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Introduction
Shakespeare, Spectatorship and the Technologies of Performance

To mark the quatercentenary of Shakespeare's death in 2016, the summer season at Shakespeare's Globe was billed as the 'Wonder Season'. Emma Rice, the theatre's first female artistic director, promised to kick-start a 'new era' of gender parity and performer and audience diversity – and of artificial lighting, amplified sound and livestreaming of productions that would reach new audiences free of charge.[1] By the autumn, however, Lyn Gardner's hopeful prediction of 'the start of a great love affair' under Rice's leadership was headed towards a bitter divorce.[2] At stake was what Kevin Quarmby describes as the 'insidious political fundamentalism that infects Shakespeare theater productions worldwide',[3] which decried how 'Rice's installation of heavy duty sound and lighting ha[d] destroyed the shared space previously enjoyed by actors and audiences and the unique complicity between the groundlings and great actors'.[4] What some commentators saw as a progressive approach that opened up the Globe as a symbolic seat of Shakespearean stagecraft to diverse new audiences and theatrical experiences, others deemed to be equivalent to 'screwing an electric pickup to a Stradivarius'.[5] By the end of a difficult set of backstage negotiations, Neil Constable (CEO, Shakespeare's Globe) issued a statement announcing Rice's departure in which he acknowledged her commercial success and the 'productive debate' she had initiated 'in relation to the use of sound and lighting technology'. That technology,

1 Shakespeare's Globe, 'This Magical Space: Emma Rice's Top 10 Globe Moments', *Medium.com*, 20 April 2018.
2 Lyn Gardner, '*A Midsummer Night's Dream* – Review', *The Guardian*, 6 May 2016.
3 Kevin Quarmby, 'OP PC or PaR RIP?', *Shakespeare Bulletin*, 36.4 (2018), 567–98, at 569.
4 John Morrison, 'Imogen', *London Theatre Reviews by John Morrison* blog, 21 September 2016; on Rice, see also W. B. Worthen, 'Interactive, Immersive and Original Shakespeare', *Shakespeare Bulletin*, 35.3 (2017), 407–24.
5 Lyn Gardner, 'Emma Rice Is Right to Experiment at the Globe', *The Guardian* blog, 28 September 2016, and Quarmby, 'OP PC'; Anonymous Globe donor cited in Hannah Furness, 'Shakespeare's Globe Risks Wrath after Installing 'Sixth Form Disco'', *The Telegraph*, 5 May 2016.

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however, was incompatible with the Globe's reconstruction 'as a radical experiment to explore the conditions within which Shakespeare and his contemporaries worked', and would henceforth be removed again so as to re-focus the programme on '"shared light" productions without designed sound and light rigging'.[6]

The public controversies provoked by Rice's brief tenure as the Artistic Director of Shakespeare's Globe are symptomatic of the fundamental tension, in a decade of economic downturn and a rise of nationalist isolationism in the UK, between purist nostalgia for a simpler past of human interaction, associated with the Shakespeare brand as a universal guarantor of humanist value, continuity and national pride, and the acceleration of the technological innovation and digital communication that contribute to globalisation. This book investigates the intersection between the production of early modern drama and experimentation with technologies of performance that came to a peak between 2009, when in defiance of economic challenges the National Theatre (NT) launched its NT Live broadcasts, and 2016, the year of the quatercentenary celebrations and Rice's 'Wonder Season'. In that short period, experimentation with technologies of performances in British mainstream performances of early modern drama changed how audiences see and access those plays, whether through the integration of live video, performance capture, theatre broadcast or the exciting experimentation with the power of candlelight and architecturally determined sightlines at the newly opened Sam Wanamaker Playhouse (SWP).

Resisting a polarising opposition between a conception of 'Shakespearean' stagecraft as centred on the technology-free interaction of performer and spectator and the disruption of intimate human relations associated with technologies of performance, I propose a historically grounded spatial theory of technologically mediated spectatorship. I argue that present-day performance technologies enable the re-activation, for twenty-first-century audiences and in the context of their increasing everyday enmeshment in digital information technologies, of dynamic and fluid performer–spectator relationships that characterise the performance and spatial technologies of the early modern playhouse. *Shakespeare, Spectatorship and Technologies of Performance* therefore reorients current thinking about modes of spectatorship in present-day performance by embedding them in the history of spatial relations in the theatre. In proposing a historicised theoretical approach to

[6] Neil Constable and Emma Rice, 'Press Release: Statement Regarding the Artistic Direction of Shakespeare's Globe', *Shakespeare's Globe*, 25 October 2016.

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digital and analogue performance technologies that has implications for present-day performance more widely, it complicates the focus on interactivity and immersion as the be-all and end-all of postdramatic performance in the digital age, showing instead how these 'new' performance modes are related to and adapt the spatial configurations and modes of spectatorship that govern early modern dramaturgies.

Whether through the use of architecture and candlelight, live video and performance capture, or the live theatre broadcasts that have widened access to Shakespeare for worldwide audiences, this book investigates the remarkable interrogation, in British mainstream productions of early modern drama, of the role technologies of performance play in facilitating modes of spectatorship that range from the pleasures of spectatorial plenitude to frustrated antagonism and critical rage. Technologies are deployed as a means of creating intense, and sometimes disturbingly visceral, individual and collective experiences that adapt the types of relationships possible in the early modern theatres for the digital age and a stratified neoliberal social environment. The productions analysed in this book invite their audiences to engage with early modern plays in ways that are framed and oriented by performance technologies, provoking responses that rely on individual and nuanced understandings of the predicaments the plays explore. The intense years of experimentation with rapidly evolving technologies that are the focus of this book have shaped the next generation's expectations of how engaging with Shakespeare and early modern drama through performance requires that we adopt an ethical standpoint as we decide how to look, where to look, what medium to look through and how to take responsibility for looking.

Theories of Theatrical Co-presence and Technologies of Performance

The tensions exposed when holes were drilled into the timbers of Shakespeare's Globe to accommodate the cables for Rice's lighting rigs and sound system have a long history.[7] Inspired by Jerzy Grotowski's call for a 'poor theatre' devoid of 'all outward technique',[8] Peter Brook famously declared in 1968: 'I can take any empty space and call it a bare stage.

[7] For an account that tracks the debate back to the 1920s, see Greg Giesekam, *Staging the Screen: The Use of Film and Video in Theatre* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), chapter 1.
[8] Jerzy Grotowski, *Towards a Poor Theatre*, ed. Eugenio Barba (New York: Routledge, 2002), p. 41.

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A man walks across this empty space whilst someone else is watching him, and this is all that is needed for an act of theatre to be engaged.'[9] Poised against this essentialist definition of theatre is a theatre practice which has always relied on technologies of performance to concentrate the audience's focus, provide spectacular magic or assist in characterisation and the creation of a fictional world. Writing in 1968, Richard Schechner seems at first sight to side with Grotowski and Brook in suggesting that theatre can be axiomatically defined as consisting in the relationships among performers, among the audience, and between performers and their audience.[10] Schechner, however, recognises that these three strands of interaction are fortified by 'production elements' of a technical nature (such as lighting and sound) and anticipates that performance technologies may in due course move from merely 'support[ing] a performance' to becoming 'more important than the performers'.[11]

By the turn of the millennium, Schechner's prediction had come true, with multimedia productions that still relied on 'fairly traditional understandings of the role of text and the creation of character' increasingly vying for attention with intermedial works, in which characterisation and acting were affected by the performers' interaction with various media, so that 'neither the live material nor the recorded material would make much sense without the other.'[12] Shakespeare, as Thomas Cartelli notes, has been a particular focus for this 'pointedly intermedial turn'.[13] Such work, Hans-Thies Lehmann warns, may involve a 'conflict between the present body and its immaterial projection within the framework of a single production'.[14] As his term 'conflict' suggests, Lehmann is profoundly troubled by the 'seductive superiority of the virtual image world of cyborg, internet, virtual reality' that threatens to crowd out the body of the actor, thus devaluing the meaningfulness of communication between performer

[9] Peter Brook, *The Empty Space* (London: MacGibbon & Kee, 1968), p. 9.
[10] Richard Schechner, '6 Axioms for Environmental Theatre', *The Drama Review: TDR*, 12.3 (1968), 41–64, at 44.
[11] Ibid., p. 45.
[12] Giesekam, *Staging the Screen*, p. 8.
[13] Thomas Cartelli, *Reenacting Shakespeare in the Shakespeare Aftermath: The Intermedial Turn and Turn to Embodiment* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), p. 47. Cartelli's wide-ranging discussion of transformative experimental productions that markedly rely on performance technologies provides a critical context for my own focus on moments when the 'avant-garde' practices he analyses penetrate into the mainstream, disrupting normative approaches to staging early modern drama.
[14] Hans-Thies Lehmann, *Postdramatisches Theater*, 3rd updated and enlarged edition (Darmstadt: Verlag der Autoren, 2005), p. 405, my translation. The passage is not contained in Hans-Thies Lehmann, *Postdramatic Theatre,* trans. Karen Jürs-Munby (London: Routledge, 2006), the English translation of the 1999 edition.

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and spectator.[15] His concern is that media 'transform the giving of signs into information' and 'dissolve the consciousness . . . for the fact that the act of sending signs ultimately involves sender and receiver in a shared situation'.[16] Not only is the human performer devalued as a result, but the viewer is also confined to the supposedly passive consumption of spectacle in 'bad traditional theatre'.[17]

It is the perceived threat technologies pose to the connection between the performer and the spectator that also worries Peggy Phelan. Reacting vehemently to the incursion of technologies of reproduction that threaten to contest the primacy of live performance, she famously states in her chapter on 'The Ontology of Performance':

> Performance's only life is in the present. Performance cannot be saved, recorded, documented, or otherwise participate in the circulation of representations of representations: once it does so, it becomes something other than performance. Performance's being . . . becomes itself through disappearance.[18]

In her later work on performance artist Marina Abramović, Phelan goes on to give this ontology an ethical spin when she suggests a connection between live performance and the ethics of the face-to-face encounter as imagined by Emmanuel Lévinas. Writing in the wake of the Holocaust, Lévinas had explored the ethical potential of an encounter between the self and their other, in which the subject is called upon to accept absolute and unconditional responsibility for their other. For Phelan, Abramović's invitation to gallery visitors to engage in a direct, sustained and profoundly affecting exchange of gazes with her prompts an argument that conflates theatrical co-presence with Lévinas' ethical face-to-face encounter.[19]

[15] For further critical reflections on how spectators favour the mediated image over the live performer, see also Jennifer Parker-Starbuck, *Cyborg Theatre: Corporeal/Technological Intersections in Multimedia Performance* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p. 99, and Philip Auslander, *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture*, 2nd edition (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), pp. 38–40.

[16] Lehmann, *Postdramatic*, p. 184. [17] Lehmann, *Postdramatisches*, pp. 468–9, my translation.

[18] Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 146. For a critique of Phelan focused on the stipulation that performance becomes itself through disappearance, see Rebecca Schneider, *Performance Remains: Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment* (London: Routledge, 2011), chapter 3. For a counter-argument focused on the historical contingency of 'liveness', see Auslander, *Liveness*, pp. 43–63.

[19] Abramović cited in Peggy Phelan, 'Marina Abramović: Witnessing Shadows', *Theatre Journal*, 56.4 (2004), 569–77, at 574. Abramović's work has become a touchstone of reflections about absolute theatrical presence: see Nicholas Ridout, *Stage Fright, Animals, and Other Theatrical Problems* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 17, and Erin Sullivan, 'The Audience Is Present: Aliveness, Social Media, and the Theatre Broadcast Experience', in Pascale Aebischer, Susanne Greenhalgh and Laurie Osborne (eds.), *Shakespeare and the 'Live' Theatre Broadcast Experience* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018), pp. 59–75, at 59–62.

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For Phelan, what differentiates Abramović's live performance from theatre accessed through 'streaming video, webcasts, digital video, and other media able to record and circulate live events' is 'the possibility of mutual transformation of both the observer and the performer within the enactment of the live event', which is 'the point where the aesthetic joins the ethical'.[20] In this argument, which is reliant on an understanding of Lévinas' ethics as transformative affect, performance's capacity to provoke ethical encounters hinges on the absence of mediation in the face-to-face encounter between two humans.[21]

Without invoking Lévinas (and thus side-stepping the risk of a blunting of his ethics when applying them to theatre),[22] Lehmann, too, edges towards a conclusion that brings a powerful ethical dimension to his privileging of the unmediated encounters possible in theatre. Technologies, he suggests, lend themselves to productions that 'assert the fantasy of omnipotence inherent to mediated inscription' and therefore contribute to 'creating the illusion of being able to preside quite calmly over all realities'. Theatre responds to the distancing effect technologies of performance have when harnessed to facilitate such spectatorial plenitude and omnipotence with

> an *aesthetic of responsibility (or response-ability)* [German: *Ver-antwortung*]. Instead of the deceptively comforting duality of here and there, inside and outside, it can move the *mutual implication of actors and spectators in the theatrical production of images* into the centre and thus make visible the broken thread between personal experience and perception. Such an experience would be not only aesthetic but therein at the same time ethico-political.[23]

In Lehmann's productive formulation of the '*aesthetic of responsibility (or response-ability)*', what gives theatre an 'ethico-political' edge, then, is not so much the simple fact of co-presence in a single time and space, nor the exchange of gazes between audience and performer in a Lévinasian acceptance of the subject's total and unconditional responsibility for their other, but rather theatre's capacity to endow both actor and spectator with

[20] Phelan, 'Abramović', p. 575.
[21] For similar Lévinasian approaches to theatrical co-presence, see Helena Grehan, *Performance, Ethics and Spectatorship in a Global Age* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009) and Susan Kozel's performer-oriented approach in *Closer: Performance, Technologies, Phenomenology* (Boston, MA: MIT, 2007).
[22] Nicholas Ridout critiques attempts to apply Lévinasian ethics to the theatrical setting in *Theatre & Ethics* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp. 53–6 and *Stage Fright*, p. 30.
[23] Lehmann, *Postdramatic*, pp. 185–6, original emphasis.

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the ability to respond, to contribute to the production of images and to bring their own personal experience into play. It is when spectators are contributing responsibly/response-ably to the production of images that 'spectators take responsibility for making what is shown part of their personal experience' and are, as Nicholas Ridout bluntly puts it, called 'to do something about it' with ethical force.[24]

This understanding of the mutual implication of performers and audiences in the production of images in the theatre is theorised further by Jacques Rancière and confirmed by the empirical audience research of Caroline Heim and Kirsty Sedgman and the pioneering work of Susan Bennett. They contest the notion that traditional theatre audiences can be dismissed as passive. Rancière's 'emancipated spectator' escapes the alleged passivity and collectivity of bourgeois theatre audiences by virtue of a re-jigging of power relations in the theatre that puts the spectator on an equal footing with the actor. Rancière advocates an understanding of theatre audiences as composed of separate individuals, each on their own journey, who meet the performers on equal terms in the community setting of the theatre. Rancière's spectator is emancipated whenever in the theatre performers and spectators approach the production together, each an equally valued independent thinking agent who brings to their interpretation their own experiences, knowledge, feelings, memories. It is this emancipation of the audience that Heim and Sedgman observe in the vocal and visible role audiences play in present-day theatres, where regardless of whether they are seated in 'quiet receptivity' or participating through demonstrative acts such as singing or dancing in the aisles, most spectators are involved as performers in their own right as they join in the 'transformative communion' characteristic of theatre.[25]

Rejecting the value judgements attached to the different ways in which audiences perform, Rancière explains how spectators and performers as both individuals and a community approach the production as a 'third thing that is owned by no one, whose meaning is owned by no one, but which subsists between them'.[26] Such a triangulation between the performer, the

[24] Ridout, *Theatre & Ethics*, p. 59; see also Andy Lavender's discussion of Lehmann in *Performance in the Twenty-First Century: Theatres of Engagement* (London: Routledge, 2016), pp. 99–100.

[25] Kirsty Sedgman, *The Reasonable Audience: Theatre Etiquette, Behaviour Policing, and the Live Performance Experience* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), pp. 19, 20; Caroline Heim, *Audience as Performer: The Changing Role of Theatre Audiences in the Twenty-First Century* (London: Routledge, 2016); Susan Bennett, *Theatre Audiences: A Theory of Production and Reception*, 2nd edition (London: Routledge, 1997).

[26] Jacques Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator*, trans. Gregory Elliott (London: Verso, 2006), p. 15.

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emancipated spectator and the production allows us to see how the transformation of, as Lehmann puts it, 'the behaviour onstage and in the auditorium into a *joint text*' is the result of an encounter that involves both performers and spectators in their ethical response-ability/responsibility towards the production.[27] The triangulation, while still insisting on the importance of the relationship between the performer and spectator, also opens up a space for technologies to act as an additional player or, in Jennifer Parker-Starbuck's evocative term, as 'subject technologies' with which the humans in the theatrical encounter are entangled and implicated.[28] Resisting the anthropocentrism of standard philosophical thinking, Ian Bogost advocates an 'alien phenomenology' that makes no ontological distinction between 'things' and humans but sees them as 'a unit made up of a set of other units (. . . human or nonhuman), irrespective of scale', with unit operations organised into systems.[29] In technologically mediated theatre, Bogost's 'alien phenomenology' steers us towards recognising the shared agency of human and technological 'units' as they engage in co-creating the production as a 'joint text' or 'third thing'.

That such a shared yet individual ethical response may in fact be heightened by their use and agency, rather than hindered by the interference of technologies of performance, becomes clear from a quick look at Peter Brook's 1962 staging of the blinding of Gloucester on the proscenium stage of the Royal Shakespeare Theatre (RST) in Stratford-upon-Avon. As a result of the director's 'cool . . . moral scrutiny' of Shakespeare's *King Lear*,[30] the production demanded of its spectators that they re-view its scene of torture in, literally, a new cold light. When Gloucester's eyes had been gouged out,

> the house-lights come up – the action continuing in full light for several seconds afterwards. If this works, it should jar the audience into a new kind of adjustment to Gloucester and his tragedy. The house-lights remove all possibility of aesthetic shelter, and the act of blinding is seen in a colder light than would be possible otherwise.[31]

Theatre lighting became the means of galvanising the audience's ethical response. Brook transformed the private affect of the individual viewer into

[27] Lehmann, *Postdramatic*, p. 17, original emphasis.
[28] Parker-Starbuck, *Cyborg Theatre*, pp. 40–1.
[29] Ian Bogost, *Alien Phenomenology: or What It's Like to be a Thing* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2012), p. 19.
[30] Kenneth Tynan, 'The Triumph of Stratford's *Lear*', *The Observer*, 11 November 1962.
[31] Charles Marowitz, programme note, 1964 revival, *King Lear*, dir. Peter Brook, assistant dir. Charles Marowitz.

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a public expression of an ethical stance within a community in which there was no 'aesthetic shelter.' For Ridout, this 'reciprocal spectatorship' is crucial: 'We watch ourselves watching people engaging with an ethical problem while knowing that we are being watched in our watching (by other spectators and also by those we watch).'[32] As Kenneth Tynan experienced it, Brook's blinding scene 'could hardly [have been] more shocking'.[33] The house lights in Brook's *Lear* acted as a technological means of making visible what had hitherto been invisible: here, the other audience members, each an emancipated spectator involved in the co-creation of a scene of torture, each called into individual and collective response-ability and accountability in the face of this horror.

The ability of technologies of performance, in Brook's staging, to bring into visibility the spectators' implication in previously hidden power relationships allows us to see the connection between physical technologies, as used in this production, and their involvement in mediating, obscuring or uncovering structures of power. In that sense, technologies of performance can act as 'technologies' in the sense in which Michel Foucault used the word in his exploration of state power and sexuality: not as mere physical tools that assist in creating the performance, but as themselves part of the structures and laws through which 'modern social and political systems control, supervise, and manipulate populations as well as individuals'.[34] Here, switching on the house lights revealed the role played up to that point by the technological darkening of the auditorium in reducing the force of the audience's response-ability/responsibility.

Building on the work of Marshall McLuhan, Bogost furthermore reminds us of the need to pay attention not just to the content of a medium, but to how any new medium 'alters, adopts, or disposes of previous media'. Even as new technologies 'obsolesce' some of the features of older modes of theatrical engagement (here: the darkness of the auditorium in a proscenium theatre), they also bring back 'previously obsolesced ground' (here: the shared light of the early modern stage) and 'enhance or intensify or make possible or accelerate' new modes of spectatorship (here: the consciousness of shared light brought about by the switch from darkness to light).[35] It is on the recovery of obsolesced ground

[32] Ridout, *Theatre & Ethics*, p. 15. [33] Tynan, 'Triumph'.

[34] Michael C. Behrent, 'Foucault and Technology', *History and Technology*, 29.1 (2013), 54–104, at 55.

[35] Ian Bogost, 'I Became a Fan of Marshall McLuhan on Facebook and Suggested that You Become a Fan, Too', in D. E. Wittkower (ed.), *Facebook and Philosophy: What's on Your Mind?* (Chicago, IL: Open Court, 2010), pp. 21–32, at 24.

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and the intensifications of bodily experiences of spectatorship brought about by new technologies that I will focus much of my attention. Digital technologies of performance have increasingly worked to intensify, rather than obsolesce, precisely the intense sensation of co-presence that is associated with ethico-political modes of spectatorship. While technologies can contribute to the distancing of spectators from an illusionist spectacle and offer them a sense of control without responsibility, they are also ever more frequently harnessed strategically to reactivate older forms of spectatorial engagement and offer enhanced, intensified and accelerated ways of experiencing the shared response-ability/responsibility of performers and spectators as they confront the ethical predicaments and political problems explored by early modern dramatists.

Bogost's reminder of how newer media bring back earlier, obsolesced ground accords with Martin Heidegger's intuition, in *The Question Concerning Technology*, that technologies are perhaps best understood as ways of 'revealing' or 'bringing forth' what was hitherto concealed.[36] For Heidegger, drilling for oil to bring forth the energy reserves hidden in the landscape exemplifies how modern technologies can give access to the hitherto invisible structures and energies that underpin what we know – or thought we knew, until a new technology helped us tap hitherto concealed resources. Technologies, he argues, can bring into our consciousness hidden aspects of the known world that in turn may create new things (as oil extracted from the earth can generate energy or be turned into plastic). Therefore, technologies are a 'setup' or a way of 're-framing' what is visible as they bring forth what was previously hidden and, in doing so, make it possible to recognise a 'truth'.[37] Applied to present-day productions of early modern drama, Heidegger's thinking allows for an understanding of technologies of performance as a means of releasing from those plays some of the energies and truths, along with the spatial dynamics and modes of spectatorial engagement that are locked within them and that are part of their deep structures, and as enabling the creation of new artworks out of the depths of plays that are at the centre of our dramatic canon.

[36] Martin Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology*, trans. William Lovitt (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), p. 11; Martin Heidegger, *Die Technik und die Kehre* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1963), p. 11.

[37] Heidegger, *Die Technik*, p. 12. My use of 're-framing' adapts William Lovitt's translation of Heidegger's description of technology as a *Ge-stell* as 'enframing' (p. 19 in both the English and German texts); 'setup' is Sarah Kember and Joanna Zylinska's translation in *Life after New Media: Mediation as a Vital Process* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2012), p. 21.

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