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"The End Was Always the Same":

Adaptation, Dystopia, and Subverted Expectations in Nick O'Donohoe's *Too Too Solid Flesh*

The opening line of Nick O'Donohoe's *Too Too Solid Flesh* reads: "The end was always the same" (O'Donohoe 1). This is an apt opening for a novelistic adaptation of a well-known dramatic text. In this novel, O'Donohoe draws of one of William Shakespeare's most famous plays: *Hamlet*[1]. However, the novel deals with this source text in highly innovative ways. One way that it does this is by moving into the dystopian genre. It is significant that the characters in the novel are androids: adaptation theorists frequently invoke mechanical metaphors in their discussions of adaptation, and dystopias often express a fear of technology. In this analysis, I suggest that in *Too Too Solid Flesh*, Nick O'Donohoe uses androids to invoke these common metaphors and tropes. However, he treats them ironically by subverting our expectations of both the *Hamlet* text and of the dystopian genre. In this way, he creates an inventive, dynamic text, demonstrating that adaptation can move far beyond mere "mechanical reproduction" and that even "pop culture" adaptations are worthy of critical attention.

The idea of mechanical reproduction as a metaphor for adaptation is one that is frequently invoked and criticized by theorists attempting to develop and analyze theories for adaptation

[1] The novel depicts a company of robots who perform *Hamlet* every night. When the creator/ "father" of the androids dies mysteriously, the offstage "lives" of the androids begins to loosely parallel the structure of the play. In investigating this death, the android Hamlet, along with the human Horatio, begin to question the nature of humanity and freedom.

studies. Because many see adaptation as simply re-creating a source text, without applying any creativity or ingenuity, images of machinery and robotics seem appropriate for discussing adaptation. These metaphors call to mind images of mass-production, with machines churning out scores of commodities, each an exact replica of the one that came before it. These types of images are common in scholarship describing our modern, technological era. As Robert Stam states, "[i]n modernity, everything is able to be reproduced" (Stam 7). In other words, the technological age is one in which art is just another cog in the production machine; one in which we can stream The Royal Shakespeare Company on our laptops and get Monets printed on our shower curtains. Nothing is original; it is an age of "uniformity, conservatism, submission and control" (Causey 60). In this conception of the world, adaptation is just another example of the art of mass-production.

This idea is clearly referenced in *Too Too Solid Flesh*. The androids in the text perform *Hamlet* to the letter; their lines are literally programmed into them, leaving no room for improvisation or creativity. This is "mechanical reproduction" in its truest sense. As one character tells one of the android actors, "'You're another chemical imitation of art'" (O'Donohoe 173). In this way, the androids' performances of Shakespeare are the type of adaptation that theorists have in mind when discussing adaptation as mechanical reproduction.

Because most adaptations are clearly not as mechanical as the play performed by the androids in *Too Too Solid Flesh*, one might wonder why such metaphors persist in adaptation studies. Thomas Leitch states that one reason that "mechanical reproduction" analogies persist is because it's easier than discussing what really constitutes originality (Leitch 16). In other words, instead of dealing with thorny questions of if and how adaptation can be original and creative,

critics often take the easy way out by labeling them as mere reproductions. It is this type of thinking that O'Donohoe's text challenges.

Authors aren't the only ones attempting to subvert the mechanical reproduction metaphors. In the realm of adaptation studies, there has also been push-back against these types of analogies. Linda Hutcheon asserts that adaptation is, in fact, *repetition*, but that doesn't necessarily mean that it is *replication* (Hutcheon 7). Julie Sanders makes a similar point, describing adaptation as "complication and expansion" of the source (Sanders 12). Both of these assertions suggest that adaptation has things to offer in terms of originality and creativity.

Other "robotic" uses of Shakespeare have demonstrated the possibility of using adaptation creatively. For example, the Robot Shakespeare Company created an adaptation of *Macbeth* using robots. This film is aimed at appealing to children, making the text more accessible to them ("Robot Shakespeare Company"). By adapting the text to a new audience, this film demonstrates how adaptation can be used creatively. Similarly, MIT student Nathan Matias developed a robot that "writes" Shakespeare; the program suggests words that Shakespeare may have employed, and the user can then choose from the list to create a poem that mimics Shakespeare's style and voice ("Wherefore art Thou"). This may seem to be "mechanical" production in the extreme, but the user still has the last word in creating the final product; the program may do a lot of the work, but still requires a user's creativity. These robotic engagements with Shakespeare raise serious questions about what exactly constitutes originality and how adaptation can be a creative force.

Too Too Solid Flesh clearly falls into the category of adaptations that go beyond replication. Though O'Donohoe invokes metaphors of mechanical reproduction through his use

of androids, he goes beyond simple reproduction, creating a unique take on Shakespeare's text. In this way, the novel offers a critique of the assumption that adaptations lack originality.

One example of how the novel adapts *Hamlet* freely is O'Donohoe's treatment of the iconic "skull" scene. This is one of the most familiar scenes in *Hamlet*. As Ivan Callus states, "The episode with the skull…is almost familiar enough to be a dead metaphor, a cliché" (Callus 217). In fact, this scene may have even been cliché in Shakespeare's time; the image of the skull was prevalent in "memento mori" paintings and plays. Therefore, even Shakespeare's audience might have seen this reference as unoriginal (Callus 217).

In Shakespeare's play, when Hamlet picks up Yorick's skull, he says: "Alas, poor Yorick! I knew him, Horatio; a fellow of infinite jest, of most excellent fancy; he hath borne me on his back a thousand times; and now, how abhorred in my imagination it is! My gorge rises at it." (Hamlet 5.1.3515-3518). In this scene, Hamlet has a strong, negative reaction to the skull. He seems disgusted by it, lamenting the effects of death and musing on the issue of mortality. Horatio is mostly a passive listener; his comments are infrequent and brief.

In *Too Too Solid Flesh*, the scene that comes closest to corresponding to the graveyard scene in *Hamlet* is the scene in which Hamlet and Horatio go to the laboratory and watch as the Barnardo android is dissolved in a vat of chemicals. There are numerous differences between the two scenes. First of all, it is Barnardo and not Yorick whose death is at issue. Because Yorick is not an actual character in the play, there is no Yorick android in the theater company. For this reason, O'Donohoe uses a different character as the corpse.

In addition, instead of just coming across a pile of fleshless bones, as they do in *Hamlet*, the characters in the novel actually watch as Barnardo's flesh dissolves away. The characters also react differently in the novel than in the play. In the novel, it is Horatio, not Hamlet, who is

disturbed by what is happening in the scene: "Horatio gasped as the head sagged, melting, and the first metal tendon showed in the jaw musculature" (O'Donahoe 277). It is possible that because Horatio is human, dissolving flesh is more disturbing for him than it would be for an android; however, the text suggests that Horatio's horror comes from being faced with a situation in which he cannot deny that his beloved Hamlet is not truly human: "Horatio couldn't imagine that same lifeless machinery below Hamlet's skin" (O'Donohoe 278). By this point in the novel, Horatio has begun to see Hamlet as human (in his thoughts and behavior, if not in his flesh). Being faced with the reality of Hamlet's mechanical nature shatters this illusion, causing a strong negative reaction; a reaction that is a far cry from the passivity that we see in Shakespeare's Horatio.

Hamlet, on the other hand, remains composed throughout the scene. He watches Barnardo's flesh melt away without recoiling. When he sees Horatio's reaction, he explains to the scientist that "'Horatio is fairly new. Our death disturbs him'" (O'Donahoe 277). He says this to cover up the fact that Horatio is human, and thus has human reactions and emotions. This suggests that Hamlet's cool passivity in this scene is the result of his lack of humanity. The fact that he is an android while Shakespeare's Hamlet is the pinnacle of humanity causes their very different reactions in these parallel scenes. Examining these differences highlights how O'Donohoe's text is a free, "unfaithful" adaptation of the source text. By making significant alterations to the content of Hamlet, *Too Too Solid Flesh* creatively and ironically subverts readers' expectations for the story.

Another way in which O'Donohoe subverts readers' expectations is by freely adapting common dystopian themes. This novel is clearly marketed as a dystopia; the description on the back cover describes Hamlet "descend[ing] into the depths of the Orwellian society he has been

programmed to serve" (*Too Too Solid Flesh*, back cover). Therefore, readers would come to the text expecting to engage with specific themes in predictable ways based on their previous experiences with the genre. By freely adapting the dystopian genre, O'Donohoe subverts these expectations.

Genre adaptation is as aspect of adaptation that is often overlooked. Scholars tend to focus on how writers adapt the content of a text, subordinating the impact that genre has on how a text is adapted (Cardwell 71). This is particularly important when the adaptation crosses into a new genre. Linda Hutcheon mentions genre when she discusses the complexity of adapting a text: "In the act of adapting, choices are made based on many factors…including genre or medium conventions" (Hutcheon 108). In other words, genre is part of the vast web of intertextuality that surrounds every text (whether it is an obvious adaptation or not[2]).

For example, when the Robot Shakespeare Company made their adaptation of Macbeth, aimed at introducing children to Shakespeare, they used the appearances of the robots as "visual shorthand." They drew on science fiction conventions when designing the appearances of the robots so that children could easily distinguish the "good guys" from the "bad guys" ("Robot Shakespeare Company"). The filmmakers took the conventions of science fiction (the genre of the adaptation) and applied them to Shakespeare in order to make the play legible to a young audience. This is just one example of how application of genre conventions is an important aspect of adaptation.

In addition, as Robert Stam points out, trying to negotiate the conventions of genre when adapting from one genre to the other is a challenge (Stam 25). Adapters have many things to

[2] The fact that every text is intertextual, drawing on other texts and conventions of genre and medium, is often used as a justification for abandoning the hotly contested "fidelity criticism" aspect of adaptation studies.

take into consideration when adapting a text for a new genre. For this reason, examining genre considerations is an important and fruitful area of consideration in adaptation studies.

For example, one interesting factor to consider when examining genre adaptation is why an adapter would choose a certain genre for his or her adaptation. This is a particularly intriguing question for *Too Too Solid Flesh*; why would O'Donohoe take a classical, Renaissance Shakespearean play and place it within a dystopian/science fiction genre? These two genres seem vastly different. However, adapting Shakespeare into dystopia actually makes sense. Ramona Wray states that Shakespeare "is a peculiarly apt repository of meaning to invoke at a time of perceived change, crisis and temporal rupture" (Wray 30). Is this because in times of crisis, people seek the comfort of the familiar? Or, do they enjoy subverting the established institutions and cultural icons that they perceive as controlling their lives? In any case, adapting the dystopian genre is also a highly meaningful move for O'Donohoe: because dystopia often turns on fear of technology, and fear of losing our individuality and humanity, using androids is a way of evoking those expectations, allowing O'Donohoe to expertly subvert them.

Before examining how O'Donohoe adapts and subverts these themes, it is first necessary to explore how these themes are applied in other dystopian texts. First, let us look at the fear of technology that is often present in dystopia. Dystopia frequently engages with the fear of the technological age (Stephens 79). In dystopian texts, technology is often the source of the problems that the characters face, becoming a locus of control and fear. Dystopia frequently depicts "oppositions between limited disorder, individuality and freedom on the one hand, and order, automatism and subjection on the other" (Seed 225). In other words, the mechanization associated with technology is a threat to the freedom and individuality often seen as essential to

humanity. For this reason, images of technology are paired with descriptions of humans being stripped of their individuality and humanity.

Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* is a canonical dystopian text that plays heavily on this theme. In his text, Huxley creates "automated" humans (Grushow 43), grown and programmed on assembly lines rather than being born naturally. This novel is also interesting to consider because it frequently references Shakespeare. The character John, who grows up as a "savage" outside of the "civilized" society, reads Shakespeare often. His personality is largely emblematic of the type of humanity depicted by Shakespeare. By comparing the other characters to Shakespeare, Huxley can show how incomplete each character is (Meckier 134), emphasizing their lack of individuality and humanity.

Another well-known dystopia, *1984* by George Orwell, also addresses these issues. Technology is prevalent in the novel, particularly in the form of "telescreens" through which every citizen is constantly monitored. They must behave in a perfectly orthodox manner, or be tortured and executed. This creates a society of automatons. The novel shows how technology is a danger to individuality and freedom because the main character's despair is correlated with his lack of humanity (Bernstein 26). All of his human feeling is degraded by the industrialization of his society (Stephens 82).

In Yevgeny Zamyatin's *We*, we see the ultimate mechanization of the human being. In this world, the decisive solution to individuality is the complete programming of humans (Dunn 49). Humans in the novel are numbered rather than named. Every minute of their lives is controlled by a master schedule. Most significantly, scientists in the novel develop an operation to surgically excise citizens' imaginations, completely erasing every shred of their humanity. In this way, a new technology permanently does away with individuality.

These themes exist in lesser-known dystopias as well. In Kurt Vonnegut's *Player Piano*, society has been completely mechanized. Almost every job is done by machines, leaving citizens without true purpose to their lives. Because society is so controlled by machines, it leads to novel's most revolutionary character to vehemently assert that our purpose is to be human beings, not appendages to a machine (Dunn 51).

In Octavia Butler's Xenogenesis trilogy, earth has been largely destroyed by nuclear war. Humans are practically extinct, and the planet is no longer habitable. A race of aliens, called the Oankali, who survive by combining with other species, rescues some of the few remaining humans by bringing them onto their ship. They plan to eventually merge the two species and repair the earth as a habitat for the new beings. In this series, the shiny machines typically associated with technology are absent. Oankali scientists do not work in sterile labs, but with and among organic material (Belk 374). In fact, technology is often depicted in a negative light. For example, the Oankali perceive plastic as poison (Belk 375). Yet, the loss-of-humanity theme is as prevalent as in other dystopias. In spite of the fact that combining with the Oanklai is humankind's best hope for survival, the humans are so desperate to maintain their humanity that they reject this logic (Belk 378). The Oanklai ignore individual identity when making decisions, and the humans object to this (Belk 382). In this way, the organic "technology" of the Oankali is just as threatening to humanity and individuality as the mechanical technologies of other dystopias.

Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* is another dystopia in which the world has been largely destroyed (possibly by nuclear war) leaving technology conspicuously absent. Yet, the loss-of-humanity theme is the novel's central problem; in this world, the remaining humans exist in constant anxiety over the inability of the earth and humankind to regenerate (Kearney 161). In

this way, "*The Road* emerges from an age characterized more by limits than exponential growth, more by a fear of the finite than a belief in heavenly transcendence" (Kearney 163). In this world, humans are limited, and thus robotic. This is a hopeless state of affairs in a world on the brink of extinction.

The other common dystopian theme that *Too Too Solid Flesh* invokes involves entertainment; dystopian texts frequently depict entertainment as passive and mindless, ultimately contributing to the downfall of humanity by making people into mindless drones. O'Donohoe references this trope by creating a theater company made up exclusively of androids that perform the same play in exactly the same way each and every night. One would expect both the actors and the audiences of these performances to be experiencing them mindlessly due to the lack of variation, similar to how dystopian characters passively consume entertainment. However, as I will later demonstrate, this is not actually the case.

As with the loss-of-humanity theme, Huxley's *Brave New World* provides some of the best examples of the entertainment theme. Mindless entertainment, such as feelies (movies with tactile and olfactory sensations) and Electro-Golf (golf in which everyone gets a hole-in-one on every shot) is a major factor in the characters' lives. Huxley clearly found entertainment technologies such as film to be dangerous. In *Brave New World Revisited*, he writes that "In the field of mass communications…technological progress has hurt the Little Man and helped the Big Man" (Huxley 43). He states that in *Brave New World*, entertainment serves to distract people from larger issues (Huxley 45) and that this "propaganda" relies on repetition to imprint ideas on people's minds (Huxley 55). He sees entertainment as providing pleasures that dim the mind and uphold conformity (Varricchio 98). Clearly, Huxley is disgusted by this vision of the future (Grushow 42).

Entertainment in Orwell's *1984* is similarly a technology of control. In addition to allowing the government to spy on citizens, the telescreens also provide a constant stream of propagandistic content. It is impossible to turn off or mute the programs; therefore, it is impossible for anyone to direct their attention away from screens (Varricchio 105). In addition, citizens are frequently required to view propaganda films, which they consume mindlessly. Winston, the primary character, is depicted daydreaming at these films while keeping his face as a mask of perfect attention and conformity. In this way, each form of "entertainment" in the novel makes the citizens completely passive consumers (Varricchio 106).

In Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451*, entertainment is one of the government's primary concerns. They go to great lengths to ensure that citizens are consuming proper types of entertainment, such as television, and not dangerous forms of entertainment, such as books. As in the other novels, they do this as a form of control and distraction; people spend all of their time watching TV, absorbing themselves in an alternate, irrelevant universe (Seed 228). By spending all day sitting in a room where all four walls are massive TV screens, they forget about the reality of their world. The novel also parodies the concept of an active audience; viewers can pay for the privilege of speaking some of the lines in the shows (Seed 230). However, no one else hears them speaking, and the lines are often meaningless in terms of the plot. The main character, Montag, has a wife who is completely brainwashed by the mindless entertainment to which she is exposed. Because of this, Montag views his wife as if she is no longer human (Seed 231). Therefore, as in the other novels I have discussed, mindless entertainment and lack of humanity and individuality are linked; through technology, such as the technology of entertainment, humanity is doomed to becoming a race of automatons.

In *Too Too Solid Flesh*, the android characters lack humanity by their very nature. It would seem logical to assume that true, creative performance would be impossible with nonhuman actors. As Matthew Causey asks, "Is it not true that the actor's presence is the constitutive moment of theater?" (Causey 106). A real human presence is, after all, the feature that distinguishes theater from other forms of entertainment. Yet, the ultimate goal of any kind of performance or art, no matter what the medium, is communication. Writers, actors, singers, and painters all aim to communicate an idea or feeling to their audiences. Therefore, if the ultimate goal of cybernetics is to maximize capacity for communication (Lehmann 53), isn't it possible that androids, too, can be effective performers and artists?

Some would argue that androids could and should fall into the category of "human" because the difference between organic, human bodies and mechanical, android bodies is not as vast or distinct as one might think. The human body is often viewed in terms of processes, its mechanisms examined as one might examine the components of a machine. In this way, there is not as much difference between human and machine as once perceived (Kelly 133). As Jantica Kelly discusses, the "body has been refigured in response to the machine age" (Kelly 136). This seems to be the very fear that dystopian express through the use of technology in their novels. Yet, as Kelly points out, there is still one difference between the human body and the android body: the body can change, but a machine is static (Kelly 140).

However, this is not the case for O'Donohoe's androids; as I will later demonstrate, some of the androids exhibit an ability to develop humanity. This, then, seems to be the opposite of how technology and humanity are typically negotiated in the dystopian genre. Instead of humans becoming automatons, androids become human. By subverting the theme in this way, the text raises questions about what truly constitutes humanity.

Although O'Donohoe's text is highly innovative, these are not new questions. In fact, Shakespeare's own texts raise the question of what it means to be human (Turner 198). This is one of the great questions of his time, which he explored through characters such as Hamlet. Humans aren't always characterized in terms of psychology and emotion; life can also be "understood in terms of generality and pattern, of logical rules and mathematical abstraction" (Turner 200). This is an example of the body being understood in terms of its mechanisms. Looking at the body this way, it seems that artificial systems can be just as alive as natural ones (Turner 206). Therefore, what Kelly characterized as a concept of the body that developed in response to the technological age isn't actually anything new; does this mean that the mechanization is not something that we should fear, as dystopian writers would have us believe? By playing on the dystopian technology theme, O'Donohoe seems to be suggesting that technology should not be a catalyst for fear; by endowing his Hamlet android with characteristics typically associated with humanity, he seems to suggest that technology is not the dehumanizing force that others suggest it is.

One moment in which O'Donohoe's Hamlet exhibits humanity is after Horatio goes to see a simula ballet performance: "That night Horatio performed with a recklessness that Hamlet, amused by it, matched and exceeded" (O'Donahoe 212). This simple description imbues the Hamlet android with humanity. First of all, he has the ability to be amused by Horatio's behavior. In addition, he is able to adapt his performance to encompass an intense level of emotion. These are behaviors that one would not think an android would be capable of.

Another scene, near the end of the novel, symbolically suggests Hamlet's humanity. When the novel is nearing its climax, Hamlet and Horatio get caught in a flood in the poor section of town. This flood calls to mind common symbolism relating to baptism. Baptism is

often coded as a return to the natural Great Mother (Dunn 52). This could suggest that Hamlet will emerge from this scene as a true, "natural" human.

As Horatio watches Hamlet during the flood, he notes that "Hamlet seemed calmer as the storm became worse; improvising in a crisis had always been his genius" (O'Donohoe 294). Improvising is not something that an android should be able to do; yet, this is one of Hamlet's strengths. In addition, Hamlet displays compassion for the lowest of humans in this scene; he descends to the truly dystopian part of the world and attempts to pull the downtrodden people out of the flood. This scene is significant because it is the one moment when the characters enter the area that appears typically dystopian. Thus, this scene truly demonstrates the novel's ironic subversion; the most compassionate character in the dystopia, a place that should be characterized by fear of technology, is an android.

Hamlet's human characteristics suggest that we are not in danger of losing our humanity to technology. However, this does not mean that we should abandon our concerns about losing our humanity altogether. In the novel, Horatio tells Hamlet that Hamlet is "a prisoner of [his] own personality." When Hamlet asks Horatio whether he is any more free as a human, Horatio responds by saying "'Sometimes I think I am'" (O'Donahoe 117). This suggests that Horatio, a human, might lack the freedom that is associated with true humanity. In this way, by subverting the technology theme, exonerating it from being the cause of such problems, the novel encourages us to search for other culprits.

If Hamlet, and android actor, is not as lifeless and mechanical as he seems at first, does this mean that the audiences' engagement with entertainment in the novel is not as mindless and passive as it appears? In the world of the novel, most people are not interested in either human or android productions. Horatio says that "'there hasn't been a live play performance since the

simula boom took hold…simulas killed living acting the way talking film killed silent film'" (O'Donahoe 11). Is this because audiences are becoming uninterested in passive entertainment?

Late in the novel, the android actors discover that the people who come to their performances each night are mostly simulated humans and techs who run the theater. They discover that the androids are being used as an experiment to "test mass response to acute interpersonal suffering. Where the sythetics' direct responses will show their range of emotions, their indirect behavior (including theater production values) should show their understanding of and empathy for pain, misery, despair, and death" (O'Donahoe 318). Therefore, the techs attend the performances to engage with them in an active, intellectual, and emotional way through their study of android reactions and development.

The other, more popular form of entertainment in the world of the novel is the simulas. Hamlet describes them as "'computer models of long-dead actors.'" To create a simula, an actor's entire body of work, along with biographical information, is loaded into the system. These components can then be used to create a new performance. Anyone can use these simulas to create a show. In the novel, Horatio attends one of these performances. Members of the audience choose the setting, costumes, and props that will be used. The person who is primarily responsible for constructing the performance is even able to insert one of the audience members into the performance: "the girl clinging to the statue had Mary's face" (O'Donahoe 207). In other words, the audience is able to take a traditional ballet and change it. As Horatio describes, "From a sense of history, or from sheer perversity, Eric had tampered wildly with the ballet" (O'Donahoe 207). Although mechanical components are used, the audience is still able to engage actively with this form of entertainment.

Although this performance lacks human actors, Horatio is in awe: "Horatio realized that for the first time in many years, he was in the presence of human artistry" (O'Donahoe 206). Even though it is a simula performance, he still feels emotionally engaged with the performer. This further counters the typical dystopian view of entertainment. Although entertainment in the novel is just as (if not more) technological and mechanical than in other dystopian texts, audiences engage with their entertainment in emotional and intellectual ways that typical dystopian characters do not.

This subversion suggests that it is not entertainment that is the problem; as with his treatment of the technology theme, O'Donohoe encourages us to look to other causes for the issues dystopias commonly illustrate. By depicting audiences engaging actively with entertainment that is unique and creative, the novel suggests that it is the *type* of entertainment that we consume that is the key factor. This reflects on the idea of adaptation. "Faithful" adaptations that deviate little from their sources aren't as unique or creative as freer adaptations. Therefore performances like the simulas or works such as *Too Too Solid Flesh,* are the ones that audiences really want.

This is reflected in the audiences' responses to performances in the novel. Simulas, which are interactive, have put live theater out of business. In addition, after the simula ballet, Horatio notes that "Hamlet's audience had never produced so much applause" (O'Donahoe 202). Because the audience has engaged with the performance, they are more moved by it. As Horatio states, "Even in this technology, magic had not lost its power over the human mind" (O'Donahoe 205). This suggests that technology can actually be a catalyst for creativity and engagement.

A real-life Shakespearean performance has demonstrated this on a smaller scale. A theater group at Texas A&M put on a performance of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* using robots

to supplement the performance. Observers studying this performance discovered two noteworthy conclusions: that the robots afforded greater opportunities for improvisation among actors, and that it was possible to create affect through the behaviors of the robots (Murphy 143). For example, it was necessary for the directors to create a prologue that introduced the robots to the audience (Murphy 147). This is an example of engaging creatively with the source text.

In addition, when robots crashed, the actors had to improvise, finding creative ways to re-launch the fallen robots (Murphy 147). It is also noteworthy that when a robot crashed into the audience, audience members did not look to the operators to find out what to do with them (Murphy 150); this suggests that through the performance, the audiences began to see the robots as agents. Audiences also noted that the robots enhanced the magical world created by Shakespeare (Murphy 147). This suggests that we do not need to fear technology and entertainment, as dystopia suggests. Even with modern technology and mass entertainment, individuality, creativity, and humanity can still persevere.

In *Too Too Solid Flesh*, we see Nick O'Donahoe invoking metaphors of adaptation as mechanical reproduction as well as common dystopian tropes about a fear of technology. He subverts our expectations in both cases, altering the Shakespearean text as well as the common applications of these dystopian themes. In this way, he shows us how adaptation can truly be a creative, dynamic process. This idea is reflected in the novel through the performances and the reactions of the audiences. Because performers and audiences are more interested and engaged in more original, inventive entertainment, the novel suggests not only that adaptations are creative endeavors, but also that audiences can be excited by and actively engaged with such texts. Therefore, works like *Too Too Solid Flesh*, though often dismissed as reproductions or low/pop culture, can actually be interesting, innovative works that are worthy of our attention.

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