

## “When Sorrows Come”: Shakespearean Echoes in *the Originals*

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### Abstract

*Shakespeare and vampires represent a sort of “Beckettian pair” whose intertextual connections seem to have been explored more in detail by the so-called escape literature than by literary critics themselves. Based on this premise, this article is aimed at exploring Shakespearean intertextuality in one of the most famous and popular TV series about vampires, The Originals, thus trying to demonstrate that Shakespearean quotations are not accidental, but perfectly mirror the neo-gothic world of the Mikaelson’s family. Seasons 3 and 4 of the series have apparently nothing in common except direct quotations from Hamlet. In season 3 it is the vampire Marcel Gérard – a former close friend of the Mikaelsons’ – who leaves a copy of Hamlet open at 4.2.75-6 (“When sorrows come, they come not single spies / But in battalions”), whilst in season 4 the witch Inadu takes Elijah Mikaelson’s appearance and quotes from Shakespeare’s Danish tragedy. In both seasons of The Originals, Shakespeare’s work seems to connect the different narrative levels, thus commenting on the story and being commented by it, interpreting the characters’ deepest secrets and being intertextually interpreted by them.*

**Keywords:** Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, vampires, TV series, *The Originals*, appropriation, adaptation.

No poet, no artist, of any art, has his complete meaning alone.

T.S. Eliot, *Tradition and the Individual Talent*

### 1. Introduction

Shakespeare and vampires represent a sort of “Beckettian pair” whose intertextual connections seem to have been explored more in detail by the so-called escape literature than by literary criticism itself. Stephanie Meyer’s forbidden-love-centred *The Twilight Saga* is only one of the copious narrative examples of how the Bard’s canon has been adjusted following that diegetic transposition known in Genettian terms as “movement of proximization” (1997, p. 304) according to which Shakespeare’s plays have been drawn close to the contemporary cultural context within which they are inserted.<sup>1</sup> Moving from the telling to the showing mode,<sup>2</sup> this “cultural updating” (Sanders, 2007, p. 74) is even clearer in our screen-addicted contemporary society, where movies and TV series about supernatural fictions abound. In the last few decades, Shakespearean or pseudo-Bardolatrist vampires have been regularly appearing on our screens, and directors/producers seem to compete in acknowledging their Stratford an inspiration.<sup>3</sup> Evidently, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Hamlet* and the other Shakespearean masterpieces are particularly suitable for vampiristic transmodalizations, so much so that we can openly endorse Nina Auerbach’s statement that all modern vampires are “children of Hamlet’s ghost” (1995, p. 20) – as we will see shortly.

On the basis of this very brief theoretical introduction, this article focuses on Shakespearean intertextuality in one of the most famous and popular American TV series about vampires: *The Originals*. Born as a spin-off of season 2 of *The Vampire Diaries*, another interesting and fascinating series dealing with Dracula’s epigones, broadcast from 2009 to 2017 and run for eight seasons, *The Originals* tells the story and the vicissitudes of the most long-standing, powerful and cruel supernatural family in the world, the Mikaelsons (to be precise, formed by four

<sup>1</sup>Other examples of this tendency are, among others, Claudia Gabel’s novel *Romeo & Juliet & Vampires* (2010), whose title gives little rise to doubts, or the curious narrative by Graham Holderness titled *Black and Deep Desires: William Shakespeare, the Vampire Hunter* (2015), which mixes up historical events such as the Gunpowder plot, literary figures as the Dark Lady, together with Shakespeare’s supposed leisure activity as a vampire hunter.

<sup>2</sup>For a definition and comparison between telling and showing modes see Hutcheon, 2006[2013], in particular pp. 33-45.

<sup>3</sup>In addition to *Twilight*’s filmic adaptations, suitable examples are, among the others, Wiseman *et alii*’s *Underworld* series (2003), Witter’s *Hamlet the Vampire Slayer* (2008), and Jarmusch’s *Only Lovers Left Alive* (2013).

vampires, Finn, Elijah, Kol, and Rebekah, a hybrid named Niklaus, who is half vampire and half werewolf, and the witch Freya, who is actually the first born of the family).

All the siblings are the children of the witch Esther and the rude Viking hunter Mikael except Klaus, the son of Esther and her lover Ansel, a werewolf who transmitted his genes to Klaus. One day, their youngest son, their symbolically seventh born child, was killed and Esther, to protect the rest of her children, decided to cast such a powerful spell that all the other siblings (apart from Freya entrusted to Esther's sister Dahlia as an apprentice witch) were transformed into immortal and invulnerable vampires. When interviewed in 2013 at the Comic-Con in San Diego, Julie Plec, executive producer of the series, acknowledged that in comparison with *The Vampire Diaries*, in *The Originals* "there's definitely a Shakespearean element [...]; there's definitely a bolder tone to it" (as cited in Simon, 2013, online). However, apart from a couple of literal quotations such as Miranda's "brave new world" (*The Tempest*, 5.1.205), the producer seemed to be somewhat reluctant to insert direct quotations from the Bard's work until the last episodes of the third season of *The Originals*.

## 2. The Originals, season 3: Sorrows in battalions

This season, released in the USA from September 2015 to May 2016, sees the Mikaelsons doomed by an old prophecy meant to destroy them all by the hand of a mysterious enemy who, thanks to a magical potion, obtains a stronger power than the Mikaelsons'. Surprisingly, the enemy chosen by the fate is Marcel Gérard, a vampire created by the hybrid (Ni)klaus – the strongest among the Mikaelsons – and considered a member of the family by them. In the penultimate episode, the audience discovers that Marcel is the prophecy's fatal enemy, and Klaus bursts into his foe's headquarters looking for some hints about his sinister intentions. However, all he manages to find is unsurprisingly a copy of *Hamlet*.

"When sorrows come, they come not single spies / But in battalions"<sup>4</sup> (4.2.75-6),<sup>4</sup> are the lines Klaus reads from the Shakespearean volume Marcel had left open at act 4, scene 2, and this is when Claudius starts to fear about the course of events; as a matter of fact, Polonius has been killed, Hamlet reveals himself to be a murderer who puts on an antic disposition, and Ophelia goes completely mad. At this point Klaus Mikaelson adds: "*Hamlet*. We taught Marcel to read with this very copy," and he regrets the time when Marcel was their friend and follower, and when he was also treated better than a brother by all the members of the family.

Before continuing with the analysis of this scene and its connections with Shakespeare's Danish tragedy, we already have enough elements to reflect about the kind of intertextual relationship that exists between *Hamlet* and *The Originals*, in the light of the above-told facts. In her study about "literariness of literature" (2006, p. 1), Julie Sanders explores the concept of intertextuality analysing its two main, broad categories: adaptation and appropriation – this binomial giving the title to her book. "An adaptation signals a relationship with an informing source text or original. [...] [A]ppropriation frequently affects a more decisive journey away from the informing source into a wholly new cultural product and domain" (p. 28). This "more decisive journey away" characterizing the operation of appropriation seems to be exactly what happens in *The Originals*. The series' intertextual connection with Shakespeare's *Hamlet* becomes apparent when Klaus reads the above-mentioned lines from Claudius's speech. It is an epiphanic instant when *Hamlet*'s peritext, in all its physic – even before ideological and conceptual – dimension, becomes the objective correlative of the complex web of relationships which typifies the neo-gothic universe of *The Originals*; it is in this very moment that "Shakespearean appropriation becomes possible, perhaps even imperative" (Desmet & Sawyer, 1999, p. 2).

Starting from these assumptions, we can look back at the whole series and analyse the complicated interactions among its characters as an appropriation of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. In order to be the clearest possible, particular attention will be paid to three main questions which can help readers to understand how and to what extent the TV series deals with Shakespearean echoes. The first is "Why *Hamlet*?" the second "Why these lines?" and last, but not least, "Is it possible to find a correspondence between Shakespearean characters and *The Originals*?" The first question is the easiest to answer; both *Hamlet* and *The Originals* deal with the question of revenge and power. To borrow from Harold Bloom, *Hamlet* "displace[s] the revenge theme itself with emphasis on [...] issues of power politics" (2004, 92).

<sup>4</sup> Quotations from Shakespeare's canon are taken from the *New Oxford Shakespeare* edition. See the section dedicated to references for bibliographical details.

We all know about Hamlet's power-struggle with his uncle Claudius (a power-struggle that Klaus Mikaelson and Marcel Gerard carry to the extreme within the space not of a single tragedy, but of over two centuries).

In fact, in the TV series, Klaus and his siblings funded the city of New Orleans (where the action takes place)<sup>5</sup> and ruled it for centuries until they left it for reasons which remain unclear. During their absence, Marcel ruled the city making deals with the witches and trying to eliminate all the werewolves who roamed around it. The situation gets out of control when the Mikaelsons come back from their numerous journeys at the beginning of season 1: Klaus believes he has the first option on New Orleans, whilst Marcel accuses him of abandoning the city and all the vampires of his bloodline in it. However, this is an unequal fight: Klaus is the original, the strongest creature, a hybrid whose venomous bite can kill any other vampire within a few hours. But when the fight seems to be over and Marcel is about to accept Klaus's superiority, a mysterious prophecy comes true and turns the tables completely, thus reversing the balance of power.

These considerations lead us directly to the earlier-mentioned second question: "Why these lines?" Unlike the first question, this is not an easy one to answer. As previously stated, when Klaus goes to Marcel's place to look for some signs of his presence, the only thing he finds is an open copy of *Hamlet* and he starts reading the lines of the open book: "When sorrows come, they come not single spies / But in battalions." (4.2.75-6) At this moment in time, the audience is focusing on Klaus's point of view, and its interpretation of the word 'sorrows' is that by leaving the copy open on purpose, Marcel is promising his creator infinite pain and sadness; in fact, after drinking the complex potion other vampires had supplied him with, he has all the power to destroy the Mikaelsons now. However, Klaus's point of view is not the only possible one; after all, we do not know if Marcel was sure that Klaus would go to his headquarters to look for something, so we cannot say for sure that the new invincible vampire had left the book open on purpose to have it read by Klaus himself.

This reflection paves the way for a more intimate and lingering struggle that Marcel could have endured for a long time. Put it this way, the 'sorrows' become all the ominous events that have followed one another in New Orleans after the return of the Mikaelsons. And Marcel is determined to stop these sorrows once and for all.

Yet, a last hypothesis can be put forward and it is linked with the psychological notion of 'suggestion.' In fact, as far as one can see on the screen, Klaus quotes two lines he chooses from *Hamlet* deliberately. Marcel had not underlined or emphasised the words the original vampire reads from Claudius's speech, so how can we be sure that Klaus is not reading these two lines because his mind is influenced by the way they reflect the situation he is facing? In other words, what if his mind recognized those lines unconsciously as the most suitable in that particular moment of the story? After all, even the French philosopher Descartes, when writing about the three dreams he had on November 10<sup>th</sup>, 1619, affirmed that in his last dream he was shown an open book on a table where he read a precise sentence in Latin, "Quod vitae sectabor iter?" – meaning "Which path do I choose in my life?" – and admitted that he dreamt about that sentence because his mind was wondering about that question those days (see Gaukroger, 1995, p. 109). Therefore, it can be perfectly plausible that suggestion acted on Klaus's mind.

To some degree, even the notion of self-fulfilling prophecy – whose formulation was attributed to the XX century sociologist Robert K. Merton – can help to reinforce the hypothesis we have just advanced. Similarly to what happens to the eponymous protagonist of Shakespeare's *Macbeth* – which seems to be a more suitable source text than *Hamlet* if we are talking about prophecies – Klaus is so concerned with the prediction according to which Elijah, Rebekah and he "will all fall: one by foe, one by friend and one by family" (as Freya utters after casting a divination spell) that he believes those lines from *Hamlet* refer to the prophecy and its fulfillment.

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<sup>5</sup> The choice of New Orleans as the setting of the story is a well-thought-out one. New Orleans is famous for being one of the most – if not the most – multicultural city in the US, and so it is the perfect setting for a TV series which involves vampires, witches and werewolves alternating periods of peace and times of ferocious fights and fierce feuds. Moreover, New Orleans is famous for its *Mardi Gras*. This paramount day is pivotal in the carnivalesque celebrations which take place every year in the city, and Carnival – to borrow from Kristeva's analysis and development of Bakhtin's semiology – "inevitably brings to light [...] sexuality and death" (1980, p. 49). Even if referred to a semio-linguistic approach to narratological studies, Kristeva's analysis perfectly suits the narrative system of *The Originals*. "Composed of distances, relationships, analogies and non-exclusive oppositions" (48) – let us think about the main character, Klaus, who is a hybrid, a fusion of vampires and werewolves, two factions which are sworn enemies – New Orleans of *The Originals* is a carnivalesque city in its very essence, a heterotopian place – to borrow from Foucault this time – which, as we will see, "struggle[s] against Christianity and its representation" (p. 50).

Whilst Macbeth's actions are completely dedicated to the fulfillment of the witches' prophecy, however, the Mikaelsons had been attempting to stop its realization until Marcel revealed himself to be the fatal enemy chosen by destiny.

Finally, the third question. Fans of the series know that Klaus is the protagonist of the story. If we also consider that during his absence from New Orleans, Marcel takes the power and rules the city, we can quickly surmise that the Mikaelson stands for Hamlet who comes back from Wittenberg, and Marcel represents the usurper and tyrant Claudius who is in love not with Klaus's mother this time, but with his favorite sister, Rebekah Mikaelson. Klaus has no father to revenge, but he has the proud ghost of his own glorious past as undisputed king of the city. However, a closer look at the events could overturn the parallelism between Shakespearean characters and the protagonists of this neo-gothic series. When Klaus closes the book, he declares that they (probably meaning all the Mikealsons) had taught Marcel to read English using that copy of the Danish tragedy he is now holding in his hands.

Marcel's story is told in seasons 1 and 2 of *The Originals*. He was a black slave boy whom Klaus, his brother Elijah and his sister Rebekah saved from continual corporal punishment by his former master – who, of course, was slaughtered by the vampires in a few seconds. The Mikaelsons raised him like a child and a brother, teaching him to read and giving him a proper education.<sup>6</sup> Once he learned to read (S2E08), Kol Mikaelson took him to the theater and they attended a performance of *Hamlet* together. Unfortunately, he was not able to see the end of it, since Kolgot tired of the performance and drained all the blood from the actors. Nevertheless, even when transformed into a vampire, Marcel will never feel part of that cruel and unscrupulous family of originals whose motto is “always and forever.” When Klaus, Elijah, Rebekah and the others threaten his life more than once during the seasons to preserve their family's cohesion, he keeps repeating that he will never consider himself a Mikaelson. If we do not take into account the post-colonial implications that the black slave Marcel's story has, we can see a parallelism between Marcel and Hamlet: they both feel betrayed by what they considered family and they both mistrust a sense of belonging to a family they perceive as unfit for them. Under these circumstances, one could even put Hamlet's first line of the play in Marcel's mouth: “A little more than kin and less than kind” (1.1.64-5). Therefore, Hamlet's Elsinore as well as Marcel's French Quarter in New Orleans become a golden cage where the two characters struggle to find their own place, a place that has been stolen by Claudius-Klaus (even the assonance of the names seems to reveal their similarities...). Hamlet, Prince of Denmark, is the son of that very same king Hamlet who is now seeking revenge through his son's intervention. Marcel, on the other hand, has clarified his ‘Hamletic condition’ since the first episode of the first season of *The Originals*, when he yelled at Klaus: “I'm not the prince, friend, I'm the king!”

Moreover, even a toponymical consideration can help us to reinforce the parallel between Marcel and Hamlet, as well as Klaus and Claudius's. When Klaus saved the young black slave from the whip of his master, he gave him the Latin speaking name of Marcellus that “comes from Mars, the God of war, and it means ‘little warrior’” (S1E02). Two quotations to Mars are present in *Hamlet*, and they are both intended to undermine Claudius's status. The first (2.2.394) compares the Cyclopes' ferocity when completing Mars's eternal and indestructible armor with Pyrrhus's savagery in stabbing Priam (a ‘metaphor-within-the-simile’ which stands for Claudius killing king Hamlet); the second refers to the glorious and noble portrait of king Hamlet – who had “an eye like Mars, to threaten and command” (3.4.55) – that his proud son shows to Gertrude in order to characterize Claudius as a “mildewed ear” (3.4.62), thus putting him in a bad light. Therefore, in *Hamlet* the god of the war stands out for his pride and is associated with the dead king who has to be avenged by his son. Exactly as prince Hamlet is second to his father since he is younger than him, the vampire Marcellus – even though a supernatural being – is a diminished version of the god Mars.<sup>7</sup> As noted earlier, in the last two episodes of the third season, Marcel becomes king of New Orleans, so the correspondences between Klaus-Claudius and Marcel-Hamlet are overturned.

<sup>6</sup>Echoes from *The Tempest* could be gathered here, especially from act 1, scene 2, when Miranda reminds Caliban that she “Took pains to make thee speak, taught thee each hour / One thing or other. When thou didst not, savage, / Know thine own meaning, but wouldst gabble like / A thing most brutish, I endowed thy purposes / With words that made them known” (1.2.354-8).

<sup>7</sup>The speaking name ‘Marcellus’, apart from its symbolic references, has a more obvious and direct intertextual connection with *Hamlet*'s homonymous character. Marcellus is the only character in the play (with the exception of Hamlet) who sees the ghost twice – he saw it with Bernardo the first time, but he is present when Hamlet has his encounter with the spirit of

For the first time since the beginning of the series, Klaus is forced to submit to Marcel's will, and Marcel intends to kill his creator. Unsurprisingly, the audience will soon face a very Shakespearean season finale. Marcel manages to mortally wound all the Mikaelsons in various and 'creative' ways, apart from Klaus whom he wants to kill brutally with his own hands. In the last scenes of episode 22, *Hamlet's* poisoned sword becomes a magical dagger which does not kill the person it hurts, but which inflicts endless pain to its victims, by keeping them alive in an everlasting catatonic state. The poisoned cup is transformed into a magical cup filled with Klaus's blood, which will save the lives of all the Mikaelsons sending them to sleep. Marcel-Claudius has carefully planned everything, and the only thing Klaus-Hamlet can do to save his siblings is to link his life to theirs through a spell cast by Freya, the only Mikaelson witch still alive. They drink Klaus's blood so that they fall into a sort of coma in the exact moment he is pierced by Marcel's dagger.

This pseudo-Shakespearean tragic finale sees all the Mikaelsons defeated by the newly self-crowned Marcel. The last episode of season 3 is a balance between death and sleep, an eternal coma from which all the siblings can awake only if the hybrid Hayley, the mother of Klaus's daughter, succeeds in finding all the necessary things that Freya has told her to find before casting her final spell. The Mikaelsons are inert in the protective limbo Freya has created with Klaus's blood, and the only thing they can do is "to die, perchance to dream." (3.1.66)

### 3. *Hamlet's recalling from season 4*

Season 4 of *The Originals* was broadcast from March to June 2017 and it had a completely different plot, even if the Mikaelson family was always the fulcrum of the storyline. The evil spirit of the mystical and incredibly powerful witch Inadu, better known as The Hollow (definitely not a coincidence with the title of J.K. Rowling's seventh *Harry Potter's* novel, as will be explained shortly) had been awakened for the first time in centuries by Vincent Griffith (the regent of the New Orleans witch coven) in a murky period of his life and then worshipped by his psychopathic dead ex-wife Eve Sinclair. After Vincent had managed to seal her spirit, the witches of New Orleans found a way to summon The Hollow again in order to protect themselves and stop what they called 'The Beast', meaning Marcel and his ever-growing power.

The daughter of a Native American family, Inadu had been overprotected by the witchcraft of her tribe's shamans while she was still in her mother's womb. Those Indian magicians' protective spells obtained the dreadful effect of attracting black magic, and the new-born girl grew up eagerly destroying everything she desired to crush. No one was able to stop her devastating powers, so her parents, together with her tribe's shamans, cast a curse and literally tore her into pieces; as long as her bones remained separated, there would not be the risk she would awake in the flesh again. In order to be resurrected, The Hollow has to gather all the bones of her dead body and channel an incredible power to cast a resurrecting spell (exactly the same 'resurrecting procedure' Voldemort uses to come back to life in *Harry Potter's* saga: a mere coincidence?).

Meanwhile, five years have passed since Hayley and a two-year-old Hope (Hayley and Klaus's daughter) began their journey around the world to collect all the things Freya Mikaelson asked Hayley to find in order to bring Elijah, Kol, Rebekah and her back from the artificial limbo she had created to protect them all from Marcel. Hope Mikaelson is seven now, and she is training to become the most powerful witch on earth. Needless to say, Hayley and Hope succeed in finding (and taking) the serum of all the seven existing packs of werewolves, and they manage to awake all the Mikaelson siblings. Once Freya, Elijah, Kol and Rebekah are all reunited, they free Klaus who is hallucinating in his personal hell created by Marcel's cursed dagger.

The Mikaelsons – together with a newly-found Marcel who decides to bury the hatchet and help his counterparts – and The Hollow cross paths in the very moment when the spirit of the ancestral witch understands that the family is an incredible and inexhaustible source of energy. Above all, Inadu understands that Hope Mikaelson is an extremely powerful, though young and unexperienced, which whose energy could be exploited through a reincarnation spell if the other members of the family manage to destroy her original body. After all, if The Hollow took control of Hope's body – thinks the malicious witch – none of the members of her family would have enough courage to attack the body of their precious little girl. As it has usually occurred in every season finale of

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his dead father – and he is also one of the first characters who plainly discloses the terrible condition of Elsinore: "Something is rotten in the state of Denmark" (1.4.99) became one of the most famous line of the whole play. Marcellus is a soldier, so the sense of duty is what characterizes him most (the same sense of duty which makes Marcel Gerard feel obliged to the Mikaelsons who freed him from a miserable life of slavery and exploitation).

*The Originals* so far, even this time the happily ever after leaves a bitter taste in the audience's mouth. In fact, the price to be paid to sort the situation out is high: Vincent and Freya find a way to both defeat The Hollow and save Hope from a never-ending oblivion, but in order to accomplish this task they separate Inadu's spirit in four different parts, allocating each part in one of the Mikaelsons' bodies. As a consequence, in order to prevent The Hollow from coming back a third time, Elijah, Klaus, Kol and Rebekah are condemned to spend the rest of their (eternal) lives completely apart from each other and from Hope.

During the thirteen episodes of season 4, The Hollow takes control of different characters, but she seems to be particularly attracted by Elijah Mikaelson. In episode 5, Inadu makes his appearance and torments Marcel in New Orleans's Lafayette cemetery in order to put him down. While haunting his tried mind, The Hollow/Elijah whispers to Marcel: "The spirit I have seen may be the Devil, and the Devil hath power to assume a pleasing shape. Do you not recall your Shakespeare, Marcellus? The ghost which appeared to Hamlet, and then, of course, unrelenting tragedy." Shakespeare again; and *Hamlet* again.

First of all, it has to be clear that Plec's choice of quoting again from the Danish tragedy seems to be a coherent one, since, as seen before, season 3 had finished with various intertextual references to *Hamlet*. However, intertextual connections between the Shakespearean text and S4E05 of *The Originals* can be explored again at different levels. To begin with, the first aspect which helps the audience 'breathe a Shakespearean atmosphere' is the heterotopian setting of Lafayette cemetery in New Orleans. When writing about cemeteries as heterotopias, whose function and symbolic references have changed during the centuries, Foucault concludes his chapter asserting that in the XIX century "[t]he cemeteries [...] came to constitute, no longer the sacred and immortal heart of the city, but the other city, where each family possesses its dark resting place" (1984, p. 6).

Starting from this assumption, one can immediately highlight a first, important difference between Hamlet's vision of his father's ghost and Marcel's hallucination of Elijah's presence. Even if shocking, Hamlet's vision of his dead parent happens on a platform of Elsinore castle, whilst Marcel's hallucinatory state manifests itself in the "dark (un)resting place" of Lafayette cemetery, where vampires like him could not even have access and where the witches of the French Quarter coven meet and perform their rites.

In order to proceed with a precise analysis of Elijah/The Hollow's line from and about *Hamlet*, we will divide it in two different parts: the exact quotation and the following intertextual comment on it. "The spirit I have seen / May be the Devil, and the Devil hath power / To assume a pleasing shape" (2.2.494-6) are three lines taken from Hamlet's famous soliloquy "O, what a rogue and peasant slave am I!" They increase the prince's doubtful condition of avenger; Hamlet does not know if he has to murder his uncle Claudius or not, because he still does not discern whether the ghost he has seen is actually his dead father's spirit. After all, as Hamlet affirms, the ghost could be the devil himself, since the devil can turn into anyone he wants. In *The Originals* this doubtful condition is completely absent; Marcel understands perfectly that the 'ghost' who is in front of him is not Elijah – in fact his following line is "You are not Elijah". The stress of the quotation is put on the semantic load of the word 'devil', since The Hollow can actually be considered a demoniac character who takes over the body and mind of whoever she pleases. Even if one imagines an inversion of roles, since Hamlet's lines are actually uttered by a ghost, the correspondence between Shakespearean characters and the protagonists of the TV series is evident once again: The Hollow/king Hamlet's ghost blames Marcel/Hamlet for not having killed Klaus/Claudius when he had the chance to accomplish his task.

Nevertheless, The Hollow's comment to the lines she repeats by heart is even more interesting than the quotation itself. First of all, it has to be noticed that the quotation is anachronistic, because Inadu had been born and died long before Shakespeare wrote his works, and one may certainly doubt that for all those centuries of oblivion she could have read Shakespeare just to pass the time while waiting to be resurrected; unless her magical powers allowed her to control even Elijah's memory. This chronological discrepancy, however, does not affect the meaning and importance of the quotation and the comment which follows it. "Do you not recall your Shakespeare, Marcellus? The ghost which appeared to Hamlet, and then, of course, unrelenting tragedy". Certainly, the comment has the primary aim of reinforcing – if not explaining – the intertextual connection between *Hamlet* and *The Originals*, since the audience who watches the TV series is not supposed to know the Bard's lines by heart or recognize them as soon as some of them are quoted. Nevertheless, there are some other ideas which are worth analyzing. One of the most peculiar aspects of the above-quoted sentence is undoubtedly the use of the possessive 'your'; indisputably, Shakespeare cannot be Marcel's exclusive possession – no need to say that – therefore we have to speculate further.

The possessive ‘your’ can hint at three different contexts: 1) the adjective can be a reference to the penultimate episode of the third season of *The Originals* we have analyzed earlier; in this case ‘your Shakespeare’ would mean the physical copy of the play which Marcel held in his house, as if The Hollow alluded exactly to that very copy for unknown reasons; 2) ‘your Shakespeare’ could also have a stronger affective value linked to the fact that the Bard – and *Hamlet* in particular – was the means through which Klaus and the other Mikaelsons taught Marcel to read in English; 3) finally, a more source-oriented explanation can be connected to the fact that Marcellus – as The Hollow/Elijah calls the vampire in the above-mentioned lines – is the namesake of one of *Hamlet*’s characters (as we have already seen).

In all three cases, the possessive contributes to a kind of reification of Shakespeare, as if the Bard were something Marcel knows so well that it is more like possessing him than knowing his works. The adjective is strictly functional to the simple and clear message Elijah/The Hollow wants Marcel to bear in mind: since the vampire knows Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* so well that he seems like possessing him, he would certainly know that at the end of the tragedy the main character – not unlike most of the others – actually dies. This interpretation reinforces the intertextual parallel between Hamlet and Marcel Gerard which has been explored in the previous session of this article, thus paving the way for an ‘unrelenting tragedy’ which seems to be avoided for the time being.

Before concluding, it is worth comparing the two ghosts who appear respectively in *Hamlet* and in *The Originals*. Scholars have been analyzing *Hamlet* with regard to the multifaceted theme of revenge and the Renaissance genre of the revenge tragedy (see for instance Prosser, 1981; Mercer, 1987; Rist, 2008) and they have largely discussed about its inclusion within this popular Elizabethan genre. What is certain is that, be it a revenge tragedy or not, Hamlet is the only avenger in Shakespeare’s play – with the exception of his alter egos Laertes and Fortinbras – who has to murder the usurper Claudius to do his father’s justice. The conclusion of this tragedy is a half-revenge, since Hamlet manages to kill Claudius, but he pays the price for accomplishing this task with his own and many others’ lives. In *The Originals* the situation is completely overturned. The Hollow does not designate any specific person – or better to say, supernatural being, since humans do not usually take part in the storyline – to avenge her: she does not need any revenge, she only needs to be resurrected and to rule the world as she pleases. She is summoned by some of New Orleans’s witches of the French Quarter, but she does not make their interests fighting Marcel and the Mikaelsons.

Therefore, while king Hamlet’s apparition is justified by the fact the he needs to be avenged in order to rest in peace once and for all, Inadu wants to come back for a largely less noble aim, and the closer she gets to her goal, the more she understands that she can count only on her unlimited strength. Unlike king Hamlet’s ghost who is stuck in the (Catholic? Pagan?) Purgatorial dimension, The Hollow understands that she is the only one who can make her own resurrection possible, thus challenging the most deeply-rooted dogma ever, which is a divine prerogative. Inadu is depicted as an egotistical psycho spirit who acts alone in order to break a universally acknowledged godly privilege; after all, it could not be otherwise, since we are in the carnivalesque New Orleans, whose mystical dwellers “struggle against Christianity” (Kristeva, 1980, p. 50).

Considering this point of view, we can easily understand that even the subversive and essentially devilish universe of *The Originals*, dominated by riotous and unscrupulous supernatural beings, cannot endure this outrageous undertaking.

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