sets out to transform a

group of demons into a prosthetic system, the system he creates ends up transforming him: he becomes a new and altered being subsumed into the system he thought he controlled" (25). Faustus ultimately fails in his role as engineer because he never understands the power of the demons and is too concerned with how to create more power and wealth for himself.

Marlowe's *Tamburlaine, Parts One and Two*, feature another character that in many ways is similar to Faustus. Tamburlaine is exceedingly ambitious, and sometimes barbarous, in his effort to gain power and control in his conquests, but unlike Faustus, he also has redeemable qualities. *Tamburlaine, Part One,* tells of Tamburlaine's humble background as a shepherd and his rise to becoming a leader through his success in war. His success and thirst for power lead him to become a conqueror and tyrant, but he is also strangely generous to the people who surrender to him immediately. While *Tamburlaine, Part One* ends on a positive note with the marriage of Tamburlaine and Zenocrate, *Tamburlaine, Part Two* is much more tragic and brutal. Tamburlaine's ambition leads him to act without reason, his wife dies from sickness, and he becomes exceedingly greedy by the end of *Part Two* – leading to his ultimate demise. Like Faustus, Tamburlaine uses technology, or "engines," for self-serving purposes. These engines allow Tamburlaine to destroy cities and people who stand in his way to power. In addition, Tamburlaine is often compared to animals throughout the play and treats others as an animal would be treated, a primary posthuman concern as well. Timothy Francisco, for example, argues that Marlowe uses horses to destabilize violent masculinity throughout the play: "Through its evocation of horses and horse-man relations, Marlowe's play evokes chivalric masculinity and its erotic valances, only to reveal the violent, bestial core of the martial subject position. In so doing, the play ultimately reduces violent masculine subjectivity to brute animalism" (48). In doing this, Marlowe decentralizes the human, suggesting that he criticizes the human tendency

for violence and destruction throughout *Tamburlaine* and puts animals on the same horizontal plain as humans, a posthuman quality.

Before looking at the usage of the word "engine" within *Tamburlaine, Parts One and Two*, it is important to understand the etymology of the word. Ultimately, it derives from the Latin word ingenium, which means genius or talent; however, the first appearances of the word engine were in the 14th century, and it was typically used to refer to people who were ingenuine or of a cunning nature (*OED*). It is interesting to note that the fourteenth-century usage of the word had negative connotations because there still existed a negative attitude surrounding engines and machines. During the time of Marlowe and Shakespeare, the word engine began to refer to tools, weapons, and machines with complex parts that could produce a sort of physical effect (*OED*). This version of the word is more familiar to modern readers, but Marlowe and Shakespeare's "engines" would have been less powerful than the steam engine or locomotive engines to come two centuries later that we more closely associate with the word. Both Doctor Faustus and Tamburlaine use or intend to use engines to cause destruction for self-serving purposes, but Tamburlaine's successful conquests would not have been possible without them.

Tamburlaine is a great warrior, and it is suggested throughout the play, even by Calyphas, who is his own son, that his actions and decisions are not always necessary. His army is massive and easily evokes terror into the minds of his enemies, but he actually causes more fear by the number of machines he prepares to use against his enemies. This can be seen in the following lines from the messenger of Tamburlaine's opposition in *Part One*:

> TAMBURLAINE. Five hundred thousand footmen threat'ning shot,
>
> Shaking their swords, their spears and iron bills,

Environing their standard round, that stood

As bristle-pointed as a thorny wood;

Their warlike engines and munition

Exceed the forces of their martial men. (4.1.24-29)

Here the messenger acknowledges the great number of footmen in Tamburlaine's army, but he is clearly more concerned with the "warlike engines" and the ammunition that the army prepares to use against them. Returning to Bennet's problems with the Machine model of nature, here the audience can see how Tamburlaine's engines are used for the sole purpose of harming and terrorizing other humans to promote self-gain and power. Tamburlaine has enough men to defeat the opposing army who are prepared to fight with swords, spears, and iron, but he uses his warlike engines anyway.

As mentioned before, the play becomes exceedingly violent in *Tamburlaine, Part Two*, partly due to Tamburlaine's use of engines. In *Part One*, Tamburlaine never verbally threatens his enemies with the use of engines, but as he becomes angrier and greedier throughout *Part Two*, he also becomes more threatening and increasingly violent. This can be seen when he threatens the Kings of Soria, Jerusalem and Trebizon in Act 4, Scene 1. He exclaims:

TAMBURLAINE. I will with engines never exercised

Conquer, sack, and utterly consume

Your cities and your golden palaces,

And with the flames that beat against the clouds

Incense the heavens and make the stars to melt. (191-195)

Tamburlaine has no reason for conquering these cities other than the desire for more wealth and power. These lines reveal the true nature of his character because he is sure to mention that he intends to use engines that have never been used in war or against other humans to kill and destroy anyone and everything that stands in his path. Through Tamburlaine, Marlowe captures the dangers of machines and technology when it falls into the wrong hands, and the audience sees the extent of these dangers at the close of *Tamburlaine, Part Two*. More specifically Tamburlaine shows his enemies no mercy when he orders his soldiers to drown all men, women, and children who remain in the cities after he defeats their leaders.

Throughout the play, Tamburlaine also seems to symbolize what we call today – toxic masculinity. The audience sees this in the way he treats the citizens and leaders of the cities he conquers and in the way he treats his own sons, going so far as to murder his eldest for the son's lack of interest in war and glory. Scholars believe, however, that there are instances within the play where this masculinity is disrupted. Francisco suggests that this occurs when man and animal comingle to create violence. As he explains, "In these disruptions, the play reveals the inhuman, violent, and even queer underpinnings of martial manhood by unsettling commonplace contemporary associations of normative masculinity with controlled subjectivity" (48). Francisco believes these occurrences happen most frequently with man and horse interactions throughout the play, but I believe it is also evident in other areas of the play that discuss and compare animal, human, and nonhuman bodies.

Many times during the play, Tamburlaine is compared to an animal because of his barbarous appearance and brutal actions. One of the earliest descriptions of Tamburlaine's appearance comes from Techelles, one of his followers. Techelles states, "As princely lions when they rouse themselves / Stretching their paws and threat'ning herds of beasts, / So in his

armour looketh Tamburlaine" (*Part* One, 1.2.52-54). There is a combination of awe and fear in Techelles's description of Tamburlaine. While a lion is both strong and majestic, it is also brutal and unforgiving. Tamburlaine, like the lion, is a symbol of strength throughout the play, but he also shows his enemies no remorse through his vicious conquests. Even though Techelles is Tamburlaine's follower and is safe from his wrath, he still fears him, which this account captures. Through this illustration of Tamburlaine, it seems that Marlowe attempts to decenter the human, and even his warriors realize this as seen in the descriptions of Tamburlaine throughout the remainder of the play.

Another similar description of Tamburlaine occurs in Act 2 by Meander, one of the Persian lords who Tamburlaine aims to defeat in battle. Instead of comparing Tamburlaine to an animal, Meander rids him of all human qualities in his description:

> MEANDER. Some powers divine, or else infernal, mixed
>
> Their angry seeds at his conception:
>
> For he was never sprung of human race,
>
> Since with the spirit of his fearful pride
>
> He dares so doubtlessly resolve of rule
>
> And by profession be ambitious. (*Part One*, 2.6.9-14)

This description is interesting because Tamburlaine comes from a considerably humble background. Before his success in war, he was only a shepherd, but Meander, a Persian lord, insists that a God-like person or power had some sort of influence on him before his birth. He boldly states that Tamburlaine is not of human race because he is too prideful and ambitious;

however, these are two of his most prominent human qualities. In this description, Marlowe seems to highlight the problems of human nature. Rather than praising these negative traits in Tamburlaine, however, Marlowe foreshadows the causes of his downfall.

Marlowe portrays the most hideous parts of human nature through the descriptions of Bajazeth's (the Emperor of the Turks) torture and his death. Because he will not surrender to Tamburlaine, Tamburlaine shows him no mercy after he defeats his soldiers. He locks Bajazeth in a crate "like an animal" and intends to starve him until he can force him into cannibalism. Francsico explains this situation further: "In his debasement of Bajazeth, Tamburlaine abuses his captive in ways that progress along the species grid from animalized human, to animalized animal, and finally to object, denied any semblance of agency" (59). Through these horrific acts, Marlowe shows the audience that humans are no different from animals; if anything, they are worse. Rather than succumb to the fate Tamburlaine plans for him, Bajazeth decides to kill himself. He contemplates his situation in the following lines:

> BAJAZETH. Now Bajazeth, abridge thy baneful days
>
> And beat thy brains out of thy conquered head,
>
> Since other means are all forbidden me
>
> That may be ministers of my decay. (*Part One*, 5.2.223-226)

Rather than remain in a cage and fully depend on another person for his well-being, Bajazeth decides to kill himself by beating his head against his cage. This situation reveals how humans, rather than using their knowledge and power to better themselves, have a natural tendency to use knowledge and power for wrongdoing. Tamburlaine's treatment of Bajazeth shows the audience humans are no more superior or special than any other living creature, and it further shows that

humans are capable of the most horrific atrocities known to the universe for no other reason than to gain power and glory, a point we will return to in the conclusion.

Tamburlaine has unrealistic expectations for his sons at an early age as well. He expects them to be as ruthless as he, even as children – further, he expects them to be like his war engines from the time of their birth. This is evident in the following lines from Tamburlaine:

> TAMBURLAINE. Their hair as white as milk and soft as down,
>
> Which should be like the quills of porcupines,
>
> As black as jet, and hard as iron or steel,
>
> Bewrays they are too dainty for the wars.
>
> Their fingers made to quaver on a lute,
>
> Their arms to hang about a lady's neck,
>
> Their legs to dance and caper in the air,
>
> Would make me think them bastards, not my sons. (*Part Two*, 1.4.25-32)

Tamburlaine does not see his children as people; he sees them as weapons of war, not unlike a cyborg in a posthumanist world. He is upset in these lines because his sons do not meet his impossible expectations. This is seen when he states that their hair should be hard like "iron or steel" rather than soft and dainty like the hair of a typical child. He ridicules their child-like instincts to be nurtured and loved, and even goes so far as to question whether he is truly their father. His machine-like descriptions of his sons are similar, in some ways, to those of the cyborg, as Donna Haraway, author of *A Cyborg Manifesto*, defines it: "A cyborg is a cybernetic organism, a hybrid of machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as a creature of

fiction" (1). The cyborg is a creature that is simultaneously animal and machine, and Haraway argues that all humans today are cyborgs. With that being noted, Tamburlaine's expectations for his sons and his desire for them to be machine-like highlights the problematic misunderstanding of the relationship between humans and machines in not only Marlowe's play, but in the early modern period in general. Tamburlaine desires his sons to be machine-like because he wants to use them to defeat his enemies, but he does not consider how they could be used as a more humanly asset to promote stability within his growing kingdom with these attributes.

Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* and *Tamburlaine, Parts One and Two* sent a clear message to early modern audiences, and there is a lesson to be learned for modern audiences as well. Both Faustus and Tamburlaine are exceedingly ambitious and greedy. They have little regard for the well-being of other living creatures around them, whether human or animal. Because of their problematic character traits, they both face harsh deaths at the end of their respective plays. Most importantly, though, these plays highlight the problematic tendency for humans to use power and machines for destructive purposes, which is still extremely relevant today in a world that is rapidly changing and advancing in technological possibilities. Marlowe also captures the need to decenter the human and acknowledge the living world alongside of the human. He does this by creating the character of Tamburlaine, a man who takes on and exploits many of the evils present in humanity. The relevancy of the issues set forth in these early modern period plays for today's time are addressed by Claire Colebrook in the following passage: "Either the future holds the promise of technological maturity and of finally reaching the full potential of the intellect, or technology has reached its destructive limit, causing an 'epidemic of distraction,' environmental destruction, infantilism, and intensified imperialism" (196). Instead of using technology in the way of Faustus and Tamburlaine, these plays suggest that people need to develop a maturity to

reach their full intellectual potential. Colebrook warns that if this does not happen, the world will face complete destruction and tyranny, as seen as early as these plays. She further states:

> Either humans have finally recognized that the border and threshold they share with animality needs to be problematized to recognize our companionship, kinship, and shared existence, or the human must break with anthropologism and rise to the status of the subject. Either we have entered the Anthropocene and it is game over for humans, who should therefore begin to come to terms with extinction of themselves and others, or the advent of the Anthropocene finally offers humans the chance for revolution, social justice, and an even better planet. (196)

Marlowe begins to show this with Tamburlaine in creating a character so toxic that it is difficult to call him human. To preserve the state of the world, we need to step away from the ideas presented in humanism – that humans are at the center of the universe – and acknowledge the importance of the living, breathing, vibrant world around us such as posthumanist theory demands.

CHAPTER 4. WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE'S *TITUS ANDRONICUS* AND *THE TEMPEST*

Shakespeare was, and remains, one of the greatest writers of all time. Over four hundred years after his death, his works continue to have importance and are studied in literature classes around the world. Many scholars would argue that Shakespeare is the most contemporary or relevant of all the early modern playwrights – and for good reason. In fact, as Stephen Greenblatt argues:

> Shakespeare seems to have been able to view society simultaneously as an insider and as an outsider. His plays can be interpreted and performed—with deep conviction and compelling power—in utterly contradictory ways. The centuries-long accumulation of these interpretations and performances, far from exhausting Shakespeare's aesthetic appeal, seems only to have enhanced its perennial freshness. (721-722)

Because of this, his works demand attention in current times and present unique opportunities for understanding posthumanism. Of all the early modern playwrights, Shakespeare seems to have been the most aware of the long existing interconnections of the human, animal, and object worlds – making him an ideal, early-modern posthumanist. The realizations of these interconnections are apparent in his plays *Titus Andronicus* and *The Tempest*. In these two plays alone, Shakespeare manages to address the tension between humans and machines, the construction of assemblages, the breaking of gender binaries, the role of engineers, the creation of network systems, and key questions in animal studies, some of the major posthuman elements. These plays have the ability to teach today's audiences and readers that similar concerns have always been present and are only becoming more urgent in a world that is being destroyed by anthropocentrism each day.

Titus Andronicus, a bloody play about violence and revenge, serves as an exceptional example of posthuman concerns. Titus Andronicus murders Alarbus who is the son of Tamora, the Queen of the Goths. To avenge her son's death, she allows her other sons, Chiron and Demetrius, to rape and then to mutilate Titus's daughter, Lavinia; however, the violence does not stop there because Titus feels obligated to gain justice for Lavinia. The characters in this play are constantly searching for a way to avenge their loved ones after a wrongdoing. In the end, most of the drama's characters are dead because of their inability to escape the cycle of violence, specifically looking at the human tendency to use machines for destructive purposes. In following with this play's theme, Titus intends to use machinery for violence and the results of this are apparent in the deaths of most of the characters. In this revenge tragedy, Shakespeare also shows the audience how nature can improve human life as well as challenge humans to think and function in more constructive ways through Lavinia's "assemblage" after her mutilation. Lastly, Shakespeare manages to break down traditional gender binaries as well as the binary between humans and animals through the character of Tamora. Throughout the play, Tamora rejects the traditional role of a woman, which makes her a strong leader and authoritative figure who is to be feared. At moments, Tamora almost seems inhuman, as she often allows the desire for revenge to control her mind; however, she is an important figure in the play because of her power and strength, which surpasses most women characters of the time and equates to that of an animal, and she is even referred to as a "tiger" on numerous occasions.

The play begins after the Romans have defeated the Goths in battle. In Scene 1, Titus knows that the Roman people will demand a sacrifice for the lives lost in battle, which is how he justifies the murder of Tamora's son, Alarbus. This is seen in the following lines:

TITUS. Patient yourself, madam, and pardon me.

These are their brethren whom your Goths beheld

Alive and dead, and for their brethren slain

Religiously they ask a sacrifice,

To this your son is marked, and die he must,

T'appease their groaning shadows that are gone. (1.1.121-126)

This passage shows that Titus clearly understands and follows the set of rules his society abides by to keep peace and create stability. Through his explanation of these rules to Tamora, it seems that Titus is somewhat sympathetic towards her and her grieving, but he reinforces what must be done to appease the Roman people and their dead. This explanation and matter-of-fact tone seem almost algorithmic. Algorithms are automatic actions that do not require real decision making, which can potentially create major problems. In all Tamora's pleading, Titus never believes he has or is making the choice to murder Alarbus. He simply does what has always been done to keep peace and satisfy his followers, and he does not think of the consequences. This single action sets the play in motion and drives all the violence that comes after it. In a world such as our own, where algorithms have much control over our lives, this play serves as a prescient warning for the future.

Similar to Marlowe's Tamburlaine character, Shakespeare's Titus intends to use metal and steel to avenge Lavinia's assault. While Titus is not as power hungry as Tamburlaine, he still manipulates these metals for violent, self-serving purposes. In Act 4, Scene 3, Titus explains the importance of having access to these materials: "Marcus, we are but shrubs, no cedars we, / No big-boned men framed of the Cyclops' size, / But metal, Marcus, steel to the very back" (4.3.46-48). Here Titus reveals how Marcus and himself are only men, but they are men who can survive

and sustain themselves. He compares himself to a shrub rather than a cedar or the cyclops because they do not have great stature or strength; however, the metal armor they use will enable them to prolong their lives like the low shrubs that remain when tall cedars fall. The problem with this statement is that he intends to use these materials to wreak revenge on his enemies, which only leads to more trouble and grief. Without the use of these metals, Titus would not have as much confidence in his ability to defeat his enemies, but the steel grants him greater strength.

The result of Titus's actions is apparent at the end of play. His endeavors are the direct cause of his own death and the death of many others such as Lavinia, Tamora, Chiron, Demetrius, and his own son, Mutius. He is unable to control his life and his anger, and as a result, he destroys the lives of those around him to an unreconcilable point by using metals. This is discussed by Marcus, Titus's brother. After the many deaths in Act 5, he states:

> MARCUS. Tell us what Sinon hath bewitched our ears,
>
> Or who hath brought the fatal engine in
>
> That gives our Troy, our Rome, the civil wound. –
>
> My heart is not compact of flint nor steel,
>
> Nor can I utter all our bitter grief
>
> But floods of tears will drown my oratory. (5.3.86-91)

The engine that Marcus refers to in these lines is the wooden horse that caused the fall of Troy. The fall of Rome, then, would be a comparable result of Titus's actions. Titus blindly follows the algorithm created by his society. He does not question or feel that he has a choice in the matter

when he allows Tamora's son, Alarbus, to be murdered to suffice the Roman people. This sole action leads to the cycle of violence throughout the remainder of the play. Marcus explains that his heart is not made of "flint nor steel"– unlike the description ascertained by Titus. Here the audience sees that Marcus, as well as many other Romans, will grieve the loss of their leaders.

After Titus allows Alarbus to be murdered, Lavinia finds herself caught amid the revenge and in the hands of Tamora's two lustful sons, Chiron and Demetrius, who sexually assault and mutilate Lavinia's body. They then leave her alone in the woods after cutting off her hands and tongue, which they believe is as good as killing her. After this tragic incident, Lavinia accepts her disabilities and utilizes the resources surrounding her to reveal the perpetrators of the horrific crime. She first appears to her uncle, Marcus, as an assemblage (a collection of things) of stumps, shrubs, and flesh. Through the acceptance of her disabilities and by becoming interconnected to the non-human objects surrounding her, Lavinia can reveal Chiron and Demetrius to her father, and they eventually suffer the consequences of their actions.

Immediately after the assault, the brothers taunt Lavinia because they believe she is unable to reveal them as her abusers since they have taken away her ability to use her hands and tongue. Karen Raber explains Lavinia's situation: "Shorn of her hands and tongue, two unique signs of human exceptionalism in much early modern writing because of their connection to language and material creativity, Lavinia is not merely sexually violated, but doubly denied speech *and* writing" (55). Taking away these two abilities, Chiron and Demetrius believe they have taken away the most important human attributes away from Lavinia, but they fail to understand the power of natural elements. This can be seen when they sneer at her:

DEMETRIUS. So, now go tell, an if thy tongue can speak,

Who ‘twas that cut thy tongue and ravished thee.

CHIRON. Write down thy mind; bewray thy meaning so,

An if thy stumps will let thee play the scribe. (2.4.1-4)

These last lines from Chiron foreshadow exactly how Lavinia will utilize the non-human parts of herself to reveal the truth to her father. Chiron and Demetrius believe they leave her as good as dead, but they do not actually kill her, as their mother, Tamora, advised; however, she is much more resourceful than they imagine, and their actions towards her will be the cause of their deaths. Indeed, Chiron and Demetrius ensure their own deaths by allowing Lavinia to live. They fail to understand the power in the unification of the natural world and the human body, but Lavinia does, and she refuses to let her abusers hold this alleged disability over her for long.

When Titus discovers the state of Lavinia’s body, he is outraged. He reveals his determination to find and even double all the tortures they performed on Lavinia in a way that is just as painful and horrific. Titus’s determination can be seen in a number of his speeches: “I shall never come to bliss / Till all these mischiefs be returned again / Even in their throats that had committed them” (3.1.275-279). Titus is determined to exact revenge on the men who have abused Lavinia, and now Lavinia holds this power over them despite her disability. Raber explains Lavinia’s situation and disability further: “The play’s disabling of Lavinia, and her gradual reconstruction as an assemblage of natural and manufactured objects that can manipulate wood, sand and blood to satisfy Titus’s need for revenge, resonates with many similar instances in Shakespeare’s work in which characters confront what we would now call bodily ‘disability’” (56). Although Lavinia has lost some of what makes her human, her assemblage is able to give life back to her, and she refuses to be defined by her disability. Soon, Lavinia finds new forms of

organic wholeness through her disability rather than succumbing to the fate that Chiron and Demetrius intended for her (Raber 57). She is determined to provide answers to her father, avenge herself, and prove her worth by utilizing the resources she constructs.

To reveal Chiron and Demetrius as her abusers, Lavinia turns to books, specifically Young Lucius's textbooks. At this point, Lavinia causes a frenzy among her relatives, which helps them to realize she is trying to communicate with them. The first fact that they discover is there were two perpetrators instead of one, and she can tell them this by using both her human flesh and her non-human body parts in this way:

> TITUS. Reveal the damned contrive of this deed. –
>
> Why lifts she up her arms in sequence thus?
>
> MARCUS. I think she means that there were more than one
>
> Confederate in the fact. Ay, more there was,
>
> Or else to heaven she heaves them for revenge. (Shakespeare 4.1.37-41)

Instead of allowing her disability to control her life, as Chiron and Demetrius hoped, she uses every inch of her body, both human and nonhuman, to show her father the truth of what has happened to her. By lifting her stumps in sequence, she can reveal to them that there were two men who committed the crime rather than one. Lavinia then manages to obtain a book from Young Lucius that shows her father the truths of her abuse, which happened to be none other than Ovid's *Metamorphosis*. As Titus and Marcus watch her, Titus states:

> TITUS. Soft! So busily she turns the leaves.
>
> Help her! What would she find? – Lavinia, shall I read?

This is the tragic tale of Philomel,

And treats of Tereus' treason and his rape.

And rape, I fear, was root of thy annoy.

MARCUS. See, brother, see! Note how she quotes the leaves. (4.1.47-52)

They watch in awe as Lavinia uses her assemblage of stumps, body, and mind to her advantage. She quickly shows her father and uncle exactly what has happened to her through the similarities of her experience to Philomel's, even though she has lost her tongue, or the "engine of her thoughts" (3.1.84). Lavinia proves her intellect in these passages, despite the intentions of Chiron and Demetrius. She understands the usefulness of the world around her and uses all the non-human materials at hand to reveal the truth of her circumstance.

Finally, the audience sees Lavinia take her revenge by accomplishing the exact action that Chiron and Demetrius intended to take away from her forever. To reveal the criminals, she must find a way to write their names. Marcus advises:

MARCUS. Write thou, good niece, and here display at last

What God will have discovered for revenge.

Heaven guide thy pen to print thy sorrows plain,

That we may know the traitors and the truth. (She takes the staff in her mouth, and guides it with her stumps and writes.)

O, do you read, my lord, what she hath writ?

TITUS. "*Stuprum*. Chiron, Demetrius." (4.1.75-79)

Lavinia denies Chiron and Demetrius the power that they believe they hold over her when they take away her ability to speak and write. However, she accepts her disabilities and finds a way to remain cogent through assemblage. By using her body, mind, and the non-human stumps, Lavinia becomes interconnected with the vibrant world that surrounds her, which allows her to reveal the crime itself, "stuprum," meaning violation or dishonor, as well as the exact names of the perpetrators of the crime. Because of their heinous actions towards Lavinia, Titus takes his revenge on the brothers by feeding them to their mother.

Lavinia obtains her ultimate revenge later, when Titus discovers her abusers and outwits them in their own scheme. Chiron, Demetrius, and Tamora knock at Titus's study door disguised as Revenge, Rape, and Murder, but Titus knows it is them and easily persuades the two sons to stay with him while their mother returns to her husband, Saturninus. Following the binding of the brothers, Lavinia supports her father by holding a basin, which is used to catch their blood. These actions are seen in Titus's declaration to Chiron and Demetrius:

> TITUS. This one hand yet is left to cut your throats,
>
> Whiles that Lavinia 'tween her stumps doth hold
>
> The basin that receives your guilty blood.
>
> You know your mother means to feast with me,
>
> And calls herself Revenge, and thinks me mad.
>
> Hark villains, I will grind your bones to dust,
>
> And with your blood and it I'll make a paste,
>
> And of the paste a coffin I will rear

And make two pasties of your shameful heads. (5.3.185-193)

Chiron and Demetrius believed Lavinia would not be able to tell of the torture they put her through; her ability to assist her father in revenge was unthinkable. However, she uses her stumps in this scene to deny the perpetrators any pleasure in the moment of their deaths. Regardless of their violation, Lavinia remains a strong character through the aid of her assemblage and receives the justice she deserves.

While many of Tamora's actions in the play seem problematic, she serves as a strong female character who breaks the traditional female gender binary as well as the binary between human and animal. As Katherine Hayles, one of the leading scholars of posthumanist theory, explains, the reader can further understand the problems brought forth by inscribed practices of gender. Hayles states that inscribing practices are problematic because they aim to correct and modulate the performance of gender, which helps to produce and maintain potentially harmful concepts of gender within a given culture (Hayles 200). After the murder of her son in the first act of the play, Tamora shows no mercy towards Titus and his family, who she considers as the enemy. She easily obtains power in Rome through her marriage to Saturninus, the eldest son of the former emperor, but what she truly wants is revenge on Titus for the murder of her son. Because of this, she encourages her sons to attack and kill both Bassanius and Lavinia as seen in the following lines:

CHIRON. And if she do, I would I were an eunuch!

Drag hence her husband to some secret hole,

And make his dead trunk pillow to our lust.

TAMORA. But when you have the honey [you] desire,

Let not this wasp outlive, us both to sting. (2.3.128-132)

Tamora is fully aware of her sons' intentions to sexually assault Lavinia and murder Bassanius, and she encourages them to do so as a means for revenge. She also advises them to kill Lavinia to prevent her from revealing their identities, which her sons ignore. Most mothers would mourn the death of their child quietly, but Tamora, like Titus, actively seeks revenge through violence, which is a clear departure from the traditional female gender binary.

Tamora's identity as a woman and mother breaks down further in her interactions with Lavinia in Scene 2. Tamora has no interest in Lavinia's pleas for life and her unsullied innocence. Tamora is steadfast in her desire for revenge at all costs, however:

TAMORA. So should I rob my sweet sons of their fee.

No, let them satisfy their lust on thee.

DEMETRIUS. [*to Lavinia*]

Away, for thou hast stayed us here too long!

LAVINIA. [*to Tamora*]

No grace, no womanhood? Ah, beastly creature,

The blot and enemy to our general name,

Confusion fall – . (2.3.179-184)

Lavinia describes Tamora as lacking all womanhood and equates her to that of a beast; however, she really acts exactly like the men in this play, specifically Titus. It is important to understand that Titus's resolution to satisfy the Roman citizens' desire for blood is the sole reason why all

the violence thereafter takes place. While Shakespeare breaks down traditional gender binaries through the character of Tamora, he also breaks down the human and animal binary. In this scene, Lavinia calls Tamora a "beastly creature" because she refuses to stop Chiron and Demetrius from their planned assault. Later in the play Lucius, Titus's son, describes Tamora as a "ravenous tiger" (5.3.197). Instead of remaining calm, as a woman is expected to do, Tamora determines to have revenge for the death of her son, and she disregards all traditional expectations for women or humans in general. She shows no emotion when she denies saving Lavinia, but neither does Titus when he murders Tamora's sons.

Auditors can find more evidence of early modern posthumanist thought from one of Shakespeare's earliest plays *Titus Andronicus* to the last play he composed, *The Tempest*, a play about a powerful magician named Prospero. Prospero creates a storm to strand a ship on the island over which he has taken control. This vessel contains not only a suitable match for his daughter, but also his brother who has betrayed him. At the end of the play, most of the characters resolve their differences through forgiveness, and they all sail back home. However, I will focus on Prospero's relationship with the island's inhabitants before the dramatic action takes place, particularly the creature Caliban. I also examine Prospero's role as an engineer for the servant network he has created on the island. Unlike Faustus, Prospero has a better understanding of the balance between the engineer and the system, and he is able to create balance within his network, which also is noted as a type of engine. In contrast to Faustus as well as Tamburlaine, Gonzalo, Prospero's friend, believes somewhat naively, that humans should be able to accomplish their own actions without the use of machines. Additionally, this play contains issues surrounding animal studies through the inclusion of the character of Caliban. This

character, who is half man and half beast, shows the porous boundaries between animals and humans in the play, another central concern of posthumanism.

To survive on the island, Prospero understands precisely what needs to be done for the well-being of his family and to remain prosperous, so he takes on the role of engineer. While Faustus creates a servant system that is unsustainable and results in failure, Prospero manages to create a system that is the exact opposite. As Kevin Lagrandeur explains, "The main reason Prospero is able to maintain control over his network of creatures and things is that he is aware of the power it contains and so he takes measures to stay one step ahead of it" (21). Faustus's main problem with his network of servants is that he never understands the power of the network from the beginning, and as a result, he is never able to stay one step ahead. Prospero's success is apparent through his interactions with Ariel, his most powerful servant, which would be the closest equivalent to Mephistopheles in *Doctor Faustus*. Prospero's control over Ariel can be seen in the following lines:

> PROSPERO. How now? Moody?
>
> What is't thou canst demand?
>
> ARIEL. My liberty.
>
> PROSPERO. Before the time be out? No more.
>
> ARIEL. I prithee,
>
> Remember I have done thee worthy service,
>
> Told thee no lies, made no mistakings, served
>
> Without or grudge or grumblings. Thou did promise

To bate me a full year.

PROSPERO. Dost thou forget

From what a torment I did free thee? (1.2.290-300)

Prospero understands that he needs Ariel to keep his servant system balanced, and he presents himself to Ariel as a strong, yet just, leader. In these lines, he persuades Ariel to forget about his freedom, which will come when Prospero sees fit. He does this by reminding Ariel of his life before he found them, which gives Prospero control over Ariel and makes him a successful engineer over his network of servants.

Like many of the other early modern plays mentioned, *The Tempest* also includes the word "engines," but in this play, the reader or audience member receives a different view towards machines. Faustus, Tamburlaine, and Titus all use engines or machines for destructive purposes that are usually self-serving, but Gonzalo argues against this. He explains:

GONZALO. All things in common nature should produce

Without sweat or endeavor; treason, felony,

Sword, pike, knife, gun, or need of any engine

Would I not have; but nature should bring forth

Of its own kind all foison, all abundance,

To feed my innocent people. (2.1.175-180)

Gonzalo firmly believes that humans should not use engines to accomplish human purposes. He states that people should work to obtain their needs rather than use technology or tools to

accomplish tasks for them. The "engine" he refers to in this passage is a military weapon. Gonzalo would disagree and resent the way in which Faustus, Tamburlaine, and Titus used engines in their respective plays because they were only used for violence and destruction. Gonzalo represents a person who Claire Colebrook would describe as having "technological maturity" (196). Indeed, he seems to understand the potential that engines have for destruction when they fall into the wrong hands, which is an important lesson for modern audiences to recognize as well.

An outcast member of Prospero's slave system, Caliban, is one of the most complex characters in *The Tempest*, representing both man and enslaved beast, and his actions are frequently barbaric. For example, he causes much disruption when he attempts to sexually assault Miranda, Prospero's daughter. This is seen in Prospero's exchange with Caliban about the near violation in the following passage:

> PROSPERO. Filth as thou art, with humane care, and [I] lodged thee
>
> In mine own cell, till thou didst seek to violate
>
> The honor of my child.
>
> CALIBAN. O ho, O ho! Would't had been done!
>
> Thou didst prevent me. I had peopled else
>
> This isle with Calibans. (1.2.415-421)

Caliban, a native of the island, is forced by Prospero to conform to civilized life, but this is not something that Caliban chose for himself. By raping Miranda, Caliban would have been able to start his own race of people, which is his true desire, yet he is vilified for it. As Raber explains,

"Caliban, named a fish-human hybrid, is offered education and admission to civilization by Prospero and Miranda; taught to speak, he finds, however, that his non-identity with the only 'true' humans on his island is merely accentuated, made more concrete" (97). By trying to force Caliban to be more human-like, he only becomes more lost and "uncivilized" in his actions towards humans.

Because he feels like an outcast and wants to remain separate and other, Caliban continues to be seen as barbaric and animal-like by Prospero and Miranda. This treatment can be seen in the following lines from Prospero:

> PROSPERO. Hagseed, hence!
>
> Fetch us in fuel; and be quick, thou'rt best,
>
> To answer other business. Shrugg'st thou, malice?
>
> If thou neglect'st or dost unwillingly
>
> What I command, I'll rack thee with old cramps,
>
> Fill all thy bones with aches, make thee roar
>
> That beasts shall tremble at thy din. (1.2.440-446)

Prospero insults him repeatedly in this passage from Act 1. He not only calls him "hagseed" and "malice," but he also demands and threatens him if he fails to perform his work. Caliban's treatment is the most sinister part of the entire play, which Shakespeare seems to highlight. This part of the play calls attention to the problems caused by anthropocentrism. Because humans believe themselves to be at the center of the universe, they have the tendency to want to change and mutate anything that is different or other. Yet, as Raber explains, "this process will always

remain incomplete, the resulting creature made not pure and whole, but confused and confusing. In short, he remains an irreducible (or un-translateable) hybrid" (97). When this effort to change fails, we push "the other" to where it can no longer be seen or heard, and it neglects all responsibility.

Of all the early modern playwrights, Shakespeare clearly covers the greatest area of topics in his plays that reveal posthuman concerns during his time. *Titus Andronicus* teaches modern audiences to be aware of the algorithms that control an overwhelming proportion of our lives, because if we are not aware, our lives can be permanently changed in an instant. Similar to Marlowe's plays, *Titus Andronicus* warns us of the dangers when metals and machines fall into vengeful hands, which has only become a more pressing matter in modern times with rapid technological advancement; however, the bleakness is mitigated by the technological maturity of Gonzalo in *The Tempest*, which modern audiences should all strive to achieve.

Shakespeare also begins to deconstruct traditional gender binaries through the character of Tamora, who is strong and violent like the men in the play who surround and challenge her. In doing this, she rids herself of the more passive role of woman and mother and becomes someone who is more active and should be feared. Like Jonson and Marlowe, Shakespeare teaches us the importance of decentering the human and acknowledging the living and non-living world around us. We see this importance through the horrific treatment of the island-native, Caliban.

The actions and decisions we make now are more important than ever before because our world is in a vulnerable state, both literally and figuratively. Raber suggests that in looking backward to Shakespeare and his contemporaries, future studies in posthumanism may be able to answer questions about human exceptionalism and self-referentiality in clearer ways, which are topics that should be of even greater concern to modern society (162). This awareness, along

with the answers, will serve us well in creating a more hopeful world for ourselves and future generations.

CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSION

These early modern playwrights provide today's audiences with a unique opportunity to understand the modern world. Above all else, these writers show us that human life, science, animals, and machines have always been interconnected and that this thought is far from absurd or even new. The plays serve as evidence of posthuman thought long before the theory was prominent – making these playwrights our early modern posthumanists. Their messages serve as warnings that work to guide humanity in the right direction, but only if we are willing to listen. Now more than ever before, these messages demand our immediate attention. Current events show us the potential dangers if we continue our present course. The rapid advancement of technology demands technological maturity that humans do not seem to possess, the environment is deteriorating at an alarming rate, and imperialism is growing as seen through the recent acts of Russian leader Vladimir Putin. Ultimately, humans must learn to coexist with technology, intelligent machines, and the vibrant world surrounding us in a responsible, mature way to create a promising future for our world while there is still time; if not, we might enable these intelligent machines to reach a highly destructive limit, one that will further the possibility of human extinction.

Like the plague in *The Alchemist*, Covid-19 has shown us that there is a world outside of ourselves that we cannot control and that demands our attention. For the past three years, human life has been disrupted and we have been forced to adapt to a new way of life, which we see in *The Alchemist* as well. Face, Subtle, and Doll take advantage of the vulnerability during the plague through empty promises of wealth and well-being, while their victims demonstrate naivety and a desperate longing to fix a problem that is out of their control. Jonson shows modern audiences that this cannot be done. There is not a simple fix, like the Philosopher's

Stone, that will terminate a plague and allow humans to function as normal, but this is also a desire we have seen throughout our current pandemic. Instead of acknowledging the science regarding the virus and following the necessary guidelines to keep ourselves and others safe (which would have allowed us some control over the outcomes), many people tried to continue their lives and believed misinformation (like the lies told by Face, Doll and Subtle), which led to dire consequences.

Doctor Faustus, *Tamburlaine, Parts One and Two*, and *Titus Andronicus* show us the dangers of machines when they fall into the wrong hands. Faustus, Tamburlaine, and Titus are unable to act maturely in their interactions with the machines and metals of their time. This leads to destruction and death in all their dramas, which seems to send a clear message to the audience. When interacting with technology and machines, there is a necessity for maturity and responsibility. Too many times in the plays these characters use engines and metals to give themselves an advantage over their enemies, whether for self-gain or revenge. The technology available today is entirely more powerful and dangerous than what was available to the era in which these plays were written, but the consequences of using advanced technology and machines without human maturity are the same. Today machines are designed specifically for the destruction of humans in war, which is reminiscent of Tamburlaine's disastrous usage of machines. As P.W. Singer explains, "The world's most powerful fighting forces, which once eschewed robots as unbecoming to their warrior culture, have now embraced a war of the machines as a means of combating an irregular enemy that triggers remote explosions with cell phones and then blends back into the crowd" (58). This type of warfare creates a great divide and gives an unfair advantage. Killing is already impersonal with the use of machine guns, bombs, tanks, and other military weapons, but the use of robots to fight for humans is much more

alarming. This is exactly what Claire Colebrook warns us of in her article on the future of posthumanism in our world. She explains, "[e]ither the future holds the promise of technological maturity and of finally reaching the full potential of the intellect, or technology has reached its destructive limit" (196). This technology is being created for the sole purpose of killing and destruction. There are no circumstances in which we can consider the use of these robotic machines to be a mature technological decision.

We are also facing the reality of an ecological disaster caused by climate change and human denial. Research from the American Meteorological Society shows that the magnitude of the warming of the Earth's surface cannot be explained solely by natural fluctuations, and researchers have determined this drastic change in surface temperature is primarily caused by human influence (13). To make these facts worse, many humans are in a state of denial and are not taking the proper actions and precautions to save our world. Climate change is time sensitive, and to keep it from escalating at a faster pace, all of humanity must join together to make unprecedented changes in every aspect of life and society (Petersen et al. 118). This requires cooperation and a massive dedication to a single cause, which humanity does not seem capable of in present times. The early modern playwrights were trying to warn us of what happens when humans disrespect the living and non-living world around them, and we are extremely close to facing these same consequences – which typically ends in death and destruction.

On February 24, 2022, Russia, under the order of Vladimir Putin, invaded Ukraine to gain control of the country, people, and territory. To avoid the violence, thousands of Ukrainian citizens are being forced to flee their homes and are afraid for their lives. Their home is being destroyed by an imperialistic man with too much ambition and selfish desire, much like the ruthless Tamburlaine from Marlowe's play. Today's society has much to fear from a

Tamburlaine-like leader because of modern technological advancement and the lack of technological maturity among powerful leaders. Colebrook suggests that this lack of maturity leads to other grave problems such as environmental destruction and intensified imperialism (196). This is exactly what we are seeing in the news and why people around the world are so unsettled by this conflict.

Like Tamburlaine, Putin seems to be ready to do whatever it takes to gain territory and strength. To make matters worse, Russia has nuclear weapons ready to use at a moment's notice. As NPR recently reported, "Russia has more nuclear weapons than any other nation on earth, according to Hans Kristensen, director of the nuclear information project at the Federation of American Scientists" (Brumfiel). Nuclear weapons of mass destruction in the hands of selfish leaders can only lead to destruction, which Colebrook claims. The inability to practice technological maturity will result in more sinister ends. Putin is the embodiment of intensified imperialism, and his actions could likely lead to environmental destruction if he, and other aristocrats like him, does not learn to handle technology with maturity. Marlowe's warning through *Tamburlaine, Parts One and Two* makes us more aware of these actions when they are happening in the world, and humanity must find a way to stop people, like Putin, who are power-hungry imperialists before it is too late.

While the connection between Putin and Tamburlaine is just one example, evidence of posthuman thought in the early modern period shows modern audiences that posthuman concepts need immediate attention. Jonson, Marlowe, and Shakespeare show us the importance to acknowledge the interconnectedness of the world around us and the dangers of ignoring this truth. To save our world from destruction, we must take responsibility for the centuries of destruction anthropocentrism has caused. In all these plays, we see the negative outcomes of

placing the human at the center of the universe. The only way we can escape destruction is by decentering the human, letting go of the idea of human exceptionalism, and accepting all things in both the living and non-living world as equal to ourselves. By doing this, we can create a world that has hope for the future, one which will allow us to reach our full intellectual potential.

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