

performance context, as well as to use familiar cinematic techniques to make medieval drama more accessible to contemporary viewers. *Magnyfycence: Staging Medieval Drama* is a 23-minute-long film that is now available to stream for free online.⁵ In this piece I will share some of the thought-processes and decisions that took place during its making, with a focus on the special considerations that came with working in film.

Magnyfycence: Staging Medieval Drama is not meant to replace watching Dutton's production performed live, and by virtue of its medium (film) and genre (documentary) is inevitably a different kind of project from the Hampton Court staging. Instead, we came to see it as something closer to a translation. In her chapter 'Translating Media', N. Katherine Hayles refers to Efraín Kristal's work on Borges as she describes how translations of all kinds can create (and shut down) ways of reading a text:

Borges delighted in thinking of all writing as drafts in process, imperfect instantiations never fully one with the significations toward which they gesture. In this view, texts are provocations to go in search of meaning (echoing McGann); when they become instantiated in a certain set of words (and we may add, a given medium and performance in that medium), they necessarily miss some possibilities even as they realize others.⁶

For Hayles, who argues that there 'is no Platonic reality of texts', but 'only physical objects such as books and computers, foci of attention, and codes that entrain attention and organise material operations', remediation inevitably gives rise to a kind of translation.⁷ While Hayles focuses specifically on digital and print texts, I share her perspective that even seemingly minor changes in medium (print on a page *vs* print on a screen; performance on a stage *vs* performance in a film) can radically alter understandings of a text. Even in the best representations, for instance, film can never capture the experience of live drama in a particular physical space and time. But while much can be lost in the translation from stage to film, film also holds its own set of narrative possibilities that can bring a text to life in unique ways. Recognising this, we made deliberate choices about our creative and scholarly representations of *Magnyfycence* on film. We wanted to make an informative documentary to address the challenges and pleasures of staging medieval drama today, while exploring the exceptional circumstances surrounding Dutton's production of *Magnyfycence* in Hampton Court's Great Hall. But we also wanted to allow for first-hand experiences of *Magnyfycence* while watching the film, to

supplement the more indirect experience of watching a recording of a live show. As a result, the film brings together traditional documentary methods with cinematic techniques from other genres: most notably, the voyeuristic looking of narrative film and the questionable 'realism' of reality television and mockumentary. Together, these ways of representing *Magnyfycence* give rise to a new afterlife for Skelton's sixteenth-century play: a translation, of sorts, for the present day.

In our decision to combine these approaches, we took into account the fact (often unspoken but well-acknowledged amongst filmmakers) that in spite of its implicit claim to 'document' reality, documentary films still rely upon the mediating vision of directors and their creative teams. As Jay Ruby suggests, 'all films, whether they are labelled fiction, documentary, or art — are created, structured articulations of the filmmaker and not authentic, truthful, objective records'.⁸ Necessary decisions about what information to include and what to leave out, which images to show and for how long, from what angle, with what audio, next to which other clips, etc., make the documentary filmmaking process akin to collaging: choosing and cutting scraps of information to arrange into a coherent whole. Documentary filmmaking must always grapple with its own status as presumed truth-teller, even as it actively constructs the reality that it depicts. In recognition of this contradiction, many documentary filmmakers now eschew the disembodied, unnamed 'voice of God' approach to narrating voice-overs, since it suggests objectivity and access to absolute truth. Alternatives include the filmmaker introducing herself, thereby admitting that the documentary reflects a subjective vision of reality, and choosing an identifiable person from the film to serve as the narrator. Given the many voices (current and historical, real and fictional) in our story, we took another route for *Magnyfycence: Staging Medieval Drama*. Rather than selecting a single narrator, we arranged these voices so that they all contribute to bringing the viewer through the film. In doing so, we hoped to prevent any one voice from dominating or claiming privileged access to Skelton's text, and to draw attention to the fact that this film, while as accurate as we could make it, is only one of many possible depictions of actual events.

This combination of narrators also reflects the film's intentional combination of cinematic styles. To supply contextual information, the film makes use of many of the conventions of the documentary genre. These include interviews with the actors, director, and other experts; cutaway footage from relevant locations; and scenes from the performances