Bachelor Thesis

The Shakespearean Stahr

Using Genette’s Theory of Intertextuality to Compare

The Last Tycoon to Shakespeare’s Tragedies

Author: Therese A. Edén
Supervisor: Anna Greek
Examiner: Per Sivefors
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Abstract

This essay uses Gerard Genette’s theory of intertextuality – in particular architextuality – in order to establish the connection between Shakespearean tragedies and F. Scott Fitzgerald’s last novel, The Last Tycoon. The essay relies mainly on known Shakespeare critic A.C. Bradley and the categories he uses in order to establish what makes a Shakespearean tragedy a Shakespearean tragedy. This framework will then be used to further elaborate upon the architextual connection between Shakespeare and Fitzgerald. The essay also compares the characters from The Last Tycoon directly to characters from Shakespeare’s tragedies in order to further show the intertextual connections. For example, Fitzgerald's main character Monroe Stahr is compared to Julius Caesar, from Shakespeare's play of the same name, while the antagonist Mr Brady is compared to both Cassius from the previously mentioned Julius Caesar, as well as lago from Othello.

Key words: F. Scott Fitzgerald, William Shakespeare, The Last Tycoon, Gerard Genette, A.C. Bradley, Architextuality, Shakespearean Tragedy, Intertextuality
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Introduction

What is a Danish prince doing in Hollywood? When reading *The Last Tycoon* one can be excused for pausing for a moment to ponder the sudden appearance of Prince Agge of Denmark. Why does F. Scott Fitzgerald have a sudden need to introduced Scandinavian royalty in the middle of this story of love and intrigue taking place in Hollywood? Agge is in the story for barely a chapter, and when all is said and done, he has very little impact on the overall plot. So what is a Danish prince doing in The Last Tycoon? I would argue that Prince Agge serves a very specific purpose. He is not as much a character for the sake of the plot, as he is a so called “shoutout”; a link to another famous Danish prince, from another famous writer. While any shoutout to Shakespeare could be dismissed as an author paying respect to arguably one of the most influential writers in English literature, another reason for Agge's inclusion becomes apparent if one takes a second look at the plot of *The Last Tycoon*. The main character, a man named Monroe Stahr is a wealthy young prodigy, heartbroken after the loss of his wife, making a name for himself in the wealthier upper class; despite not being one of them to begin with. Through a trick of fate, he finds a woman who reminds him of his lost love. Despite this, he is married to another, whose father seeks to threaten not only his new love, but his reputation and his very life.

With this essay I aim to show that the plot of *The Last Tycoon* could easily fit into one of Shakespeare's tragedies, since it carries shades of both *Romeo and Juliet* and *Othello*. While the term “Shakespearean” is used by almost everyone when referring to both actors and stories, the overuse of the term has rendered it almost meaningless in
everyday use. Considering the massive variety of stories and actors that are called Shakespearean, it is hard to pin down what actually makes something Shakespearean.

The Merriam Webster online dictionary refers to “Shakespearean” as: “of, relating to, or having the characteristics of Shakespeare or his writings. 2: evocative of a theme, setting, or event from a work of Shakespeare” (Merriam-webster.com). The Oxford English Dictionary agrees, citing the adjective “Shakespearean” to mean: “Relating to or characteristic of William Shakespeare or his works:“ ("Shakespearean - Definition Of Shakespearean In English From The Oxford English Dictionary").

This essay treats Shakespearean Tragedy as a genre of its own, as a category of texts that can be connected through an established set of criteria. While these criteria can be flexible, most need to be recognizable in a work for it to truly fit into the genre in question. In order to do this, I have chosen to apply the theory of Intertextuality, that is to say, the theory that no text exists in a vacuum and is always influenced by previous works and experiences of both the reader and the author. There are several different subcategories of intertextuality, and I will refer to the works of Gerard Genette to establish some of the intertextual connections between The Last Tycoon and Shakespeare. In particular, Genette's theory about architextuality, which describes the influence of the genre over the text itself, is applied.

To establish the framework for Shakespearean tragedy as a sub-genre of tragedy, I intend to mostly refer to the works of A.C Bradley, due to his contemporary status to F. Scott Fitzgerald, and his influence over Shakespearean critics at the time. In his work Shakespearean Tragedy, Bradley establishes four criteria that characterize Shakespeare’s
tragedies. I will present and expand upon these criteria further into the essay. It is these criteria that I intend to use in order to establish the intertextual connection between Shakespeare and Fitzgerald.

So what is a Prince Hamlet shoutout doing in Hollywood? Perhaps Fitzgerald only made clear what was already there. After all, Hollywood is by no means unfamiliar with Shakespeare. Monroe Stahr, the protagonist of The Last Tycoon, is based on the real life of producer Irving Thalberg who produced a version of Romeo and Juliet. His efforts earned him an Oscar nomination for best picture (Whiteley), and he is by no means the only one to adapt the Bard’s plays to the Silver Screen.

Fitzgerald himself was familiar with the classical tragedies, and one recording of him reciting passages from Othello can be easily found with a Google search (F. Scott Fitzgerald Reads Shakespeare). With Hollywood making Shakespeare available for a wider audience and Fitzgerald's popularity, as well as his familiarity with the Shakespearean traditions, it is no great stretch to assume that Fitzgerald could have played upon allusions to the Bard’s plays.

Tragedy is defined by the Merriam Webster Dictionary as “a : a medieval narrative poem or tale typically describing the downfall of a great man b : a serious drama typically describing a conflict between the protagonist and a superior force (as destiny) and having a sorrowful or disastrous conclusion that elicits pity or terror c : the literary genre of tragic dramas”. As this definition is rather broad, I have, as previously mentioned, chosen to focus upon Shakespearean tragedy as a sub-category of tragedy, since The Last Tycoon is undoubtedly a tragic tale.
The purpose of this essay is to establish an intertextual connection between *The Last Tycoon* and Shakespearean Tragedies. As previously mentioned I will attempt to use Bradley’s criteria to establish a framework for the Shakespearean tragedy, but I also intend to compare *The Last Tycoon* and its characters more directly to specific characters and plays from Shakespeare’s canon. I will in particular refer to *Julius Caesar* due to the play's status during the 1930’s, and because of textual echoes within the text of *The Last Tycoon*. In order to establish these “textual echoes”, as well as other intertextual connections, I intend to use Gerard Genette's theory of intertextuality. This view of storytelling - both through literary allusion and the architextual approach of creating a Shakespearean sub-genre - would show Shakespeare's continued influence even through the modernist era. It will also show how these classical tropes, such as the star-crossed lovers and the ambitious being overthrown by their own ambition, have been changed in order to fit a more modern setting. While works have considered Shakespeare’s influence on modern times, such as *Shakespeare among the Moderns*, I have found no works connecting *The Last Tycoon* with Shakespeare.
**Shakespearean tragedy**

The first question that needs to be answered in this analysis is, naturally: *What is a Shakespearean Tragedy?* This is the question Tom Mcalidon asks in his essay by the same name. Mcalidon begins to answer this question, by defining what constitutes a “tragedy” to begin with. Going back to Aristotle’s definition from the 4th century BC: “(Aristotle) said that the success of a tragedy depends on its capacity to excite pity and fear, thereby effecting a catharsis of these emotions.” (Mcalidon 2). Most interpretations of this statement follow the logic that pity allows us to feel sympathy for the protagonist, while fear describes the attitude towards the protagonists actions; part of this being an acknowledgment of the justification for what has occurred (2). The subject of catharsis however, has proven a more debatable subject, since the modern use of the word is to describe the instance where powerful emotions and conflicts are resolved to leaves behind a feeling of understanding (2). This viewpoint has been very much emphasised by Hegel and Nietzsche, who point to the conflict that arises when the wants and actions of one character encroach on the wants and rights of another, therefore making the acts wrongful. This view of the conflict, focused on the conflicts between people or groups, is not directed to ethical right and wrong, but rather a divine order that restores itself - usually via violent means - through the catharsis that Aristotle spoke of. (2) However, this particular viewpoint does not often apply to *Shakespearean* tragedy. A.C. Bradley criticized Hegel’s focus on external conflict, pointing out that in Shakespearean tragedies, the conflict is more often than not inside the protagonist themselves. The essence of the tragedy are the acts of moral evils committed and the sense of waste, as the universe punishes that evil, but also destroys much of the good surrounding it as well. (3)
It is from A.C Bradley’s works I have chosen to take the criteria to establish the architextual connection between Shakespeare and Fitzgerald. While Bradley was skeptical towards the more spectacle-based adaptations of the Bard’s plays, he enjoyed – and still enjoys today – a great influence over the academic study of Shakespearean Tragedy. When researching this essay, several other critics also referred to Bradley, leading me to make the decision to return to the source, rather than rely on second hand information. While I am aware that his works are not the latest written within the study of Shakespeare, Bradley's work is still the most relevant for his role in this essay – namely to establish the architextual framework for my later comparison. A.C Bradley was a university professor at Oxford from 1876 to 1882. As this puts him a few years ahead of Fitzgerald's literary career – which did not begin until almost two decades later during WW1 – Bradley was, and still is, considered one of the best introductions to Shakespeare. It is not unlikely to assume that Fitzgerald might have come into contact with Bradley’s definition of Shakespearean tragedy. Bradley published his lectures on the subject in *Shakespearean Tragedy* published 1904. In his book, he establishes four criteria that qualify a work as a Shakespearean Tragedy, and it is these criteria that I intend to use to establish the architextual framework for this essay:

1. There is only one - at most two, main characters (2);
2. The Tragedy must be caused by the characters actions (7);
3. The characters must be in some manner extraordinary (13); and
4. “Fate” may take part, but must not ultimately be responsible for the tragedy (19).
Bradley’s theory on the substance of Shakespearean tragedy can be quoted as follows:

Whatever may be said of accidents, circumstances and the like, human action is, after all, presented to us as the central fact in tragedy, and also as the main cause of the catastrophe. That necessity which so much impresses us is, after all, chiefly the necessary connection of actions and consequences. For these actions we, without even raising a question on the subject, hold the agents responsible; and the tragedy would disappear for us if we did not. The critical action is, in greater or less degree, wrong or bad. The catastrophe is, in the main, the return of this action on the head of the agent. It is an example of justice; and that order which, present alike within the agents and outside them, infallibly brings it about, is therefore just. The rigour of its justice is terrible, no doubt, for a tragedy is a terrible story; but, in spite of fear and pity, we acquiesce, because our sense of justice is satisfied.

(Bradley 22-23)

Naturally, one must question the meaning of “our sense of justice”. After all, “justice” varies greatly. Bradley points out that Shakespeare never uses what would be referred to as “poetic justice”. The punishment is never equal to the crime. Villainy will never prevail in the end, but Shakespeare is not interested in portraying the world as “poetically” just in his plays. Bradley instead refers back to the concepts of “good” and “evil”. While the powers that be, in Shakespeare's universe, will not take a motive into account when “judging” an act, they do seem to ally with good rather than evil. Bradley likens the events of the tragedy to a disease or a poison affecting the human body. The source of the disease is always evil (ex. Iago scheming in Othello, Macbeth’s ambition.
and murder). Here the motive does not matter, the act is evil, regardless of any good motive behind it. The catastrophe that follows is the world’s attempt to rid itself of that evil; like a body wracked with convulsions trying to cleanse itself of poison. But just as a body might reject things that are good for it during illness, the catastrophe might rid the world of good while attempting to remove the evil. In the end, the world, as well as the body, may survive, as the tragedy lies not in the destruction of the evil, but in the wasting of the good (Bradley 22-28).

The study of Shakespeare and his tragedies has gone forward since Bradley. Huston Diehl argues that Shakespeare's stories are, in fact filled with religious allegory. While there is no obvious “judgement of God” - which makes Bradley's criteria still stand – Diehl points to the great religious reform that took place around the time Shakespeare was active. The superstitious Othello trusting in “magic” rather than the word of his beloved, for example. Diehl also argues that King Lear is an allegory for the struggles between the old Catholicism and the new “purer” Anglican faith (Diehl). Yet, as previously mentioned, Bradley's criterion is simply that no divine forces intervene to directly cause the events in the tragedy. One can easily exchange Bradley's “fate” for Diehl's religious allegory approach; the fact that a power far beyond human comprehension in some manner intervenes in order to shape the events that follow. Bradley elects to read a more secular view into Shakespeare, rather than Diehl’s more religious viewpoint. Since The Last Tycoon touches very little on the religious practices of the characters, I have elected to rather follow Bradley’s vocabulary and refer to this power as “fate” rather than “Divinity.” Fitzgerald never references the influence of any
religious deity within *The Last Tycoon*, even if several characters, Stahr included, are Jewish in origin, the story treats them as a people, rather than a religion.
**Shakespeare in Hollywood**

Shakespeare's influence on the written word, the stage and the big screen (or even the small screen), can hardly be denied by anyone who has ever consumed any form of media since the days of the Bard himself. Although his influence is occasionally more subtle, his plots and characters, and even parts of the texts themselves, are used over and over again.

The transition between stage and the big screen seems rather natural. After all, the screen has one big advantage. It can show what the stage can only tell, as stated by the Russian director Grigori Kozintsev:

[A filmic rendering] shifts the stress from the aural to the visual. The problem is not one of finding a means to speak the verse in front of the camera, in realistic circumstances ranging from long-shot to close-up. The aural has to be made visual and the poetic texture itself has to be transformed into visual poetry, into the dynamic organisation of film imagery. (Jorgens 20)

But why Shakespeare? There have been many books written about the influence of Shakespeare and why he in particular stuck in popular culture, while many others have failed to leave a lingering impression. Among these books is Richard Halpern's *Shakespeare Among the Moderns*, which focuses on Shakespeare's influence in the modernist cultural environment of the early 20th century. When it comes to explaining Shakespeare's surge of popularity during the late 19th century and early 20th century, Halpern references F. R. Leavis:
True: there were no 'highbrows' in Shakespeare's time. It was possible for Shakespeare to write plays that were at once popular drama and poetry that could be appreciated only by an educated minority. (Halpern 53)

In the late 19th and early 20th century, Shakespeare was present in the public mind on a completely different scale than other writers at the time. This was mainly because he was accessible. Not only on a physical level – the release of the pamphlet Shakespeare boiled down, which simplified the Shakespearean plays to its core parts – but also on an academic level. One did not require a degree in literature, or even a higher education at all, in order to cry for the love between Romeo and Juliet, or laugh at the spectacle in A Midsummer's Night's Dream. Unlike contemporary works such as Joyce's Ulysses or Woolf's To the Lighthouse, the majority of the public could easily understand and appreciate large parts of Shakespeare's plays. Shakespeare was not limited to the minority of people of higher education, but to everyone. (Halpern 53-54) Adapting Shakespeare to the big screen was a natural and sound decision. Familiar stories were made even more accessible to the public, as cinema became more and more popular. Naturally the rise in accessibility as well as the higher degree of public schooling was not universally popular among all modernists. Halpern specifically points to T.S. Eliot who believed that while Shakespeare overcame social boundaries, the vastly improved access through simplification also unified the masses against individual thought (63). There was also the belief that the increased popularity would lead to greater spectacle to entertain those who were not enough entertained by the text itself. There was a period when the theater's attempted to stage both the sea-battles and violent storms taking place in the different plays. Several critics, among them Sidney Lee and A.C. Bradley, were heavily against
this spectacle, claiming that it “dumbed down” the text to a mere show and noise for the sake of the masses (64). Spectacle over content was in fact one of the criticisms towards the Romeo and Juliet adaptation produced by Thalberg (Jorgens 20). Thalberg’s adaptation had its premiere in 1936, one year after the events of The Last Tycoon and four years before Fitzgerald began to write the book, making it not implausible that Fitzgerald had watched the movie beforehand, and perhaps drew some inspiration from the infamous star-crossed lovers, to the tumultuous love story in The Last Tycoon.

Yet, Shakespeare continued in the world of film, partly because of his history with English pop-culture. He was a familiar presence in an unfamiliar medium and told epic and broad stories that had tempted people enough to keep putting them to the stage. As a result, his transition to the silver screen was a natural step. He was also a 'classic' and was accessible enough for the general public to understand without the need for higher education, but still 'highbrow' enough to fall in with that same higher crowd. His classic status also lent credence to the new medium that was considered too simple and spectacle based to have stand as an art form on its own. These are things which speak considerably in the favour of adapting the Bard to the big screen. Yet there is one more thing that made people once again focus on Shakespeare, something that is reflected in The Last Tycoon.

In a letter to his editor describing the events that were supposed to take place in the later chapters of The Last Tycoon, Fitzgerald gives us this quote about Stahr, after he has fallen out of grace with his patrons in Wall Street following his contact with a communist party-member and, a conflict where he seemingly took the workers' side
against his peers: “The Reds see him now as a conservative – Wall Street as a Red.”

(Fitzgerald, 130)

Shakespeare has been dubbed “timeless” by many, and he, like Stahr in the book, are pulled into the conflict surrounding the rise of communism. Shakespeare has written so timely and provocative a piece that the critics were actually arguing whether he favoured fascism or communism or was perhaps a Trotskyite. (Halpern 52)

Shakespeare was used by both the left and right to push forward their own agendas, but most interesting to his connection to Fitzgerald, is that the New York based Communist party helped to support and fund Orson Welles’ production of *Julius Caesar* in 1931 (52); the same branch of the party that Stahr arranges to meet with (Fitzgerald 117). This is not the only question that both Shakespeare and Fitzgerald touch upon.

I have set it safely in a period of five years ago to obtain detachment, but now that Europe is tumbling about our ears this also seems to be for the best. It is an escape into a lavish, romantic past that perhaps will not come again into our time. (Scott F. Fitzgerald 141)

The story of *The Last Tycoon* takes place in 1935, and the faint whispers of war are still recognisable and pointed out in the book. Stahr himself is Jewish, a fact which is occasionally touched upon by the novel, and the rise of fascism is mentioned as well, especially with the previously introduced Prince Agge. Agge is described by Fitzgerald as “an early fascist”, and his fascination with Stahr, is curiously reminiscent of the fascist adoption of *Julius Caesar* during the Nazi regime in Germany. However, I will return to *Julius Caesar* in a later part.
Theory: Intertextuality

Intertextuality is the theory that no text can exist in a vacuum. All texts will always, in some manner, draw upon previous works, through obvious reference or narrative similarities. The theory of intertextuality draws heavily upon Saussure’s work on systematic linguistic connections (i.e every word has a pre-determined meaning, regardless of the user (Chandler)), as well as Bakhtin, a literary theorist who put much more focus on the social influence of linguistics than Saussure himself. According to Bakhtin, it would be the social and historical context of the text that creates the meaning behind it, rather than the specific language used when writing the text. The same words can through different social and historical context ultimately mean completely different things, depending on the reader. (Simandan) The term intertextuality was coined in the 1960’s by Julia Kristeva, who sought to combine Saussure and Bakhtin’s theories (Allen 2-3). In order to do so, Kristeva establishes texts as existing within two axes. A horizontal axis, connecting author and reader, and a vertical axis, connecting text with other texts. Where the two axes intersect, there are codes that can be identified across several other texts, thereby creating an intertextual connection. (Kristeva 69)

It should, however, be noted that the term has had many definitions. In his article “Against Intertextuality” William Irwin notes: “[Intertextuality] has come to have almost as many meanings as users, from those faithful to Kristeva’s original vision to those who simply use it as a stylish way of talking about allusion and influence” (Irwin).

For the purpose of this essay, I have chosen to use Genette’s definition of the term Intertextuality. His main claim was that a work of text was not an original unique
product, but rather a result of a previously established system. The system, in this case, would be a series of previous texts, who are acknowledged as being part of the genre. This is why some authors are considered to be codifiers of certain genres, for example, with J.R.R. Tolkien being referred to as “The Father of Modern Fantasy.” The author would then take parts of this system and rearrange them to obscure the connection to the system itself. Any structuralist critique of the work would then strive to arrange the parts back to their original placement in the system (Allen 93).

In this case, the system would be Shakespearean Tragedies, and the parts that Fitzgerald uses would be the criteria established by Bradley that I have already touched upon. Returning to Genette he divides the term intertextuality into five sub-definitions, Intertextuality, Paratextuality, Metatextuality, Hypertextuality and finally Architextuality. He collectively refers to these as Transtextuality (Allen 96-104). For the purpose of this essay, I have chosen to focus on Intertextuality, Architextuality and Paratext.

Genette redefines the term intertextuality from its rather diffuse meaning into two concepts: plagiarism and allusion. This change, Genette says, comes from a desire to move the focus from “semantic-semiotic microstructures, observed at the level of a sentence, a fragment, or a short, generally poetic text” towards a more “structural whole” (Allen 98). For example, in The Last Tycoon there is a scene on a balcony, which purpose and meaning invokes the famous balcony scene from Romeo and Juliet.

Genette wanted to move the focus from the more detailed view where one would, for example, look at one specific quote, to a focus on the work as a whole. It is this viewpoint that makes his theories especially applicable to this essay, where I intend to use a similar approach to establish the connection between Shakespeare and Fitzgerald.
The most appropriate of Genette's theories for this essay is his concept of architextuality. In his work *The Architext*, Genette discusses several definitions of genre, including Aristotle’s definition of tragedy in particular. He uses the term intertextuality to refer to the text’s relation to the Architext, which Genette defines as the text's relation to the assigned genre, such as tragedy or drama. While a work does not need to fill *all* of the criteria in order to be qualified as such, it still has to fulfill certain key ones. A tragedy cannot end happily, and a fantasy cannot take place during an absolutely normal day as we know it. (Genette *The Architext*)

Genette also allows for a further split or summary of the traditional genres. Satire can become comedy, and so forth (Genette *The Architext*). Again, this essay intends to treat Shakespearean tragedy as a sub-genre of tragedy itself. *The Last Tycoon* certainly qualifies as a tragedy, as the story does not end happily. Yet the purpose of this essay is to establish a sub-category of tragedy – Shakespearean tragedy – using the criteria from Bradley and to use Genette’s architextual approach to establish whether *The Last Tycoon* qualifies within this sub-category.

Finally, on the subject of Paratext, Genette splits the category into two subterms: peritext and epitext. Genette identifies peritext as everything that surrounds a text. Cover, illustrations, title etc, while epitext are items that normally move outside of the reader's initial impressions of the book, such as letters to the editor, personal notes etc. (Genette “Paratext”). However, in *The Last Tycoon* a letter to the editor is included that addresses the events of the beginning of the Second World War, showing that Fitzgerald was clearly aware of several of these issues and formed several characters, among them Prince Agge, to fit the time period. It cannot be too far-fetched to assume that these
characters and their interactions are intentional. Using this epitext it is therefore easy to put the work into a larger historical context, which directly connects it to Shakespeare's rise in the world of Hollywood. It is through the epitext, through his letter's to the editor, that one can begin to comprehend the world in which F. Scott Fitzgerald lived in while writing *The Last Tycoon*. One can begin to see how Fitzgerald seeks to explain the current world events through the use of familiar story telling means.
The Last Tycoon

As previously stated, Fitzgerald's familiarity with Shakespeare's tragedies cannot be denied. Since Fitzgerald was both a former literary student, and an active member of the Hollywood community, Shakespeare surrounded him, and it is not illogical to assume that this influenced his writing, nor is it illogical to assume that he may have run into the works of Bradley at some point during his academic career. Bradley used several criteria to determine a Shakespearean Tragedy, focusing on plot and character. These criteria are once again as follows:

1. There is only one - at most two, main characters (2);
2. The Tragedy must be caused by the characters actions (7);
3. The characters must be in some manner extraordinary (13); and
4. “Fate” may take part, but must not ultimately be responsible for the tragedy (19).

As has been previously stated, two of Bradley’s criteria tie directly into the characterization and presentation of the main characters. According to Bradley, Shakespeare focuses his tragedies on very few characters, often only one. It is only in the romantic tragedies, such as Romeo and Juliet that there are two main characters - a hero and a heroine. The rest have exclusively one protagonist. The hero must also die within the tale itself, and the tale must lead up to the death. A character who dies while leading a otherwise happy life would not be considered a Shakespearean tragedy. However, the calamities that precede death cannot be the only part of the tale told. Suffering must come in contrast to previous happiness and must be extraordinary in nature. Additionally, the
suffering cannot only affect the protagonist. The protagonist must therefore be a person of some standing, such as a king or a general. So far, this falls into a similar category of tragedy as a medieval narrative would suggest. However, Bradley claims that Shakespeare goes beyond this, by allowing the status of his character to truly affect his surroundings. The fate of nations and armies stand and fall with the story of their leaders (Bradley, 2-6). Michael Hattaway points out how Shakespeare is continually affected by the political climate surrounding him, and how his stories are often used to “degrade” powerful men and women; mocking the almost divine standards that the nobility placed upon themselves (Hattaway). The plot of *The Last Tycoon* follows this trend in Shakespeare’s work, as it begins with Stahr at the top of his career, only to follow his downfall within the Hollywood industry, leading to his eventual death. His ambition and need to have the things surround him be as spectacular as in the movies is part of what drives him to fail in his relationship with his love interest, Kathleen. None the less, in the beginning of the novel, Stahr is described very poetically by the narrator, a young woman named Cecilia Brady.

He spoke and waved back as the people streamed in by the darkness, looking, I suppose, a little like the Emperor and the Old Guard. There is no world so but it has its heroes, and Stahr was the hero. (Fitzgerald, 27)

Compare this quote describing Stahr, to this quote from the opening scene to *Julius Caesar*. Here one can see the clear connections between Stahr and Caesar, not least by the fact that Fitzgerald calls Stahr “Emperor” in the text. Both Stahr and Shakespeare are described to draw the attention and admiration of the common people surrounding them.
FLAVIUS. But wherefore art not in thy shop today?

Why dost thou lead these men about the streets?

COBBLER. Truly, sir, to wear out their shoes, to get myself

into more work. But, indeed, sir, we make holiday,

to see Caesar and to rejoice in his triumph.”

*Julius Caesar* 1.1 28-30 (Shakespeare)

This is a clear intertextual connection between *Julius Caesar* and *The Last Tycoon*, which is demonstrated by what Genette terms “allusion”. Both of these texts are designed to point out the effect the character in question – Stahr and Caesar respectively – has on the 'common' people. Julius Caesar is introduced as a hero to the common folk, just as Stahr is introduced as a hero and protector of his employees. As noted, *Julius Caesar* was the play funded by the same Communist party that Stahr interacts with later on in the novel. There are also other connections between Caesar and Stahr. Richard Halpern argues that Caesar is already dead at the beginning of the play. In Cassius' first scene, he recounts the tale of Caesar almost drowning, which starts the continuing narrative of Caesar “falling”. In the same scene it is revealed that Caesar might suffer from epileptic attacks, or “falling sickness.” (Halpern 82) Similarly, Stahr reflects that according to the doctors he will soon die from overwork (Fitzgerald 90). This creates a connection between them, as they are both “dead men walking”, and just like Caesar, Stahr does not ultimately die due to his illness.
“They were the money men – they were the rulers; [...] Then, more than now, he [Stahr] had been a money man among money men” (Fitzgerald 45) While Stahr falls out of grace – after all this is a tragedy – with his fellow directors, his influence over people is referenced again and. This, again, ties him back to Julius Caesar. While Caesar is doubted by those who claim to be his peers, he is adored by the people.

Another interesting parallel lies in their opposition. Here one can again see the intertextual allusions between The Last Tycoon and Julius Caesar. Stahr shows himself as a man willing to do things “for the art”, even to the point of losing money due to his more artistic endeavours (131), which puts him in direct opposition of Mr Brady, who is stated to be more of a “stereotypical” shrewd capitalist businessman. Compare this to the following quote from Caesar about Cassius:

He loves no plays,

As thou dost, Antony. He hears no music.

Seldom he smiles, and smiles in such a sort

As if he mocked himself and scorned his spirit.

Julius Caesar 1.2 292-298 (Shakespeare)

Caesar does not trust Cassius, because of Cassius lack of enjoyment of theater, and he is entirely right to do this; as Cassius is one of the first characters we hear to conspire to murder Caesar. Similarly Brady does not value cinema for cinema’s sake, making him the Cassius to Stahr’s Caesar, as Brady conspires both against Stahr’s workers and against Stahr himself.

Returning to Bradley’s aspects of Shakespearean tragedy, in his third aspect, Bradley discusses the protagonist of the tragedy. As already mentioned, this character
needs to be a person of high socio-political importance and influence, and his suffering must be extraordinary. In addition to this, Shakespeare often makes his protagonists in some fashion extraordinary in nature. Sometimes this is in a distinct sense, such as Hamlet and his genius, and other times it is simply that the character is built on a “grand scale” like, for example, Othello or Macbeth. Shakespeare's tragic protagonists are persons of such intense character and emotion that they pull their surroundings down with them when they fall. They are to be pitied and envied at the same time, and their fall is lamented by the audience, who has witnessed the fall of a great man due to his own inherent flaws. Othello’s intense passion became intense jealousy; Macbeth’s loyalty was outmatched by his ambition. Richard III’s cunning fell to his greed for power.

Shakespeare's tragic protagonist doesn’t have to be good, but he has to be great. (Bradley 13-16) “There is no world so but it has its heroes, and Stahr was the hero.” (Fitzgerald 27) Stahr is described many times by the narrative as a brilliant man, reaching the height of his success at an early age. He is described by other characters as “Our production genius” (46) and is considered to be very protective of his workers; although he is against unions. He has achieved this status despite his lack of formal education, lending to his outsiderness with his peers (61). This gives him further connections to Caesar, who similarly lacked what most people would consider necessary to succeed, except raw talent. Stahr’s flaw, in this case, would be his need for life to match the “grandeur” he expects, which stops him from wholeheartedly pursuing Kathleen (131). Stahr expects his life to parallel the movies, and he fears that Kathleen would not fit into the “scene” he creates around his own life. After all, she is no actress, but a humble girl from Britain. As such, he fears pursuing her, and eventually he looses her when she agrees to marry
another man. While they continue their affair on the side, his lack of willingness to commit to the “simpler life” is ultimately what begins the tragedy. It is the affair that Cecilia’s father, Mr Brady, intends to use to drive Stahr out of Hollywood. Here one begins to see the more architextual connections between *The Last Tycoon* and Shakespearean Tragedies as a genre. Rather than just allusions between certain passages between specific plays and *The Last Tycoon*, Bradley's second criterion allows us to follow Genette's theory of architextuality. More specifically, Fitzgerald follows the system set up by the previous works in the category. This becomes further apparent as one moves towards Bradley's second aspect.

Stahr’s ill-advised affair with Kathleen, and his interaction with the communist party from New York, brings us to the plot of the tragedy itself. Bradley’s second aspect touches upon the actions of the characters involved. The tragedy has to be caused by actions taken by the characters themselves, it cannot be from a purely accidental coincidence, nor can the tragedy be sent by a supernatural force to punish the main character, such as in the case of the biblical Job. Bradley instead offers three additional ‘criteria’ to the actions in Shakespearean tragedy, as paraphrased below:

1. While characters might display symptoms of abnormal mental health, these must never be the *cause* of their action. Madness can be the *result* of tragedy, never the cause of it (8).

2. Supernatural beings and events may occur, to confirm a character's suspicions like in *Hamlet*, or to voice a half-formed thought as in *Macbeth*, but their influence may never be compulsive. The supernatural influence may only bring to light
what is already present in the character, and may *never* be used to free a character from responsibility (8-9).

3. Unlike supernatural events, pure chance or ‘accidents’ may be responsible for certain events. Juliet not waking up a minute sooner to prevent Romeo’s suicide, Desdemona dropping her handkerchief, etc. All of these are events that take place out of pure chance. However, while this is a trope used by Shakespeare in several of his plays, he carefully avoids overusing it, as it would damage the sense of personal responsibility for the actions taken (9-10).

Again, Bradley emphasizes that while conflicts may arise between characters in order to create the tragedy, Shakespeare often allows similar conflicts to arise within the characters themselves. It is the combination of the outward conflict and the inner conflict that shapes the events of the tragedy (12). Keeping these three criteria in mind, one can now look at the cause of the key events in *The Last Tycoon* and draw the connection as to how the novel fits in an architextual relationship with Shakespearean tragedy as a genre.

This is where *The Last Tycoon* becomes hard to judge, since it is unfinished. However, in the outline left behind by Fitzgerald, which is included in essentially all of the editions of the novel that have been published, he describes the continued love-story between Stahr and the married Kathleen (in the notes named Thalia). He also outlines the struggle between Cecilia's father and Stahr as they fight for control of the company, ending with Mr Brady hiring men to deal with his rival\(^1\) (Fitzgerald 130, 140). Stahr becomes aware of this plot, and sends assassins in turn. However, even though Stahr changes his mind, he dies in a plane crash before he can call

\(^1\) The notes and outlines differ whether or not Brady intended to assassinate or merely publicly humiliate Stahr in order to drive him out of Hollywood. (Fitzgerald 130)
his men off, and Mr Brady dies. This forms the outward conflict of the novel. Brady vs Stahr, “modern” capitalism vs “old-fashioned” paternalistic capitalism. That is to say, while Brady does not seem to consider anything but the success and profit of the company, regardless of the fate of the workers, Stahr seems to expect a certain amount of loyalty towards him, as he looks to “take care” of his employees, and have a personal relationship with them.

The inward conflict of Stahr himself concerns his affair with Kathleen. As previously mentioned, he struggles with the fact that she does not fit into his grand vision of life, yet he still finds himself drawn to her, even after her marriage to another man. This, combined with his decision to contact the communist party in New York, ultimately gives Brady the tools he needs to push Stahr out of the business. Stahr laments, during one of his first meetings with Kathleen, that he no longer wishes to be the Hollywood producer, but that he wished to: “hunt for love like men who had no gifts to give, like young nameless men who looked along the streets in the dark.” (90). This scene, on a balcony in the dark with a character contemplating to throw away his name in order to be with his love, is reminiscent of *Romeo and Juliet*. Yet *The Last Tycoon* also holds allusion to another classic Shakespeare tragedy, namely *Othello*. As previously mentioned, Stahr is of Jewish descent which ties him to Othello, since they are both of a different religion than their prospective partner, and since his and Cecilia's courtship is never mentioned in the actual novel, we never find out about Mr Brady's reaction to it. Yet in the notes left behind, Fitzgerald suggests a turn of events where Brady arranges for Stahr and Kathleen to be caught in their affair, and for the scandal to be enough to force Stahr away from Hollywood permanently. While the details of Brady's plot are lost to us,
Fitzgerald seemingly intended to use Kathleen's husband, who was naturally furious to find out that Kathleen had been cheating on him, in order to enact his plans. This planning is reminiscent of Iago and Rodrigo's plans for Cassio in *Othello*. Iago intends for Rodrigo to start a fight with Cassio, thereby getting him on Othello’s bad side, and making it easier for Iago to implicate Cassio as cheating with Desdemona. (Shakespeare, Raffel and Bloom) In *The Last Tycoon* Stahr finds out about the Othello-esque plot against his person and retaliates with the suspicion that Brady murdered his ex-wife, further linking him to Iago who also killed his wife. These allusions to classic Shakespeare characters further support the theory that there is an intertextual relationship between Shakespeare and Fitzgerald.

The fourth aspect Bradley mentions concerns the world surrounding the characters. Despite our characters' decisiveness and influence on the world surrounding them, their end is ultimately tragic; the good never outweighs the bad. Why is this? Bradley emphasizes Shakespeare’s secular nature, the answer to the ‘why?’ is never found in any religious language. He also proposes two statements: one, that the force that leads our protagonists into tragedy is mysterious, and two, that it is accepted, and the play will not leave us rebellious or desperate.

According to Bradley, these statements lead to the following assumptions: The ultimate power in the world cannot be described as a ‘moral order’ nor can it be immediately identified as ‘just’ or benevolent. This would lead to its diminishing mysteriousness. Secondly, it follows that this power cannot be described as ‘fate’ since this would mean that the individual's action does not matter in the grand scheme, and
therefore leave the audience desperate and rebellious against this fatalistic viewpoint.

(Bradley 17-18)

PLAYER KING. Our wills and fates do so contrary run

That our devices still are overthrown.

Our thoughts are ours, their ends none of our own.

*Hamlet*, 3.2.2105-2108 (Shakespeare, Raffel and Bloom 2003)

In this quote from *Hamlet*, Bradley points to one of the impressions that are clear in several of Shakespeare’s plays: The world of tragedy is one of action. This action translates the doer’s thought into reality; however instead of its intended goal, the action results in the terrible opposite. This, regardless of the doer’s motive, be they selfish or benevolent. As the previous *Hamlet* quotation suggests: “Our thoughts are ours, their ends none of our own.” The action is taken out of the character’s own free will, yet the mysterious nature of the world around twists that action to result in the opposite of his intent - thereby causing his downfall. Here, again, Bradley points to the element of chance present in Shakespeare's tragedies. Desdemona and her handkerchief, Juliet waking up a moment too late, but also the bigger coincidences: How did Othello end up befriending the only man able to manipulate him so fully against the woman he loves? How did Lear end up with such daughters? This, combined with the character’s own virtues and flaws that tend to cause his doom, should contribute to a feeling of fatality; because how could a person succeed with the board so thoroughly stacked against him? Yet Shakespeare’s tragedies never show those expected and obvious signs of fatalism. The powers that be are not aimed to destroy a person, or a family, regardless of their actions or feelings. Again, the focus is on the character bringing this ‘judgment’ upon
himself. While the board is stacked against him, and to the audience, the consequences seem clear that, it is the character's own will and his own actions that drive the story forward. (Bradley, 14-22) Fitzgerald himself comments upon this point in capital letters at the end of his notes: ACTION IS CHARACTER (Fitzgerald 163). This proves yet again how *The Last Tycoon* can be placed as a Shakespearean Tragedy, if viewed through an architextual relationship. In *The Last Tycoon*, there is no otherworldly influence that causes the characters to act the way they do. Everyone, from Stahr to Mr Brady are aware of what they are doing, and do so out of their own free will. While the plane crash that prevents Stahr from saving Mr Brady, is not due to any character action, it is Stahr’s own decision to send an assassin in the first place, and his own decision to pursue Kathleen despite her being married to another man.

There are in essence two “fated” events that shape the story. The first one is the earthquake in the beginning of the book, which causes Stahr to meet Kahleen. The other is the plane-crash that kills Stahr, planned for the end of the book. These two events are the only two that are not influenced by the characters in any way, which makes them “fated” rather than influenced by characters free will; such as the decision to hire assassins. This again shows the architextual connection that makes *The Last Tycoon* a Shakespearean tragedy. There are “fated” moments that set events into motion, but the tragedy of these events, comes from the character's own actions.
**Conclusion**

As the book is not finished, the question remains as to how much Fitzgerald eventually intended to change. However, as it stands, it does fit the set genre standards of a Shakespearean tragedy. Genette’s architextual approach allows the conclusion that since *The Last Tycoon* fits into the criteria for the sub-genre of Shakespearean Tragedy, it also stands to reason that the more obvious allusions to Shakespearean works, are Fitzgerald taking the pieces of the system, such as the conflict, and making them his own. The conflict of *The Last Tycoon* is primarily between Stahr and his own emotions about Kathleen; but also on a larger ideological scale between the pure businessman in Brady and the more liberal Stahr. This, due to rising conflicts in the country with a rising communist presence, causes Stahr to end up alienated from his surroundings. The conflict between Brady and Stahr escalates until Stahr crosses his moral event horizon which means he hires an assassin. However, he changes his mind, but before he can make the call, he dies in a plane crash and the murder takes place anyway.

While in the end, the death-toll in *The Last Tycoon* is admittedly lower than most Shakespearean tragedies – three in total during the events of the story – none of the characters enjoys a “happy” ending. Cecilia loses her father, Kathleen her lover – as well as the chance to fulfil her dream of visiting a movie studio, the reason she ended up meeting Stahr in the first place – and Stahr and Mr Brady are both dead.

While one could conceivably make the argument that Fitzgerald simply wanted to tell a *tragic* story, rather than a specifically *Shakespearean* tragedy, one cannot deny the
influences of Shakespeare in the text itself. Using Genette’s theory of architextuality, that
the genre of the story influences the text in a way one can see even in its unfinished state.
The novel upholds the tenets set by Bradley, as well as supporting Hattaway’s
observation about the political influences in Shakespeare's plays. As proven in the
analysis part The Last Tycoon not only refers to Shakespearean tragedies in the
previously established architextual manner, but also through more direct allusions to
characters and plot. Monroe Stahr would not feel out of place in a modernised version of
one of Shakespeare’s plays. He carries shades of Julius Caesar, and his story seems to use
heavy allusions towards the play as well as the character, but also towards Romeo and
Juliet and Othello. And Stahris not the only one; in particular Mr Brady seems to reflect
Cassius and Iago, the cunning businessmen that turn on their leaders, and his daughter,
Cecilia, who is our narrator for some of the chapters, who becomes the Brutus to Stahr’s
Caesar as the one who loves him, but ultimately betrays him. In The Last Tycoon,
Fitzgerald uses the familiar shades of these characters in order to play upon our
expectations and create a greater sense of grandeur around what became his last work.
This all seems very intentional. Fitzgerald chooses to let Stahr contact the communist
party in New York, the very same division that would fund Welles' version of Julius
Caesar only three years later in book time - two years before Fitzgerald wrote the book.
Between this and the obvious Hamlet shoutout in Prince Agge, Fitzgerald openly invites
for the comparison with the Stratfordian bard.

Fitzgerald takes the timelessness of the classic Shakespeare tragedies and makes
them his own, allowing them to be shaped by the world around him in 1940. Where
Shakespeare is hailed as a fascist and as a speaker against tyranny all at once, Stahr
himself is torn between east and west within the pages of the novel. This very adaptation that Fitzgerald does, is supported by Genette, whose entire approach to the study of intertexuality was the adaptation and rearranging of the established aspects of the genre. It is with these more obvious allusions within the text, as well as the architextual connection shown through Bradleys criteria that one can then refer to The Last Tycoon as a truly Shakespearean tragedy.
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