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"Let Her Speak Too":

Shakespeare's Shrews and the Modern Stage

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Submitted For The Degree Of Doctor Of Philosophy

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Declaration

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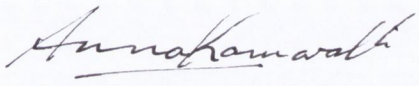

Anna Kamaralli

Summary

This thesis takes as its starting point those of Shakespeare's female characters who are upbraided by other characters for speaking inappropriately, or too much, who are, in effect 'shrew' figures. The plays concerned span the full period of Shakespeare's writing career, including the *Henry VI* plays, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Measure for Measure*, *Pericles*, and *The Winter's Tale*, all of which involve female characters who continue to speak and protest in spite of directives to be silent or compliant. In modern Western (particularly Anglophone) society Shakespeare's work is one of the most consistently validated starting points from which we generate cultural meaning for ourselves. I have therefore looked at examples of recent productions (from within the last ten years) of the selected plays, and examined their treatment of these vocal female roles, to see what strategies are currently in operation in the theatre for representing woman as talker. I have also considered the dialogue that surrounds these representations, including how these characters have been reflected on by both theatre practitioners and critics.

To do this I have employed a combination of feminist standpoint theory (as proposed by Sandra Harding) and synchronic performance analysis (as proposed by Michael Friedman), in order to relate performance choices to their social context, and assess what may have influenced decisions about how to present the female characters, along with the effect these decisions have in performance. The productions have been chosen to give a breadth of examples of different kinds of theatre companies, resources, venues and ideologies. For each play there are three core examples, one from a mainstream British company, one from an independent British company, and one from a non-British company. They include large, internationally touring productions designed for the festival circuit, or the tourist market; established, more locally-targeted companies and small profit-share ventures; and come from the U.K., the U.S., Russia, Japan, Ireland and Australia.

In looking at these examples overall, it can be safely concluded that it is discernable to an audience whether or not a production has an interest in representing female experience, or when the concerns of the production lie elsewhere. Also that these texts open up a space for feminist interpretation and presentation, that can be used and explored. What is apparent is how much variation is created by whether or not the artists involved are actively concerned with gender, and sometimes, how a position that presents as unconcerned with gender can quickly default to a misogynist one. A production inevitably invites an audience to judge characters and events critically or sympathetically and to identify with some characters over others. The same character can be made to appear malicious or foolish or unappealing, or attractive and admirable, and while audience members will never all respond the same way, the director, designer and actors will give pointers indicating what response they expect. This is never more the case than in the presentation of transgressive female speech, which has such a history of being weighed and judged. Though the productions here offer only a few examples of current Shakespeare performance practice, they are enough to demonstrate that we should never passively accept what we are shown about a character, but can and should keep asking who is telling us this, and what their own motives are. This thesis concludes by proposing a starting point for a set of questions that can be asked of a performance by someone interested in whether a production is giving value to female experience.

In a world that repeatedly signalled that the best kind of woman is a silent one, Shakespeare drew all kinds of situations where this is demonstrably not the case. In the end the shrew figures in these plays suggest that, for a woman, virtuous silence is not enough. There are times when speech is demanded, or disaster will fall. Taking the further step of observing what people today believe about Shakespeare's shrews can continue to show us how prepared we are to accept the prospect of hearing what we may not want to hear from the tongue of a woman.

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Introduction

The presence and appropriateness of female speech is a recurring theme in Shakespeare's plays, from his earliest dramas to those among his last. Characters who represent women speak, and other characters reflect on the nature and content of what they say, but also on the very fact of their speaking. Of course, during the period of their writing there would have been no real female voices heard, but only their representation by a boy.[1] On today's stage, when the opportunity exists to use actual female voices, how have recent productions engaged with the question of a place for these voices? This thesis examines how the representation of female eloquence on the early modern stage has been treated in recent performance practice. To accomplish this, I look at how directors, actors and critics have addressed some key female characters from Shakespeare's text, in selected productions from the last ten years.

I will also examine some aspects of the way theatre practitioners and critics talk about female characters in performance. Using a selection of Shakespeare's plays that contain examples of women who are verbally transgressive – who are, in effect, shrew figures – I will examine some of the ways such characters have recently been staged, and what kind of dialogue surrounds their interpretation. How do the actors who play the roles understand their task, how do the directors of the productions see these characters, and how are they received by critics and other audience members?

From the crudity of the scold's bridle to the more artful use of religious directives banning women from speaking in places of worship or in mixed company, from the preaching of silence as a virtue to the glorification of the silent physical image of her body as the highest aspiration for a woman, women have a long history of being

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[1] See Stephen Orgel, *Impersonations: The Performance of Gender in Shakespeare's England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) and Michael Shapiro, *Gender in Play on the Shakespearean Stage: Boy Heroines and Female Pages* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994), for equally detailed, but contrasting, examinations of the cultural context and theatrical effects of this practice, and David Kathman, 'How Old Were Shakespeare's Boy Actors?', *Shakespeare Survey 58* (2005): 220-246, for details and analysis of the available evidence surrounding the use of boy players by Elizabethan and Jacobean companies.

discouraged from making noise. For a long time, accompanying this, there has been a strand of protest at such directives and such discouragement. Shakespeare created a number of scenarios in which that dialogue, between those who seek to silence women and those who protest against the restriction of female speech, is played out.

Shakespeare is far from being the only playwright from this period to feature the female voice, or to create scenarios that raise questions, or make arguments, about the right of women to speak. Obvious examples from other playwrights include John Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi* (circa 1614) and *The White Devil* (1612), which both put female eloquence on display, and Elizabeth Cary's *Tragedy of Mariam* (1613), which explores the dilemma involved for a woman who is called upon by her conscience to speak against her husband, to whom religious directives tell her it is her duty to submit. Contemporaneous plays with a more clearly apparent agenda on the topic include the anonymous work *Swetnam the Woman Hater Arraigned by Women* (1620), which was a humorous response to John Swetnam's misogynist pamphlet *The Arraignment of Lewd, Idle Froward and Unconstant Women*, and John Fletcher's 'sequel' to Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*: *The Woman's Prize or The Tamer Tamed* (circa 1612). All of these, and numerous others, include eloquent women among their characters, women who are both challenging and challenged. Shakespeare's distinctiveness lies in the breadth and variety of his roles of this kind, but also largely in the cultural credit his work has accrued. None of his plays are ever out of production for long, and so modern actors are still regularly embodying his shrews, and having to form opinions on them, and generate opinions on them from their audiences. Shakespeare acts as an excellent lens through which to view the society that is mounting and consuming his plays. It is because of the combination of the presence of these characters and the absence of a definitive authorial position on their rightness or wrongness, their wisdom or naivety, their virtues or flaws, that the agendas of theatre practitioners and critics reveal themselves so readily.

The plays examined here have all been selected for their presentation of female characters who are at some point told by others that they talk too much: too boldly, too

harshly, too freely, too inappropriately. All of them also reflect, themselves, on their decision to speak, and express thoughts on why they need to speak, and what they hope to achieve by doing so. Jeanne la Pucelle and Margaret d'Anjou in *Henry VI* use their voices to gain control of armies. Most modern productions do some kind of edited amalgamation of the play's three parts (occasionally including *Richard III* as well), sometimes even drawing attention to the parallels between the two characters by doubling the roles. These are the only characters in this examination who come to a bad end, but I hope to demonstrate that there is an ambivalence in their presentation in the text that some productions choose to tap into. By any reckoning, they are not straightforward villainesses. Katherina in *The Taming of the Shrew* and that less-tamed shrew, Beatrice in *Much Ado About Nothing*, use their mastery of words to negotiate the form that their marital relationships will take. *Shrew* is certainly the greater political minefield for modern performance, but *Much Ado* has also attracted its share of attention for its incorporation of an unruly woman into the socially controlling institution of marriage. These are by far the most popular of the plays included in this examination, and provide the widest range of possible choices for performance analysis case studies. Isabella in *Measure for Measure* and Marina in *Pericles* use their exceptional persuasiveness and talent for articulate argument to defend their virtue, but also to facilitate reconciliation. It may be primarily in the service of the patriarchy that virginity is consecrated as a valuable commodity, but these plays do not shy away from examining the dangerous position women are put in through society's acceptance of sexual trade. Hermione and Paulina in *The Winter's Tale* have the most subtle relationship with speech, involving protest, but also invoking ideas about protection, healing and magic. *The Winter's Tale* is the play that explores the negative and positive perceptions of womanly eloquence with most explicitness and sophistication. Leontes's fears of the persuasiveness of the female tongue, and in particular the linking of these fears in his mind with fears of female sexual licentiousness and witchcraft, lay bare the gamut of traditional anxieties surrounding female speech. Obviously these are only a portion of Shakespeare's serious talkers, but these are the ones that others attempt to silence, and who do battle against those injunctions.

There are a number of Shakespeare's other characters who may appear to be candidates for this thesis, but who do not feature here. Generally this is because, although their speech may be unruly or transgressive, other characters within the plays do not label them as shrews, witches or madwomen, and make attempts to curb or silence them. Characters such as Portia and Rosalind, for example, though they clearly usurp a male privilege of public or direct speech, find a way to circumvent the usual accompanying censure (in these instances, by adopting male personas). This applies also to the Princess of France and her ladies of *Love's Labours Lost* and to Windsor's merry wives, though their solution does not involve donning breeches. Lady Macbeth, Volumina and Cleopatra have all frequently been spoken of in these terms by critics, but within their respective plays their speech is not challenged or labelled inappropriate by other characters. By rights, perhaps, Adriana from *Comedy of Errors* and Eleanor, Duchess of Gloucester, from *2 Henry VI* fit the criteria, but neither shows any potential to influence the course of the narrative in the way of the characters who are discussed in detail in this study. Cordelia may be the slipperiest consideration of all. Although she is upbraided by her father for silence, not speech, her 'nothing' does not remain nothing, but precedes challenging and transgressive speech that should allow her admission to the rank of shrew. However, this behaviour is confined solely to Act I scene 1, and her conformity to the norms of virtuous feminine behaviour thereafter must result in her exclusion.

As this thesis will repeatedly return to the term and concept of the 'shrew', some conclusions about the definition and use of the word are warranted. The *Oxford English Dictionary* gives 'a woman given to railing or scolding or other perverse or malignant behaviour; a scolding or turbulent wife' (though the shorter edition gives the definition simply as 'a bad-tempered woman').[2] Other definitions include: 'a woman of vexatious, nagging or violent disposition; a scolding or brawling female';[3] 'a scolding, nagging bad-tempered woman';[4] 'an offensive term referring to a woman who is

[2] *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd edition (Oxford: Clarendon, 1989).
[3] *Funk & Wagnall's Standard Desk Dictionary* (New York: Harpercollins, 1984).
[4] *Webster's Dictionary* (New York: Random House, 1991).

regarded as quarrelsome, nagging or ill-tempered';[5] 'a woman of violent temper and speech'.[6] Synonyms offered include scold, virago, termagant, and the Yiddish word yenta. All in all, the term is clear in its specific application to women, and its emphasis on speech. It does not refer to a merely sulky, obstinate or intractable woman, but one who is verbally critical, who will not remain quiet or limit herself to speaking pleasingly.

This centuries-old debate over female speech has not ebbed since Shakespeare wrote his plays, though today's version differs in which aspects are emphasised, and uses different language and frames of reference. When a question is posed of whether words spoken are appropriate or inappropriate, to be praised or criticised, the fact of whether it is a woman speaking is still treated as relevant remarkably often, and a conclusion is frequently drawn about what kind of woman the act of speaking in question makes the speaker. In the world today most attempts to subvert or dismiss female speech tend to be more subtle than simply quoting St Paul or tying a woman to a ducking stool (or burning her at the stake), but there is also a higher level of awareness of the socio-political context for endeavours to control women, greater understanding of the vested interests of power structures, and more complex reflective thinking about the issue. There has been some significant interest in recent years in political and sociological circles in the historic prevalence of attempts to silence women.[7] Arguments about the politics and morality of these attempts, direct and indirect, are now fully in the public forum and they are open to challenges from more diverse bases. So has our theatre kept up? When today's theatre performs these scenes in Shakespeare, does it show instances of an awareness of these issues?

The case studies here are not chosen in an attempt to be comprehensive, or even representative in any complete way. It is hoped, however, that they will give an overall

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[5] *Encarta World English Dictionary* (London: Bloomsbury, 1999).
[6] Dictionary.com, http://dictionary.reference.com/ (at 31 July 2007).
[7] The chapter on women's human rights in the anthology published to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, for instance, is specifically entitled 'The Silencing of Women'. Georgina Ashworth, ed. Tim Dunne & Nicholas J. Wheeler, *Human Rights in Global Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999): 259-276.

sense of the variety of approaches that can be found in staging Shakespeare's female characters today, and specifically the question of restricting or encouraging the female voice. All took place within the last ten years. For each play, one production has been examined from a major subsidised British theatre company: either the Royal Shakespeare Company or a mainstage, in-house production from the National Theatre[8] (as the National so frequently shares its directors with the RSC, it seems better to treat them in one category); the second has been selected from among Britain's regional or independent theatre companies; and the third from outside Britain, including those in languages other than English. Even this simple breakdown invites problems in classifying some productions. Ninagawa's *Pericles*, for example, has been included as non-British, despite being performed at the National Theatre, as it transferred from Japan as a complete production, using an entirely Japanese cast and production team, and was not performed in English; while McBurney's *Measure for Measure* is treated as a National Theatre production, despite being from his own company, Complicite, as it was rehearsed and developed within the National's structure, and funded by their resources. Productions at the Globe in Southwark have been treated within the 'independent' category, as its distinctive mission statement and aesthetic philosophy set it apart from the RSC and the National.

Productions have at times been chosen to ensure that there is some representation of important movements in the Shakespearean theatre industry. For example, although the Flagship production of *Measure for Measure* was not high-profile or seen by a wide audience, it is a good example of the kind of low-budget, independent, form-a-company-and-see-what-we-can-do theatre that plays such a large part in the formation of the careers of new directors and performers. The London Bubble production of *Pericles* is a fine example of the way the Community Theatre that came into being in the 1970s, with the goal of making theatre more accessible and participative, has adapted to changing demands from funding bodies and audiences. The Bell Shakespeare Company production of the *Henry VI* plays demonstrates the weight still

[8] Britain's National Theatre was known as the Royal National Theatre while under the artistic directorship of Trevor Nunn, but before and after this time has simply been the National Theatre, so this is the title I have used throughout.

given to Shakespeare as an educational product, but also the difference in attitude that arises from the awareness that the target audience will have no background knowledge or familiarity with the piece or its sources. The *Henry VI* from Northern Broadsides had another political agenda, showing an attitude not dissimilar to the New York Public Theater's annual Shakespeare in the Park performances (here exemplified by *Much Ado About Nothing*); both have been founded on the idea of creating a tradition that rejects the notion of Shakespeare as belonging to the English establishment. On the other hand, examples from Britain's larger subsidised companies have been included for each play, as their substantial public funding, large audience size and extensive critical attention give them a great deal of significance within the Shakespeare industry.

While the examination of each play will centre on its three chief examples, chosen according to the characteristics outlined above, examples of other productions will frequently be brought in to provide additional perspectives. Given that one of the aims of this thesis is to look at how these female roles are being discussed, any instances where actors have published their responses to working on the roles (such as in the *Players of Shakespeare* series[9]) have been considered, as well as the comments of directors who have stated positions on the characters. I have also drawn on performance analyses from critics and reviewers that reflect on these roles specifically, particularly in reference to productions that did anything groundbreaking or out of the ordinary in the staging of the female characters, or demonstrated an interest in female speech as an area of concern. In order to give historical context that might uncover hints in the text as to who and what these characters represent, and improve the understanding of the conventions of which they are a part, some comment on the critical history surrounding the characters has also been included, where relevant. This is also to give an idea of some influences that may have been felt by modern practitioners interpreting the roles.

I will be employing elements of feminist 'standpoint theory' to frame these examinations. Standpoint theory engages with and incorporates, rather than avoids,

[9] Currently running to 6 volumes (1988 – 2004), published by Cambridge University Press.

issues such as subjectivity, relativism and difference. Its most direct lineage is from materialist feminism (and it therefore shares associations with socialist feminism), thus its acknowledgement of, and interest in, the relationships between gender, class and access to material resources make it particularly appropriate for examining the circulation of power in an industry like the theatre. To flourish, theatre needs money and it needs attention, and so a feminist discourse that arises from critiquing the way resources are distributed, and who controls access to property and speech, is an ideal fit. Radical feminist approaches, which hold that truly equal valuing of women as people is not possible within current social structures (and therefore seek to replace them with different systems, rather than merely to work for reform) are more likely to reject Shakespeare's plays entirely as a vehicle for representing the female voice, whereas my position is to regard them as potentially a very valuable resource for this purpose. While liberal feminism, with its emphasis on reform of existing systems, and opening up greater access for women to current centres of power, may seem at first to lend itself to a project like this one, it generally does not present enough of a challenge to the way performance work is conventionally analysed. This project not only proposes that the gender balance of participation and power in the Shakespeare industry needs to be corrected, but that the potential for this has been hindered by textual and performance analysis that has failed to be aware of its own orthodox position. A framework with a more active interest in the outsider status of the female performance practitioner, and indeed the female character, has the greater potential for revealing the hidden assumptions that so often pervade the decision-making process in performance praxis. Standpoint feminism's association with materialist feminism encourages a questioning of how people like directors and critics acquire the authority to make the many decisions about meaning and expression that form the basis of both textual criticism, performance analysis, and performance itself.

While its relationship with materialist feminism is one reason standpoint theory is suited to this project, it has a more specific contribution to make which harmonizes ideally with the concerns and methods of performance analysis. Primarily used by sociologists, standpoint theory insists that no conclusion drawn from data accumulation

occurs without cultural context. For many years most published reflections on Shakespearean performance ignored both the diversity inherent in any audience response and the specificity of the privileged white male response they themselves represented, and this is exactly what standpoint theory challenges. In addition, standpoint theory's stance that a political agenda is not incompatible with sound research but, in fact, can direct that research in productive and valuable ways seems highly appropriate to a study of how modern society uses a site of cultural authority like Shakespeare.

> Severing the traditional epistemological linkage between objectivity and neutrality, and measuring truth claims in terms of particular social locations and experiences, standpoint theories typically assert that (scientific) knowledge is inescapably position-bound, and hence both partial and partisan in character. Accordingly, they plead a conscious and reflexive politicisation of knowledge...[10]

In addition to this acknowledgement, in its more recent forms, feminist standpoint theory has combated accusations of ineffectual relativism by arguing that, far from all starting points for the accumulation of knowledge being equal, structuring analysis from a clearly located point of difference will 'increase the effectiveness of scientific method'. This is possible because 'standpoint knowledge projects do not claim to originate in purportedly universal human problematics', instead they 'not only acknowledge the social situatedness that is the inescapable lot of all knowledge-seeking projects but also, more importantly, transform it into a systematically available scientific resource.'[11] Given the canonical nature of Shakespearean performance in the English-speaking world, and the fact that cultural production in this field is so often generated by the most dominant power groups, a project based around this material seems almost uniquely suited to analysis using standpoint theory, providing as it does an external and challenging perspective on a process that is rarely asked to justify

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[10] Dick Pels, 'Strange Standpoints, or How to Define the Situation for Situated Knowledge' in *The Feminist Standpoint Theory Reader*, ed. Sandra Harding (London: Routledge, 2004): 273-290, 273.
[11] Sandra Harding, 'Rethinking Standpoint Epistemology: What is "Strong Objectivity"?' in *The Feminist Standpoint Theory Reader*, ed. Sandra Harding (London: Routledge, 2004): 127-140.

itself. The persistent claims from some theatre practitioners for the universality of Shakespeare, ironically, make a cry for those claims to be assessed from a standpoint of difference. A feminist standpoint is only one of many useful possibilities, but is surely one that is apparent in its value when examining the staging of Shakespeare's shrews.

The application of feminist standpoint theory in this way bears some relationship to presentism, an area of critical theory more familiar to the territory of theatre studies. Initially critics used the term pejoratively, to denote the inappropriate imposition of modern values on texts from the historical past, but more recently scholars such as Hugh Grady, Terence Hawkes, Phyllis Rackin and Margaret Kidnie have incorporated it as a valuable adjunct to historicism, acknowledging the imperfect nature of the task of reconstructing past understandings: 'The performance of "history" is always a staged effect, limited by existing means of theatrical production, inspired by recourse to current scholarship on the past, and moulded on the assumptions and politics of one's own historical moment.'[12] Like standpoint theory, presentism demands that we identify the situated nature of our own positions, in order to make a more informed analysis of something that can inevitably be seen from many angles.

> The crucial point to note is that because historical interpretation always has a creative dimension, and because there is no way simply to reconstruct "the truth" without interpretation, our histories are always allegories of the present: they inevitable represent the historian's in the present as well as his/her best attempt objectively to reconstruct the past. In that sense some sort of "presentism" is inevitable and desirable.[13]

This reveals an area where the work of creative construction (sometimes with reconstruction also in mind) done by the performance practitioner is not so far from that done by theatre studies academics after all. Both recognise that writing from four hundred years ago cannot be reclaimed in its original meaning, but can offer insights

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[12] Margaret Jane Kidnie, *The Shakespeare Handbooks: The Taming of the Shrew* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 132.
[13] Hugh Grady, *Shakespeare and Modernity: Early Modern to Millennium* (London: Routledge, 2000), 8.

into what we now believe about the past and about our own present. Presentism is not usually drawn upon in theatre studies work concerned with present-day performance analysis, but standpoint theory shows how it could be, in that it requires the critic to position the performance, the artists and him or herself within the context of what forces have produced the playtext, the performance and the criticism, ensuring that nothing is treated as free of ideology or socio-political influences.

Of course matters more specific to performance analysis also need to be considered. Basing a study around a selection of characters, and incorporating reflections specifically on these characters by both textual critics and theatre practitioners, will inevitably create a number of methodological difficulties. Chief among these is the varying understanding of the concept of character employed by those working in theatre and in theatre studies. As much as the field of theatre studies has done to incorporate both the academic's and the practitioner's understanding of theatrical performance, there remains a significant gap between them in certain areas, notably in the understanding of what kind of information can be communicated by the text. This is particularly so in the case of texts written before the dominance of naturalism arose in Western theatre, and began to demand that its practitioners prioritise character and find psychological coherence in a role. The bulk of academics are insistent on two points: that a character as a hypothetical 'real' person with a personal history and psychology (and the potential to make choices other than those made by them in the text) did not exist as an element in the construction of early modern drama, and that the actions of characters cannot be discussed as if they emanated from a real person, as they are fictitious constructs of a playwright and act according to the imperatives of dramatic structure: 'the character is the lines… to attempt to understand Malvolio [for example] through notions of psychology, of stimuli, acculturation, development, childhood trauma, is defeated at the outset'.[14]

Western theatre practitioners, by contrast, most commonly work with techniques profoundly influenced by Stanislavski that require them to make psychological sense of

[14] Stephen Orgel, *The Authentic Shakespeare* (London: Routledge, 2002), 8-9.

a character's actions, resulting in a search for motive, and for a through-line of action that seems entirely inappropriate to the academic, but cannot be dismissed if a meaningful dialogue is to occur: 'characters must not be treated as if they were real people – they are dramatic constructions with specific narrative and political functions in the text … However, many practitioners, when they are speaking of how they work on developing a character for performance, often will talk about those characters as if they were real people.'[15] Palfrey posits that 'The study of character should be faithful both to the responses they generate and the techniques that make them'[16] but in most instances, theatre practitioners tend to place much greater emphasis on the former, and academic critics on the latter. In attempting to study the responses a character generates it is also indispensable to consider the expectations brought to the performance by the respondents. The critic must allow not only for the character-developing techniques of the actor, but the fact that the majority of spectators will assume a psychological approach, and is likely to judge a performance accordingly.

Academics may be correct in their assertions of the inappropriateness of discussing early modern characters as if they are bearers of the kind of complete psychology that we now attribute to human beings, but insisting on this point will make it difficult to engage with the work done by most theatre practitioners over the past century. It may go some way towards establishing a workable discourse to acknowledge that discussion surrounding a play usually divides itself into two forms: that which analyses staging techniques and effects, and that which pursues the act of staging a hypothetical. The latter is what happens when the 'meaning' of a play is discussed, when a 'reading' is proposed or when performers who work with Stanislavskian-influenced methods respond to many questions about their work. The unspoken premise behind most responses from practitioners is just such a hypothetical – let us imagine that these are real people. If they were, what kind of people would they be? What would motivate the kind of actions they perform? What would be the consequences of those actions? It is disingenuous to expect actors not to involve themselves in this style of discussion

[15] Elizabeth Schafer, *Ms-Directing Shakespeare: Women Direct Shakespeare* (London: Women's Press, 1998), 5.
[16] Simon Palfrey, *Doing Shakespeare* (London: Arden, 2005), 191.

when they are asked to talk about character, as their task is to stage the hypothetical for the audience. The important thing is to be clear about whether one is discussing the narrative problems being presented or their method of presentation, and this distinction has not always been made when practitioners have been asked to comment on their work. Sinfield has sought to acknowledge both understandings of what the text presents us with in a practical way:

> My contention is that some Shakespearean dramatis personae are written so as to suggest, not just an intermittent, gestural and problematic subjectivity, but a continuous or developing interiority or consciousness; and that we should seek a way of talking about this that does not slide back into character criticism or essentialist humanism.[17]

His proposed model still includes some discussion of written characters as having desires, goals and strategies, on the grounds that 'Shakespearean plays produce dramatis personae that are like characters – to the extent that they are presented in ways that invite an expectation of an adequately continuous interiority'. He then modifies conventional patterns of discourse by seeking to identify the points in the text where this continuous interiority breaks down, and where contradictory strands of indicators of 'simulated selves' operate simultaneously, and in competition with one another. His model is a deliberate contrast to the more usual 'stabilizing intervention of interpretation', whereby commentators 'seek to help the text into coherence' by means of 'supplying characters with feasible thoughts and motives to smooth over the difficulty. This has been the virtual raison d'être of traditional criticism.'[18] And, it might be said, it continues to be a precise description of the job of the actor, posing a potentially irresolvable difficulty for the performance analyst who wishes to engage with a piece of theatre on its own terms, but also to apply Sinfield's political eye to the effect of such stabilizing choices on what messages an audience takes away from a performance. Sinfield also shows how the schisms he observes in the representation of something that can be taken for a coherent interiority are particularly reductive for many of Shakespeare's female characters who, by this reckoning, cease to be

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[17] Alan Sinfield, *Faultlines: Cultural Materialism and the Politics of Dissident Reading* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 62.
[18] Sinfield, 74.

characters at crucial moments. When events affecting the character occur in the plot: 'if she is to remain a character, we need to know what she feels, how she registers it in her consciousness',[19] but the absence of such expressions render her less than the sum of the 'sequence of loosely linked interiorities'[20] offered by the text.

Simon Palfrey, in his recent *Doing Shakespeare*, approaches from yet another angle, examining the effect for the audience of the way that some of Shakespeare female characters are drawn so elusively.[21] His thesis is that it is an observable technique to say less about the subject of the female character's feelings than the audience can be expected to want to know, so that 'the coincidence of not being told, and wanting very much to know, means we dwell upon these things with whatever ethical or imaginative sympathy we can.'[22] More specifically, he suggests that the text frequently prompts the audience to ask questions that can never be answered about the sexual experiences and attitudes of female characters, and that this causes us to reflect on our own complicity with the way these characters are treated by other characters in the play. Sinfield and Palfrey between them show that the lacunae frequently found in the writing of the female characters is generally acknowledged, and that there can be many positions on why they might be written in this way, ranging from a sense that Shakespeare was uninterested in them as representations of human beings, to an idea that he was employing a technique designed to make us focus on them all the more.

At this point some discussion is necessary of the term character. How is it used, and how has it been used in the past, to apply to the representation of an individual in stage performance? During the early modern period, the word 'character' had not yet begun to take on its present connotations of an individualised coherent psychology, nor its present performance-centred meaning of the part an actor is playing. Shakespeare never uses the word in either of these ways. Generally, the word was used to the classify individuals by type. Whether the concept of a character as we presently conceive it

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[19] Sinfield, 72.
[20] Sinfield, 65.
[21] Simon Palfrey, *Doing Shakespeare* (London: Arden, 2005), 248-268.
[22] Palfrey, 249.

existed at all is a separate question, however, and is best considered in relation to the emergence at this time of a new sense of the personal identity of individuals. In order to address both facets of the matter it is helpful to divide the discussion of performed character into three distinct but interdependent aspects:

1. What was understood, during the early modern period, to be the nature of personality and interiority in people, and how they were classified or individuated
2. The place of character within the framework of the period's dramatic conventions
3. The way these conventions might be received and interpreted by the spectator, as an indication of the nature of the individual being represented in the drama.

Most discussion of character in the Middle Ages and early Renaissance was framed in terms of the human relationship with God. The theory of the four humours, along with the hypothesis of the cosmic spheres, meant that discussion of character tended to be based around a classification system of balancing types. A person was composed of a blend of phlegmatic, melancholic, choleric or sanguine humours; and was either closer to or further away from heaven. As the sixteenth century became the seventeenth, both discussion of character in literature and its representation on stage underwent such a shift as to make it inappropriate to speak of this period in any kind of unified sense, except in that a progression of ideas can be charted away from the sense of the individual as a component of a formal Renaissance cosmology, and towards an increased sense of personal interiority and subject position. It should also be noted that the class structure operating at the time will always influence such a discussion, or the evidence we have of such discussions. While members of all classes would have observed Hamlet's and Cressida's ruminations on the conflicted self, there are only records of the responses of the literate classes.

Nor is it appropriate to speak of men and women collectively in such an analysis. Although it was accepted that both men and women could display elements of both vice and virtue, virtually all discussion of character from this period would analyse

men as the default model, and women either as an appendix or as a separate question. Man was subject, woman was object to a degree of much greater explicitness than is presently the case. This had much to do with the vastly different levels of autonomy (legal, moral and philosophical) recognised as residing in men and women. Purkiss argues that it is inappropriate to suggest that literate women of the Renaissance had a sense of themselves beyond or apart from their function as members of a family.[23] A woman of the middle or upper classes would have a role to play first as a token of exchange in forming an alliance between her family of origin and another family, and then as the perpetrator of that family through childbearing and household management. Is it likely, though, that if discussion of the role of women denied them an autonomous subject position they necessarily were unable to establish such a position for themselves? Certainly by 1632, when Martha Moulsworth wrote a poem celebrating her own fifty-fifth birthday, a woman was clearly able to view herself as the centre of her own world and her own family: her family is described in their relationship to her, not the other way around.[24]

Are acts of rebellion such as, for example, those of Elizabeth Cary (enacted by her in her insistence on pursuing her literary studies, and in converting to Catholicism, and depicted by her in her *Tragedy of Mariam*) even possible without a sense of a separate self? The observing commentator in this period might look upon a person's rebellion as a result of being in sin, and so such action could be written off as the inevitable outcome of weakness or vice, but when looked at with eyes that do not see obedience under all circumstances as a virtue, it seems unlikely that rebellion could come from so simple a place. The idea of being in sin implies the influence of malignant spiritual forces, whereas rebellion seems more likely, to the modern observer, to emanate from a person's feeling their self expression is restricted. What is of interest to us here is that acts of rebellion indicate an individual experiencing a gap between the individual self and the structure of the social world, which demonstrates the acknowledgement of the

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[23] Diane Purkiss, 'Blood, Sacrifice, Marriage: Why Iphegenia and Mariam Have to Die' *Women's Writing* 6 (1999): 27-45.
[24] Helen Wilcox, 'The Birth Day of My Self' in *Sixteenth-century Identities*, ed. Amanda Piesse (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000): 155-178.

possibility of such a gap, and therefore of selfhood as individually developed. When Cary bribed her servants to smuggle candles to her room so she could read when her mother attempted to break her bookish habits by refusing her a light, we are observing a woman who found a schism between the impulse of self and her role as an obedient daughter. This act suggests the stubborn presence of a personal subject position, even if it would not have been reflected on as such by Cary, who just wanted to read her books.

The theatre of the early modern period (and it might be argued that our own is no different) was very much built on characters that were mostly types modified by certain individual circumstances. Women have always had a more limited range of these archetypes, but the degree to which these types were played with by some writers suggests a definite consciousness of their artificiality or constructedness. This is apparent in Webster's *The White Devil*, in the presentation of Isabella, who appears to be a genuine 'good wife' who chooses to play the role of shrew, or in Shakespeare's portrayal of Cleopatra, who constantly changes the role she plays, and is the subject of comments on her mutability.

Certainly by the time of Shakespeare a character was not only what he or she represented, nor only how he or she functioned in the dramatic structure, but both these things, as well as the bearer of features of individual personality. In numerous instances Shakespeare removes simple motives for his characters' actions, but keeps the action (Hamlet in the play's source feigns madness as a youth, so as not to appear a threat to his uncle until he is old enough to take revenge;[25] Isabella in the sources for *Measure for Measure* pleads for Angelo because he is now her husband[26]). This appears to be working against the idea of logical character development, but in fact it draws attention to the personality of the persons being represented, and their individuality, rather than to their place in a system that could be explained adequately by rules and codes.

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[25] Stephen Greenblatt, *Will in the World* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2004), 24.
[26] J.W. Lever, Introduction to *Measure for Measure*, Arden 2nd Series (London: Methuen, 1965), xxxix-xli.

Returning to the word itself, Palfrey points out that during the early modern period 'the primary meaning of "character" was still very close to its etymological roots: it meant a brand, stamp or other graphic sign, and consequently was most often used to mean either written "characters" (e.g. letters of the alphabet) or writing style.' But he does go on to show how this beginning was already prompting the transition of the word to being used in descriptions of individuals.[27] Orgel gives the meaning of the word 'character' in this period as 'a written account of a person', but also 'the letters – characters – in which the account is written',[28] underlining the literary genesis of the idea. Shakespeare's contemporary John Webster contributed one such account to Overbury's book presenting a range of archetypes that is actually entitled *Characters.* Webster's piece on 'an excellent actor' does seem to suggest that whatever the actor was doing convinced the spectator of a kind of authentic identification between the actor and the role, when he describes such a man as being able to seem to be the very heroes he 'personates' to the point where the audience might 'take him... for many of them'. This illuminates some valuable points. One is that the spectator's perception of verisimilitude in the performance is in no way identifiable with an assumption of naturalism. Acting in this period was still based firmly in the rhetorical style, and the words spoken were arranged in blank verse not designed to imitate the speech of ordinary life, but these conventions could be absorbed by the contemporary spectator as readily as one today accepts a naturalistic performance by an actor who somehow contrives never to turn his back to the audience. It is the audience's assimilation of the performance conventions of their theatre that is the constant here, so that the quality of the rendering of a character is not at all based on historic exactitude in the words and actions performed. The other point to note is that a sense of 'truth' in performance has always been sought and admired, even though the form and expression of that truth is likely to be vastly different in different eras.

As the seventeenth century became the eighteenth, both acting and personal identity became more theorised, giving rise to ideas distilled in Diderot, whereby the quality of

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[27] Palfrey, 182.
[28] Orgel, *Authentic*, 8.

passion perceived as truthful by the spectator when a fine performance was given could only be produced by the control and to some degree 'detachment' of the actor.[29] (Burns uses Garrick as the ideal illustration of this point.[30]) The popularity of melodrama and the well-made play in the nineteenth century, and the increasing size of theatres, helped maintain the dominance of the declamatory style of acting, and the continuing power of the actor-manager kept actors working within a hierarchical star system that encouraged individualistic performances, provided the actor strictly observed his or her rank. Then in the early twentieth century, there was revolution, of a kind, when the work of Stanislavsky became the single most powerful influence on Western acting style. Almost the whole of Stanislavsky's famous trilogy (in the English version) is spent examining the nature, form and method of constructing a character, and even his thoughts on design and *mise-en-scène* treat such elements as largely there to support the development of character.[31] He does not cover the limits of usefulness of his system, or discuss the possibility of texts for which such a system might not be appropriate. Others, of course, have since challenged or modified these principles, but their prominence and ubiquity has resulted in their application by many actors to all kinds of texts, including those written well before such a developed notion of individuated character existed.

The increasing formalisation of acting theory in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries had two principal effects on the understanding of how character works in the theatre. First is the growing multiplicity of contrasting and often conflicting theories of performance. The second is that the discussion of character in the abstract became increasingly divided from performance practice. Theories of acting have almost become independent of theories of observing and analysing drama. What character has meant on stage depends not only on period or region, but on the school of artistic thought. Over the past hundred years the simultaneous existence in one society of several schools of performance practice has made the treatment of character more

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[29] Dennis Diderot, *Paradox sur le Comédien*, translated by Walter Herries Pollock (London: Chatto & Windus, 1883).
[30] Edward Burns, *Character: Acting and Being on the Pre-Modern Stage* (London: Macmillan, 1990), 185.
[31] Konstantin Stanislavsky, *An Actor Prepares*, *Building a Character*, *Creating a Role* (London: Methuen, 1989).

diverse, but also in some manner easier to identify, as competing theories have been argued and therefore explained and codified. There were attempts to do away with character entirely, but these have never come to dominate theatrical practice. Naturalism, on the other hand, looked for a coherent psychology that manifested itself in a set of gestures or actions that could be read as such by the audience. This seems to have had the most prominent effect on the way character is discussed by both actors and audiences, even when using texts that were not written using these systems. In literary criticism a hundred years ago, A.C. Bradley's detailed psychological analysis of Shakespeare's utterly fictional personages both reflected and influenced this preoccupation with the interior life of a character. Although not written as a guide for actors, Bradley's character analysis dovetailed neatly with the exploratory work on character being done in the theatre of that time. Then, as later critics (beginning with L.C. Knights[32]) argued against the appropriateness of suggesting a portion of a text could have an independent inner life, it began to become necessary to acknowledge that the thoughts of the academic on a playtext could differ in a material way from those of a theatre practitioner.[33]

If any kind of summary or linking of the understanding of different periods were possible, it might be outlined by suggesting that what we now term character has existed on stage since the early modern period as the representation of a personage who is simultaneously archetype, symbol and bag of individuating idiosyncrasies. The changes have been in the relative balance between these different elements, in the performance style used to express them, and the later expectation of a motive that corresponds to the observed behaviour of the character.

Anyone with an interest in the transmission of meaning from a text via live performance would be reckless to neglect the significance of the actor, who perhaps has a greater effect on audience reception than any other single element, if the research of Willmar Sauter is credited:

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[32] L.C. Knights, *Selected Essays in Criticism*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981.
[33] A.C. Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy*, 3rd edition (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1992), originally published 1904.

> Trying to find out on what grounds a performance is appreciated or not, we tested all judgements of the various details of a performance against the overall judgement a person [i.e. a spectator] had expressed. This showed that the evaluation of the performances such always correlates with the appreciation of the acting, even if other aspects of the show (the drama, the directing, the set, the costumes, etc.) were estimated higher or lower. This close relationship between the appreciation of the acting and the overall evaluation of the performance proved to be independent of the social background of the spectator and also independent of the type of performance. Furthermore, we observed that a lack of appreciation for the acting almost automatically prevented the spectator from engaging in the content of the performance. In other words, if the spectator does not like the actors, the performance becomes 'meaningless'.[34]

Clearly there is more to be considered on this matter. Do the audience members questioned by Sauter believe they are being asked about the overall acting style of a production (which may be more the choice of the director), or are they responding to individual actors? If they 'do not like the actors', are they making a judgement about the actors' perceived skill, or about the personality they project? Resources for staging theatrical events have obviously changed enormously since Shakespeare was writing, not least in that female characters are now most frequently represented on stage by actual women instead of by boys. What Sauter's research makes apparent is that the person chosen to represent a female character in a stage performance will have a powerful effect on the transmission of meaning of the text.

The recording of actors' own thoughts on performing character most often appear in the form either of acting instruction manuals, or of memoirs. The *Players of Shakespeare* series, running to six books at the present time, differs from this pattern in that its purpose is primarily to provide an insight into the approaches to a role of a

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[34] Willmar Sauter, *The Theatrical Event: Dynamics of Performance and Perception* (Iowa: University of Iowa Press, 2000), 4.

variety of actors, but a variety that is strictly limited. Most obviously, the series looks exclusively at performances of characters from Shakespeare. The actors have all worked for the Royal Shakespeare Company and are somewhat divorced from the possibilities of any radical deconstruction of conventional British mainstream rehearsal procedure. Phillip Brockbank's introduction to the first book of the series is significant for setting out the expectations of the publication, and some of its assumptions. Chief among these is an unqualified belief that the goal of performance is to move towards an imagined ideal production, that seems to be identified with what an original production would have been: 'While we must keep trying, we know we can't make it. At best we meet the past half way and what we make of its art, even of its facts, depends on what we are and are becoming'.[35] Without recognising the contradiction to this goal that it presents, Brockbank also discusses in some detail the 'unacknowledged presence behind virtually all of the actors' accounts here, thoroughly assimilated into the English tradition, [of] Stanislavski's *An Actor Prepares*' (p.5), and speaks of the actors' search for their characters' appropriate subtext, and 'the imagined life of the character outside the play' (p.7). In fact, Brockbank is highly simplistic in his representation of the relationships between actor and character, playwright and text: 'if we think of characters as people then we must think correspondingly of the playwright as creator, designer, manipulator – disconcertingly like a god' (p.2). Whatever the degree to which the writers of the chapters were influenced by Brockbank's perspective (he does not record what kind of brief he gave them), the introduction does suggest the climate in which they were writing.

The default position for most Western performance (not by any means limited to Shakespeare) these days, perhaps influenced by the dominance in popular culture of very literal, narrative film styles, is that even when a character is representing a type or fulfilling a dramatic function, it can be assumed that he or she also represents a coherent psychology and subject position. The argument then becomes about whether it is a convincing one. In regard to early modern playtexts, the extreme is reached when

[35] Phillip Brockbank, Introduction to *Players of Shakespeare* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 1-2.

directors attempt to apply Stanislavskian techniques and processes to works that were not constructed to support them, such as the experience with Barry Kyle described by Paola Dionisotti when working on *Measure for Measure* in 1978: 'Juliet and the other whores were sent upstairs with the assistant director to do endless improvisations on being street-walkers – you know, "My name is Rosie and my parents died of typhus."'[36] Here we have the unusual situation of an actor who reveals criticism of the director's efforts to include character development in the rehearsal process. The *Players of Shakespeare* series, and much anecdotal evidence, suggest that many actors of mainstream Shakespeare rely on creating psychologically cogent 'given circumstances' for themselves as a standard element of their work, whether instructed to by the director, or of their own volition. Curiously, a disjunction seems to have developed here, in expectation and execution, between acting and design styles in Western Shakespearean theatre. While acting most often continues to work to try to render the characters 'like us', the *mise-en-scène* within which the actors work is usually designed to emphatically establish itself as 'not like here and now'. This has been observed by Robert Smallwood as he surveyed the productions covered in the fourth *Players of Shakespeare* book,[37] and also by Worthen, who notes that:

> For much of the 'long' twentieth century, modern Western theatre tended to take a verisimilar, broadly Stanislavskian realism as its privileged register of embodiment, acting that tends to naturalize 'character' to a distinctively modern mode of representation. While acting tends to register the continuity of 'character' with modern modes of subjectivity, production design is more often where the alterity of the play is evoked… a given production's engagement with history often opens a gap between the claims of the design and the claims of the acting.[38]

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[36] Paola Dionisotti quoted in Carol Rutter, *Clamorous Voices* (London: Women's Press, 1988), 31.
[37] Robert Smallwood, Introduction to *Players of Shakespeare 4* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).
[38] W.B. Worthen, *Shakespeare and The Force of Modern Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 68.

At the other end of the scale, Burns describes the torturous nature of attempting to discuss a text without making assumptions that a modern understanding of what a character is will work: 'The self-imposed task of describing a play without invoking "character" produces a rash of inverted syntax and passive constructions.'[39] The truth is that it is virtually impossible for us now to talk about a Shakespeare play without talking about characters as if they are autonomous beings, or at least beings with a consciousness that exists outside the text. Stephen Orgel, in his chapter considering 'What is a Character' demonstrates the paradoxes even in discussing the concept itself:

> Characters are not people, they are elements of a linguistic structure, lines in a drama and more basically words on a page... It is, of course, very difficult to think of character in this way, to release character from the requirements of psychology, consistency and credibility, especially when those words on a page are being embodied by actors on a stage. But it is arguably a difficulty that drama itself accepts, indeed embraces, and even explicitly at critical moments acknowledges.[40]

In order to explicate this very point, however, he goes on to say that: 'When Coriolanus angrily rejects Rome with the words 'there is a world elsewhere' (3.3.136), he imagines a space outside his play, a world he can control. He declares his intention, in effect, of writing his own script...' Of course lines in a drama can't 'imagine', but Coriolanus doesn't even describe a space outside the play, just a space outside Rome. It is unlikely that Orgel means any of this literally, but his choice of phrasing still manages to imply exactly the kind of independent consciousness for the character that he has just expressly argued against, and furthermore to superimpose a postmodernist sensibility on that consciousness. Orgel is addressing Shakespeare's work in an exclusively literary way here, without considering performance. This will always make a huge difference to the nature of the discussion, not least because of the physical presence and contributing psychology and subjectivity of the actor, which will blend with the character as perceived by the spectator.

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[39] Burns, *Character*, 222.
[40] Orgel, *Authentic*, 8.

To complicate this further, both academia and the theatre industry are only just moving out of a long history of domination by male power and the concerns of men. The majority of Shakespeare critics in history have been men, as well as the vast majority of directors and reviewers, but the more important point is that these men have only comparatively recently been asked to question the centrality of male viewpoints, including in judgments made on the female characters. One of the most significant shifts in the history of theatre production has been the rise in the twentieth century of the director as the primary shaping artistic influence on a performance. The director has become so prominent that it is standard practice today to use his or her name to distinguish the production being referred to (Brook's *Lear*, Warner's *Titus Andronicus*, etc.). This may tend to make it more difficult to bear in mind that any production continues to be the collaborative effort of many people. On the other hand, it would be foolhardy to neglect or minimize the very distinct and powerful role in that collaboration of a person who does have the unquestionable final authority in making the artistic decisions. When dealing with a play from Shakespeare's period or earlier, there is very little guidance for interpretation or staging external to the lines the characters speak. There are no long and detailed stage directions, such as the ones written by Shaw. There is no extensive character description, as supplied by Miller. There are only the most sketchy and incomplete contemporary accounts. Therefore, anything that goes into a production, besides the script itself, must be acknowledged as emanating from those who are staging the play, either with or without explanations or justifications drawn from the text. When Shakespeare's plays have been staged during the last century, the person with the most power to make these decisions has generally been the director. Since the rise of the modern director, until recently, it has been overwhelmingly the case that that director has been a man. Within the British national theatrical tradition (and there are similarities in those cultures that show signs of the influence of the British, such as the Irish, North American and Australian), if the show is a well-funded production of Shakespeare, he will tend to be a white man with a university education. Today this is significantly less the case than in previous decades, but it still holds true to the point where this standpoint could be considered the dominant knowledge position for cultural production in this field. In claiming the role

of final authority on the meaning of the production, if not the play, great power has been assigned to the director as the one who decides the very nature of the character the actor plays. While recent critical acknowledgement of this has created a general understanding that most audiences of Shakespeare, for a long time, were getting a white, male perspective on his work, the specific influences of this perspective on particular characters have been less examined. When it comes to representing female sexuality, the difficulties for an actress grappling with a part written by a man for a boy may at times be eclipsed by the problem of having an interpretation of that part imposed by the man given the authority to decide the overall meaning of the production. It should be emphasised at this point that there is no implication here that all white, male, Oxbridge-educated directors will treat a play or its actors the same way, or that a director of a different background will necessarily be more politically engaged with the material (probably the first performative reconsideration of the role of Cressida, for example, came from Joseph Papp, in his 1965 production for the New York Shakespeare Festival). What is important is the process of beginning to ask questions about where a director's interest lies, and forging an awareness that analysing material from a standpoint outside the dominant power base for this field of cultural production may encourage taking fewer things for granted.

Though the text may be the primary influence on a director, and many directors like to maintain that they are responding to the text in some kind of unbiased way ('When I directed *Much Ado About Nothing* I wanted it to be Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing*, not Judi Dench's'[41]), performance analysis of several productions of the same play graphically demonstrates how powerfully his or her personal perspective shapes the work, as it reaches the spectator. Directors are human individuals, and like most people will tend to identify more with some characters than others when approaching a narrative. Which character or characters a director most identifies with will inevitably influence the outcome of a performance, as it will affect the balance between roles, and the degree of provision of a sympathetic context for a character, even before influence

[41] Judi Dench quoted in Elizabeth Schafer, *Ms-Directing Shakespeare: Women Direct Shakespeare* (London: Women's Press, 1998), 80.

on the actor is considered. If the director is identifying primarily with the male characters, the female characters cease to be their own subjects, but rather objects of male observation, with the woman presented from the point of view of a male subject assessing her from outside. If women are used to perform the female roles and the director prioritises the subject position of the male characters, the female actors are very likely to feel marginalized or defensive. The effect or effectiveness of the technique of asking actors to identify with their characters is not at issue here, merely the egalitarian application of whatever approach is employed. If the male actors are permitted to seek a way of presenting their characters' words and actions from their own point of view, then so should the women, but a double standard has often been evident here. At times, while male characters were being explored for their complexity, the female would be reduced to icons of the perceived degree of their sexuality, shedding the intricacies of the text (the bulk of the performance history of the presentation of Cressida is a case in point). Gender power imbalances will intersect here with many other personal aspects of the actors and the roles they are hired to play, such as their race or age, and certainly their class. It will never be possible to perfectly isolate one strand of cultural influence, but much can be teased out that is identifiably related to traditional expectations surrounding male and female behaviour.

As one illustrative example, Susannah York in her touring production *Shakespeare's Women* describes her first day in actor training, when she was asked to perform Juliet's monologue 'gallop apace you firey footed steeds', and the director gave her the instruction to 'be sexy'.[42] This kind of direction is not designed to be in any way useful for an actor, as it does not give an indication of what to *do*, it describes no kind of action, but merely a passive state of being. What is more, it is not even a state of being from the character's point of view, but from the observer's. The director is not concerned with how Juliet feels about herself, or how the actor feels about Juliet, but how he, as an external, male eye wishes to feel about her. The flipside of this kind of reduction of the female character to the director's own sense of how he responds to her sexually was the presentation of Cassandra in the production of *Troilus and Cressida*

[42] Performed in Sydney, Australia, March 2003.

directed by Michael Bogdanov in 2000.[43] The difficult-to-pigeonhole figure of the prophetess was reduced to a caricature as Bogdanov felt that her prophesying was merely the attention-seeking behaviour of a woman who was sexually unappealing to men. This example is also a most interesting illustration of both the difficulty and significance of identifying the origin of decisions about presenting character. In this production all the female characters were dressed in a kind of Eurotrash style: very high heels, short skirts, tight tops in bright colours. Bogdanov cast an exceptionally large woman in the role of Cassandra and then dressed her in a hot pink, faux-fir top, miniskirt and stilettos. His rationale for this, as expressed to the actor concerned, was that Cassandra was trying to be like the other girls, like Helen and Cressida. This did not tally with the actor's sense of the character as a truth-speaker unconcerned by appearances, so when the director returned to Britain after the first few performances, she bought a pair of men's pyjamas and performed the rest of the run in those. In this situation, an audience member who saw a performance in the first week would get a very different idea of the character from one who went in the later part of the run, but would have no knowledge of, or reason to question, whether they were seeing the director's or the actor's interpretation. As is the case in any question of sexual equality in work practice, some analysis is called for of whether and why men and women are asked to carry out the same or differing tasks. What makes the work practice situation of performance exceptional, however, is that the task carried out is the representation of men and women. Gender-based prejudices in the process affect not only those participating, but the product consumed by the public. This aspect of the process would be most observable in rehearsal, to which the critic can only hope for sporadic access at best – and that usually second-hand, through accounts written at a later date by those involved. A performance, however, should still yield some observable material that indicates where the director's interest is primarily focused. In addition, however elusive the relationship between process and product, it should be borne in mind when critiquing a performance of Shakespeare's plays from the standpoint of feminist interest that, unless there has been substantial cross-casting, the rehearsal room will always hold more men than women.

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[43] Performed in Sydney, Australia October 2000. Rehearsals observed by the author.

While considering how Shakespeare is performed in the Anglophone world, and the use of the text to authorise performance choices, the influence of the school of voice training developed primarily within the Royal Shakespeare Company must be appreciated. The methods of Cicely Berry (for many years principal vocal coach at the RSC) and Patsy Rodenburg, and the related work of New York-based Kristin Linklater, have had a massive influence on the way modern actors approach early modern texts. Focussing on physical and vocal training, and then applying rules to scoring and vocalizing the words of the text, there is an immense amount of material here that is useful to the actor, but their systems of working do explicitly discourage actors from questioning the writing of character itself. What these practitioners share is an assumption that the task of the actor is to perform the character they find in the text by reading for rhythmic and syntactic indications of how to speak the lines. There is encouragement for the actor to historicize the text, but not to question whether what they find may or may not be what they want to perform. 'Women might have to drop their current views of womanhood, and men their idea of what a man is.'[44] The belief is that this will create the most truthful rendering of the text, but the implication is also that the text will give the most truthful reflection of life ('I believe that Shakespeare is tapping into human truths in his use of form'[45]). But, as Davies begins her analysis of Woman in Renaissance Literature: 'Woman in life and woman in art are not the same person.'[46] The concurrently held beliefs that an actor should 'trust the text' *both* for how to perform a character and for a truthful depiction of a human being cuts short any political enquiry into gaps that might exist between the two, or into deconstruction of the dramatic techniques. Rodenburg directly instructs actors to 'start by avoiding any discussion along the lines of "I wouldn't say that", "I don't believe that", "I don't think my character would do that", "can we change this line?" or "this scene is unreal".'[47]

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[44] Patsy Rodenburg, *Speaking Shakespeare* (London: Methuen, 2002), 206. See also Cicely Berry, *The Actor and His Text* (New York: Scribner, 1988); Kristin Linklater, *Freeing Shakespeare's Voice: The Actor's Guide to Talking the Text* (New York: Theatre Communications Group, 1992).
[45] Rodenburg, *Speaking*, 337.
[46] Stevie Davies, *The Idea of Woman in Renaissance Literature* (Brighton: Harvester, 1986), 1.
[47] Rodenburg, *Speaking*, 13.

This issue has been examined by Sarah Werner, though her assessment is best taken in conjunction with the subsequent refutations from Berry, Rodenburg and Linklater.[48]

W.B. Worthen has also attempted to deconstruct the political aspects of the intersection between actor training, use of the Shakespearean text and the practitioner's understanding of character. In considering the theatre practitioner Neil Freeman (who proposes the possibility of employing 'authentic' Elizabethan performance methods), he observes that 'in practice, his use of early modern texts is focused almost entirely on "character"'.[49] Patrick Tucker is another proponent of 'authentic' methods (specifically by relying on the First Folio as a guide to acting choices) who makes character his pivotal point, although his understanding of character specifically discourages too close an identification with modern people, in favour of a sense of the superiority of Shakespeare's characters, and once again that unshakable belief in the indisputably 'universal' nature of the work: 'To reduce Shakespearean characters to our own level is to remove them from their universal appeal and complexity, and to make the play so specific to our interpretation that it speaks to a small part of our lives, rather than to the grandeur of the human condition.'[50] Worthen challenges the anachronistic and frankly unlikely aspects of the reliance of directors like Freeman and Tucker on the Folio text as the transmitter of the 'authentic' voice of Shakespeare, and as a basis for the revelation of 'character'. He has written usefully about the unusual practice of 'taking theatre practitioners at their word' when examining their own thoughts about their craft, and professes himself 'less concerned to interrogate performance *per se* here than to consider the attitudes and assumptions that govern its making and reception'.[51] He goes on to investigate the advantages of constructing a dialogue that can work between critics and practitioners, working towards a discourse on text and performance that provides tools and methods that can be employed effectively by both. Worthen has written a work that gets out into the open the question

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[48] Sarah Werner, 'Performing Shakespeare: Voice Training and the Feminist Actor', *New Theatre Quarterly* 12 (1996): 249-258; Cicely Berry, Patsy Rodenburg and Kristin Linklater, 'Shakespeare, Feminism and Voice: Responses to Sarah Werner', *New Theatre Quarterly* 13 (1997): 48-52.
[49] W.B. Worthen, *Shakespeare and the Authority of Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 120. Referring to Neil Freeman, *Shakespeare's First Texts* (Vancouver: Folio Scripts, 1994).
[50] Patrick Tucker, *Secrets of Acting Shakespeare: The Original Approach* (London: Routledge, 2002), 30.
[51] Worthen, *Authority*, 42.

of how those who use Shakespeare justify their choices, and why they feel they need to do so. This is a practice that pervades the work of both critics and practitioners, but generally goes without comment. The book uncovers the process of using the idea of an authentic Shakespeare to validate and justify methods and conclusions already arrived at. The purpose that it serves, however, may differ according to the needs of the perpetrator. Worthen extends his consideration of these issues further in the more recent Shakespeare and the *Force of Modern Performance*. Less concerned specifically with the way performance choices are validated, the latter is nevertheless particularly useful for its locating of Shakespearean performance within the wider field of modern theatrical events, providing some much-needed context.

This thesis builds on Worthen's premise to ask whether a similar process occurs in validating already held beliefs about women, and also investigate any challenges that are made to this process of validation. A tension must inevitably exist between early modern and current understanding of gender relations, and it is interesting to see how those who work in and write on performance seek to resolve these tensions. It often seems that these differences are acknowledged and dismissed with almost one breath: 'these people were very different from us, but not totally different'.[52] Using Worthen's *Authority*, and to some extent his *Shakespeare and the Force of Modern Performance*, I intend to proceed with similar concerns about the way performance of Shakespeare is represented in discourse, but rather than focusing on the question of the role of authority, I would like to focus on the way authority is applied to decisions about how the female roles will be presented. I argue that given the insistence of most performance practitioners on the 'relevance' of Shakespeare's plays to today's society, it is appropriate and necessary to ask what attitudes to women are indicated by their interpretations on stage.

Examining the way Shakespearean roles are discussed will of course be quite narrowly self-limiting. Very few actors have the opportunity to publish their thoughts on the roles they play, and few directors have tabled a public discussion of their methods.

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[52] Sinfield, *Faultlines*, 62.

While for the purposes of this project it would be more than a little problematic to use the rhetoric of actors writing about their acting as evidence on an equal basis with reports of what happened on stage from more detached eyes (journalists' reviews, theatre historians, and so on), such reflections remain extremely valuable for the larger project of locating the performances within sets of cultural attitudes. Sarah Werner has touched on this territory, but her interest in authority is based largely in analysis of the political and hegemonic power of the Royal Shakespeare Company as an institution, rather than of invoking the author. In her doctoral thesis (later published in a modified, rather narrower, form) Werner considers some aspects of where the power lies in the process of staging Shakespeare's female characters, but her parameters are limited to the RSC and her interest mainly lies in the gender politics of directorial decision-making.[53]

Rutter's *Clamorous Voices*[54] and Gay's *As She Likes It*[55] are the most straightforward published records focused specifically on the way that Shakespeare's female characters are currently being staged, but both these are also limited by the choice to examine only the RSC, and both are now quite old, unfortunately without newer versions on the horizon. There is a significant overlap of subject matter between Gay's work and this, as the subtitle '*Shakespeare's Unruly Women*' might suggest, with the plays she discusses being *Twelfth Night*, *As You Like It*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, and *Measure for Measure.* Despite a similar drawback of datedness, Ralph Berry's two books on directing contribute to uncovering the way directors of Shakespeare think about their work, including approach to character, although remarkably few references to female characters emerge in his books, and he includes no female directors, seeming not to consider the possibility that there are any.[56] Similarly, *Shakespeare Survey* occasionally publishes dialogues in which directors

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[53] Sarah Werner, 'Act Like a Feminist: Women and Performance at the Royal Shakespeare Company' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1996); *Shakespeare and Feminist Performance: Ideology On Stage* (London: Routledge, 2001).
[54] Carol Rutter, *Clamorous Voices: Shakespeare's Women Today* (London: Women's Press, 1988).
[55] Penny Gay, *As She Likes It: Shakespeare's Unruly Women* (London: Routledge, 1994).
[56] He wrote in the introduction of the latter book: 'A successful director is, by definition, a very busy man.' Ralph Berry, *Changing Styles in Shakespeare* (London: Allen, 1981); *On Directing Shakespeare*, (London: Harmondsworth, 1989).

reflect on their choices and philosophies. Rutter's more recent *Enter the Body* does go further into the territory I am proposing, examining what the female body is used to represent by those who stage Shakespeare.[57] The chapter on the dead Cordelia is particularly apt as a partial model, but like most of the book, focuses mainly (though not exclusively) on the RSC.

The previously mentioned *Players of Shakespeare* series is the most unmediated compilation of actors' thoughts about Shakespearean roles, but again is exclusively concerned with the RSC (with the single exception of Simon Russell Beale's discussion of Hamlet in volume 5). It seems as if only actors from this company get their opinions canvassed with any regularity. This may be less a reflection of the interest of the public than of the media savvy of the RSC, which has for some years been putting energy into marketing itself as a company built not only of performers of Shakespeare, but of authorities on him. Also, the high level of organization and accessibility to scholars of the RSC's archives helps that company's work dominate analytical discourse.

These examples of discussion about the modern performance of Shakespearean era playtexts have different goals, interests and frames of reference, but they share a tendency to reach beyond the immediate boundaries of the subject matter to attempt to field ideas that are less about Shakespeare than about what people today feel they need to get from Shakespeare: what Kennedy calls the 'cultural uses of Shakespeare'.[58] Terence Hawkes describes the process in *Meaning by Shakespeare*, 'we *use* them [the plays] in order to generate meaning. In the twentieth century, Shakespeare's plays have become one of the central agencies through which our culture performs this operation.'[59] And this, in the end, provides the core of my project here. Shakespeare possibly works better than any other literary material as a filter through which to distil the attitudes of a society at a given moment. This is not to make claims for any kind of

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[57] Carol Chillington Rutter, *Enter the Body: Women and Representation on Shakespeare's Stage* (London: Routledge, 2001).
[58] Dennis Kennedy, *Looking at Shakespeare: A Visual History of Twentieth-Century Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 10.
[59] Terence Hawkes, *Meaning by Shakespeare* (London: Routledge, 1992), 3.

spurious 'universality', but rather to suggest that the cultural weight that these plays have generated allows them to be used by modern theatre practitioners as particularly effective tools by which to create meaning, and make reflections on the world (which remain the primary goals of staging the plays, as articulated by most theatre practitioners who do so). These plays are an exceptionally rich, dense and ambiguous collection of images and ideas, so much so that whatever your beliefs about the world you will probably be able to find an expression of them somewhere in the text, by emphasising some lines and downplaying others, or by interpreting a passage in a particular way: 'Shakespeare's plays provide overwhelming evidence that he was capable of expressing virtually any sentiment with a thoroughly convincing eloquence.'[60] This is how interpretations of the plays that seemed obvious and indisputable to one generation can be completely overturned by the next, with both calling upon the same text for support. I hope that by acknowledging this aspect of the material the discourse will be opened up to questions about how performances of female roles are used to support and confirm hegemonic ideas about women, as well as when and if they are used to subvert or challenge them. Rather than dismissing our 'very interested desire to claim Shakespeare's authority for whatever one's own beliefs and opinions happen to be',[61] we can use this phenomenon to investigate those beliefs and opinions. This is where a methodology drawn from sociology becomes so appropriate, as feminist standpoint theory requires that analysis of data or experience should itself be assessed for its specific cultural biases. Although this will never be perfectly achievable, designating it a goal can make a substantial improvement on analyses that pretend such biases do not exist.

Worthen's questions about how practitioners authorise their performance choices will continue to play an important part here, but so too will some very different questions directly pertaining to textual analysis, particularly those relating to the idea of genre. Conventions that were active in the theatre at the time the plays were written can give us clues as to what kind of abstract concepts or archetypal persons that staged

[60] Phyllis Rackin, *Shakespeare and Women* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 105.
[61] Rackin, 110.

characters might be representing or commenting on. If these are established, it then becomes possible to observe whether modern productions choose to draw on these references and conventions. As instructive as such an analysis can be, my additional goal is to employ the performance analyst's acceptance of the possibility of multiple interpretations, acknowledgement of the differences in theatrical vocabulary between the early modern theatre and our own, and appreciation of the way a play can speak most clearly when seen and heard rather than read, in order to investigate current attitudes to performing representations of women. In effect, I will be employing what Friedman refers to as a *synchronic* approach to performance analysis. This method 'aims to produce critical insights through a three-part process: exploring the range of potential performance choices circumscribed by the printed text, describing the varying effect of such choices, and examining cultural or historical reasons that one effect rather than another might be considered desirable.'[62]

In doing this it is important to distinguish between three locations of interpretation of the staging of the text:

1. in reflections by performance practitioners on their work
2. in reflections by audience members on having seen performances, including reviews by both press and scholarly critics
3. on the stage, in what actually occurs in performance.

Although primary source material characterized by level 3 above is available either through observing live performance or, in mediated form, watching video archives, any act of recording in words what happened will result in further mediation of the data by levels 1 or 2. All three are of interest in themselves (not just as ways to establish what choices were made by the artists presenting the characters), as acts of mediation reveal attitudes to the subject matter. For this reason newspaper reviews and the analyses of critics have been given as much attention here as more direct representations of the performances.

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[62] Michael D. Friedman, *The World Must Be Peopled: Shakespeare's Comedies of Forgiveness* (London: Associated University Press, 2002), 16.

Because of the imperative not to limit unduly the kinds of productions included, it was not possible to view all the case studies in their optimum mode, as live performance. Performances were watched live where possible, in other cases they have been viewed on archival video, though in a few instances this was not available, either. In all cases newspaper and critical reviews were consulted, along with production photographs, programmes and, where possible, promptbooks and published commentaries from actors or directors involved. Where I have seen a production live I have referenced it by the date and location of the performance, otherwise I have listed the source material that was available. All quotations from the plays are from the RSC Shakespeare *Complete Works*.[63]

By selecting as test cases a number of female characters from Shakespeare's plays, and examining the choices made when rendering these texts as performance, this thesis will investigate the effect of these choices on the way the female characters are perceived and understood. Female speech is not just a presence in Shakespeare, but a theme. Characters who represented women speak, but it is not just what they say, but the very fact of their speaking, that becomes the subject of the dialogue. I intend to investigate some of the ways that the words that Shakespeare wrote to represent the speech of women have been presented using our vastly different cultural resources and priorities. It is not my intention to write a critique of actor training methods, or specifically discuss their relationship to the concept of character. What I intend to look at is how gender presents itself as a factor when the staging of the plays is being considered, both by those who construct and those who observe a performance. How do practitioners and critics characterize their own engagement with the representation of the female in performance? This will occur in the absences and omissions as much as in those examples that concern themselves openly with gender.

Through this process, I expect to be able to identify and compare dramaturgical and directorial strategies that support a presentation of the female roles as complex and

[63] *William Shakespeare Complete Works*, ed. Jonathan Bate and Eric Rasmussen (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2007).

individuated, those that recognise and subvert through irony or parody an apparent stereotyping or limiting of the female roles, and certainly also those that collude with the stereotypes and continue to diminish the power and variety of the roles. The characters discussed here are all notable for the opportunities they offer the practitioner to make a choice about whether to constrain or demonise their unruliness, or to emphasise it and frame it positively. I will also seek to observe how the practitioners involved describe or authorise what they are doing. Do they recognise matters of the presentation of gender as an issue? Do they even identify their decisions as strategies with political ramifications? The purpose of all this is to explore something of the range of approaches to early modern female roles currently in practice, and give a sense of the possible different effects that such strategies can have on audience reception. Also to begin to formulate a set of questions that the interested observer might ask of a production as to whether it has chosen to engage with female speech as an issue, whether its presentation of that speech invokes censure or approval, and how that reflects the power transactions occurring in the process and the product of performance. The shrew is a figure who invites competing assessments of her behaviour. She is constructed to alleviate male anxieties through ridicule, but like so many objects of comedy or derision, she is full of power because of her very ability to generate these anxieties. Our attitudes to the wielding of power, verbal or otherwise, by women can be expected to have changed since the time these characters were created, but how much, and in what ways? Shakespeare gave us some exceptional commentary on the female voice. When we now stage that voice, who is speaking, and how do we listen?

Chapter One

"Shrewd Tempters With Their Tongues":

Henry VI

To know someone is to have power over them. Conversely, if someone is unknowable it makes them powerful, but also dangerous and frightening. In drawing a character, making him or her unknowable may seem the opposite of what a playwright would want to do. There are circumstances, however, when elusiveness is a useful characteristic. In writing about modern interpretations of Shakespeare's female characters, it must be borne in mind that these parts were originally written to be played by boys, who filled the apprentice positions in English acting troupes of the period. This meant that as well as enacting specific women characters, the boys were demonstrating 'woman' – they had to enact behaviour that marked them out as female in an all-male acting ensemble. In *The Idea of Woman in Renaissance Literature*, Davies writes of the Renaissance 'Janus temperament' regarding woman, that 'sees with a dual vision … Woman is a bane and a fool, and a scold; she is the highest being we can know or imagine. She is the alienated other; she is, like Psyche, our truest self.'[64] Shakespeare himself wrote of 'shifting change as is false woman's fashion',[65] and Hall, one of Shakespeare's chief sources for his *Henry VI* plays, wrote of Margaret of Anjou that, despite her numerous masculine qualities, 'but yet she had one poynt of a very woman: for often tyme… she was sodainly like a weathercocke, mutable and turning.'[66] 'Woman' was considered to be by her nature mercurial, elusive, contradictory. Drawing a character in this way was one way to mark her as female. A bye-product of this is that such characters are powerful.

In the presentation of character, Shakespeare's writing may at times be confusing, dense or contradictory, but it is not simplistic. As inappropriate as it may be to see his characters as representations of psychologically complete or independent entities, their

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[64] Stevie Davies, *The Idea of Woman in Renaissance Literature* (Brighton: Harvester, 1986), 26-27.
[65] Sonnet 20.
[66] Edward Hall, quoted in Nicholas Grene, *Shakespeare's Serial History Plays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 113.

construction through speech almost never suggests uni-dimensionality. Whatever else commentators argue about his presentation of character, they rarely contest that the expression and the imagery are complex, nuanced and layered. And yet both conservative critics with a distinct lack of interest in gender and feminist analysts who made it their primary focus have at times suggested that Shakespeare wrote straightforward female characters that fall into one of the few allowable categories for women: winsome romantic heroine, good wife or punished shrew, without observing the way that these figures are repeatedly destabilised, obscured or problematized by his text. Some critics and practitioners have complained that Shakespeare's female characters are either wholly good or (less often) wholly bad, idealized or demonized,[67] but it this an inevitable conclusion after examining the text, or is this the result of oversimplifying interpretations (critical and theatrical) designed to solve the problem of a female character who is neither of these things? Phyllis Rackin, first in 'Misogyny is Everywhere'[68] then again in her more recent *Shakespeare and Women*, suggests that comparative critical attention to Shakespeare's plays has been selective in choosing the texts that support a simplistic understanding of gender roles and relationships in this period: 'Plays with overtly repressive and misogynist themes have proved increasingly popular, and the stories they tell are held up as historically accurate expressions of beliefs generally endorsed in Shakespeare's time.'[69] Her theory is that plays that challenge these 'norms' are present, but are less attended to for this very reason. I believe that the same idea can be effectively extended to apply to the interpretation of the characters within the plays. The designation of the female characters as either good or bad shows the limited nature of much criticism and performance; it reveals nothing fundamental about the text, which has the elasticity to bear much more variegated interpretations. The assumption that the images the plays present of womanhood are simple can only be maintained when the text is examined selectively and those moments of word and action that render them more complex are ignored.

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[67] See, for example, the discussion 'Is Shakespeare Sexist' in *Is Shakespeare Still Our Contemporary*, ed. John Elsom (London: Routledge, 1989), 72-78.
[68] Phyllis Rackin, 'Misogyny is Everywhere' in *A Feminist Companion to Shakespeare*, ed. Dympna Callaghan (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000): 42-58.
[69] Phyllis Rackin, *Shakespeare and Women* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 11.

Ambiguity in a character is not generally the default position for a writer; it is a presence, not an omission, and writing an ambiguous character is not a simpler task than writing a straightforward one, quite the reverse. The elusive and contradictory nature of some of Shakespeare's female characters can be used to fulfil a discernable dramatic function, and therefore needs to be dealt with as a presence in the text. It has been observed of many of Shakespeare's female characters that they give an audience an incomplete sense of their subject position even, or especially, at points in the narrative where an audience may most ardently wish to understand their point of view. Palfrey and Sinfield's speculations on this matter have been canvassed in the previous chapter, but these critics are interested in performance only tangentially. If the lacunae found in the drawing of many female characters (particularly in regard to their sexuality and responses to their relationships with men) are apparent to the reader, are they likely to be so to an audience member? Can such ambiguity be staged, and what would its contribution be to a performative interpretation of a play?

It happens that the conditions of Early Modern staging were especially well suited to embodying such ambiguity. Michael Shurgot, in his investigation of the relationship between performance and audience on an Elizabethan stage, posits that performances on an apron stage would contribute to an unstable reading of what the characters are experiencing, by ensuring that when there are several characters grouped in different parts of the stage audience members would inevitably privilege the perspective of different characters, depending on their proximity to them.[70] A playwright's and actor's awareness of this effect can be put to use in conjunction with an ambiguous text to create a sense of instability and elusiveness. For those now working to create new performances with scripts written under these conditions, even using other staging conventions, a consciousness of this history prompts thematic considerations about how to present the female. In practice, however, this characteristic elusiveness of the female characters, rather than being used as an important feature of the plays, has rarely been activated in most modern productions. Rather than allowing the ambiguity

[70] Michael Shurgot, *Stages of Play: Shakespeare's Theatrical Energies in Elizabethan Performance* (London: Associated University Press, 1998).

to stand, the more common tendency has been to fill in the gaps with costume signifiers, blocking, gesture and additional tableaux, and not to leave the spaces unfilled.

An early Shakespearean example of this technique of elusiveness is in the presentation of the surprising figure of Joan of Arc in *1 Henry VI*, or Jeanne la Pucelle, as she is referred to most commonly in the text.[71] Michael Taylor frankly states: 'No other character in Shakespeare comes to us so unapologetically discrepant.'[72] She seems to give no speech, perform no action, represent no image, that is not contradicted by some other, even to the point where she appears as something completely different depending on who is observing her. To the Dauphin she is a 'Bright star of Venus fallen down on the earth' (I.3.144), to the English an 'ugly witch' (V.3.34). Truly, 'one man's Sibyl is another man's Hecate'.[73] A similar case can be made regarding the most prominent female character in the first tetralogy, Queen Margaret of Anjou, although her function and characteristics vary in each of the plays in which she appears. In part one she has only one short scene. She is a more obviously politically destructive and treacherous force in part two, but by part three the complete lack of contrasting positive figures, and Henry's obvious need for someone to defend his cause against York, do not allow her easy dismissal as a villain. She also appears in *Richard III*, making no obvious contribution to the plot but serving a thematic and choric function.

The three parts of *Henry VI* were among Shakespeare's first plays, and their representation of the ambiguous female character occurs in a less sophisticated form than in later plays. In part one, Joan's first scene is a prototype for one Shakespeare would use many times in his career. This scene, where a woman walks into the very centre of male power-broking and, by demonstration of skill, deflects sexual innuendo and insists on being taken seriously is echoed in *All's Well That Ends Well*, *Measure*

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[71] This name itself invites competing readings: 'pucelle' means virgin, 'puzel' means whore. See 'Jeanne la Pucelle/Joan Puzel' in Edward Burns's Introduction to *1 Henry VI*, Arden 3rd Series (London: Thomson Learning, 2000), 25-27.
[72] Michael Taylor, Introduction to *1 Henry VI* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 45.
[73] Gabriele Bernhard Jackson, 'Topical Ideology: Witches, Amazons and Shakespeare's Joan of Arc' *English Literary Renaissance* 18 (1988): 40-65, 48.

for Measure and *Troilus and Cressida*. The parallels with the latter are particularly startling. In both cases, a lone woman enters the political and military territory of a group of men, and challenges their assumptions. In both cases the men attempt to sexualise the encounter and reduce the power of the woman within this group, while the woman deflects and neutralizes their innuendo, or turns their suggestiveness back upon them. In both cases, men retaliate against defeat at these women's hands by calling them whores. Crucially, though, in many instances of production of both these plays, the director, identifying with the men in the scenes, simply required the actor in the role to play her enemies' description of her. When a woman scares, humiliates or defeats a man, an easy way for him to avenge his wounded pride is to accuse her of sexual promiscuity. When this happens in a play, however, we as an audience are not required to believe the insults; we don't have to give his opinion the authority of objectivity, but can see the bias of its context.

In *1 Henry VI*, Joan enters the French camp, where the Dauphin and his generals are just ruminating on their recent defeats at the hands of the English. She tells the prince that she has been sent by the Virgin Mary to ensure French victory. She then beats the Dauphin in single combat, as a proof of her divine ordination, and rebuffs his subsequent sexual advances, claiming 'I must not yield to any rites of love, / For my profession's sacred from above' (I.2.113-114). In a play that begins with the English mourning and carping over the death of Henry V, and goes on to the French mourning and carping over their military losses, she is the first positive presence the audience sees. Joan, in this scene, is an attractive, powerful, vivacious figure, in comparison with the other characters introduced up to this point in the play. They stand around and talk, she does; they worry and doubt, she blazes with certainty. As the play progresses, the French and English take turns to be the victors in a series of battles, the fearsome Joan beats England's greatest hero, Lord Talbot, when meeting him in single combat on the field, has a piece of virtuoso rhetoric in persuading Burgundy to switch his allegiance from England back to France, and is called some ugly names by the English and their allies. Burgundy calls her 'vile fiend and shameless courtesan' (III.2.44), and Talbot 'Foul fiend of France and hag of all despite, / Encompass'd with thy lustful paramours'

(III.2.51-52), along with 'witch' and 'high minded strumpet'. Notice how, as Phyllis Rankin puts it:

> The masculinity of the female warrior is linked with the sexual promiscuity of the harlot … [the women] can be either womanly or warlike. They can be either virtuous or powerful. But never both.[74]

We should be careful, however, about where we locate the judgement delivered upon female characters in situations like this. The language of critics frequently conflates Shakespeare with the lines of his characters. Rackin, for example, cites 'Shakespeare's characterisation of Joan [as] both leader of the Dauphin's army and his "trull"'.[75] But it is the Duke of Burgundy who refers to Joan as the Dauphin's trull, immediately after he has fought a battle against her. He is hardly in a position to be taken as the authorial voice. Rackin again, this time writing with Howard, refers in passing to Joan's 'sexual promiscuity', with no reference to what in the text supports this assumption.[76] Callaghan also casually comments on 'Joan of Arc (who is, of course, presented as a whore in Shakespeare's rendition of her character)',[77] but does not table evidence to suggest why this is so certain. When there are only the words of characters who are inevitably shaped by their place within the dramatic narrative, we can choose whom within the play we believe, and Shakespeare frequently provides the instruments of doubt. Directors of modern productions, however, have often taken the word of Joan's enemies, and taken it literally. Taking of insults as stage directions firmly allies the director with the enemies of the woman in question, and forces her to present herself from their point of view. It would be a similar choice to look to Tamora to decide how Titus Andronicus should be played.

In the text, Joan is not presented as a simple hero any more than she is a simple villain; she is all ambiguity. In the final act, she is given moments that specifically contradict her earlier ones. In an extraordinary monologue, she is shown asking for the help of

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[74] Phyllis Rackin, 'Women's Roles in the Elizabethan History Plays' in *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare's History Plays*, ed. Michael Hattaway (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002): 71-85, 79.
[75] Ibid.
[76] Jean E. Howard and Phyllis Rackin, *Engendering a Nation: A Feminist Account of Shakespeare's English Histories* (London: Routledge, 1997), 55.
[77] Dympna Callaghan, *Women and Gender in Renaissance Tragedy* (London: Harvester, 1989), 152.

'fiends' when France is losing the battle, contradicting her initial claim that her power came from 'Christ's mother' (I.2.106), and confirming the accusations of sorcery against her. There is no doubt that Joan does not cut a noble figure in her final scene. Condemned to burn at the stake, she denies her father (a simple and comic shepherd who comes to give her his blessing), contradicting her initial willingness to publicly proclaim such humble origins. She also makes contradictory claims about the status of her virginity, and is led away cursing. In an attempt to persuade her captors not to burn her, Joan first reminds them that she is a virgin 'Whose maiden blood, thus rigorously effus'd, / Will cry for vengeance at the gates of heaven' (V.4.51-52), but when their answer is that in this case they will add more fuel to the fire, so she will burn more quickly, she goes on to claim that she is pregnant. The English suggest it is the Dauphin's child, and therefore should die, and Joan counters by claiming first that it is the child of the Duke Alençon, and then of King Reigneir. By the end of the scene her saintly reputation is irretrievably sullied. Or is it?

Shakespeare mitigates this straightforward negative presentation in several significant matters of circumstance. Firstly, this scene is a very precise mirroring of her first scene. In I.2 she tells the French court openly that she is a shepherd's daughter without noble birth, so we know that she has not built a career on concealing her background. If her claim of noble birth (directly contradicting her stated position in Act I) is a lie, is it not most likely that her claim to have abandoned her vow of chastity (directly contradicting her stated position in Act I) is also a lie? We cannot know that it is, but we also cannot know it is not. The meticulous sequence of inversions of her claims (fiends instead of Madonna, nobility instead of peasantry, promiscuity instead of virginity) suggests a dramatic strategy, over the likelihood of mere authorial carelessness. Secondly, there are the details of her physical situation at this point in the play. To be burned at the stake is not to die in battle, fighting to the last (which honourable exit is allowed the English hero, Talbot). It is conceivable that even noble warriors might lose their nerve at such a prospect, and grasp at any way to save themselves. The propriety surrounding noble birth would have required a sentence of beheading or banishment, so all the elements of Joan's declarations during this scene (of noble birth and virginity then

pregnancy) point to her chief aim being to avoid being burnt. Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, there is the presentation of the English lords surrounding her. Their language is crude, there is nothing noble or gentlemanly in their handling of her. According to Christian law an unborn child is innocent, and Joan should have been held until her claim of pregnancy could be verified. Instead, her captors claim this is all the more reason that she should die:

> We'll have no bastards live (V.4.69)
> It dies, an if it had a thousand lives. (V.4.74)
> Strumpet, thy words condemn thy brat and thee. (V.4.83)

The English lords are not set up as a contrast to Joan, but as even more brutal.

From a textual point of view, the only thing that unambiguously marks Joan as not what she claims to be is the fact that her soliloquy is addressed to 'fiends'. Obviously, at the time of its original staging this would be enough to mark her as evil to a uniformly Christian audience, but here the gap between historic criticism and modern theatre practice opens up. In a modern production, where it is not obligatory to present the French as the villains, and they can be seen simply as a group with competing interests, even this may evoke admiration, as Joan offers everything she has, not for personal glory, but for her troops and for her country. The interesting questions to ask of these productions are firstly whether they encourage or discourage such admiration, and secondly what means they use to prompt the audience one way or another.

Inevitably viewed as a counterpoint to Jeanne is Margaret of Anjou, who is the only character who appears in all the plays of the first tetralogy. It is easy to see why it might be assumed that Margaret is a straightforward representation of inversion and misrule, and the fear that power in women is unnatural. Critics writing in the 1960s and 70s, such as Bevington, Fiedler and French, all see a fear of the feminine in Shakespeare's portrayal of Joan and Margaret.[78] Coppélia Kahn adds another level, however, in suggesting that Shakespeare is deliberately staging, and perhaps criticising,

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[78] David Bevington, 'The Domineering Female in *1 Henry VI*' *Shakespeare Studies* 2 (1966): 51-58; Leslie Fiedler, *The Stranger in Shakespeare* (New York: Macmillan, 1972); Marilyn French, *Shakespeare's Division of Experience* (New York: Ballantine, 1981).

the polarization of characteristics into male and female. Unfortunately she does not discuss Margaret directly, but she does challenge the assumption that Shakespeare shares the misogyny of his characters: 'I see Shakespeare, rather, as criticizing a patriarchal world that bases the social order and the masculine identity on a destructively narrow and brittle foundation of identification with the father to the exclusion or repression of identification with the mother.'[79] More recently, Irene Dash focuses on Margaret's exposure of women's exclusion from systems of power, such that even attempts to control their own lives must fail. She is perhaps least interested in the Queen's time as a successful martial leader, and more concerned with the way the play seems to accurately reflect the futility of a woman attempting to translate titular or nominal power into real influence on the course of events. In their introduction to the Arden edition, John Cox and Eric Rasmussen survey the feminist writing that mentions Margaret, and remark on how surprisingly little there is.[80] They also tackle the issue of the way the complexities of Margaret's presentation (whereby her role as 'bad' is problematized by things like her genuine fears for the succession of her son and her grief at his death) have frequently been ignored in descriptions of her character that treat her as simply an icon of evil. Published in the same year as the Arden edition, however, is Liebler and Shea's essay which tackles precisely these matters. Challenging the assumption that Margaret is presented wholly unfavourably, they suggest 'that an "alternative discourse of power" is central and critical to understanding Margaret's multifaceted representation, and further that Shakespeare, though not necessarily his masculine characters in these plays, valorizes rather than demonises her "aggressive" qualities as regal manifestations of autonomy.'[81]

Significantly, as with Jeanne, there are complications to the simplistic viewpoint for those willing to see them. Again we see a context that gives reasons for her behaviour,

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[79] Coppélia Kahn, *Man's Estate: Masculine Identity in Shakespeare* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981).
[80] John D. Cox and Eric Rasmussen, Introduction to *3 Henry VI*, Arden 3rd Series (London: Thomson Learning, 2001).
[81] Naomi C. Liebler and Lisa Scancella Shea, 'Shakespeare's Queen Margaret: Unruly or Unruled?' in *Henry VI: Critical Essays*, ed. Thomas Pendleton (London: Routledge, 2001): 79-96, 96. The work is mentioned by Cox and Rasmussen in a footnote only, suggesting that it came out too late for their more complete analysis.

and the behaviour of those she is surrounded by makes it clear that she can only be judged as reprehensible if most of the other characters are similarly accused, or if a different standard is applied to her alone. Margaret has only one scene in *1 Henry VI*, where her appearance as an innocent girl still prefigures her later affair with Suffolk, as he gains her acquiescence in a kiss. In part two she is shown in the least sympathetic light of the series, as part of the internal political machine jostling for position in the realm. At this stage there are still characters like Gloucester drawn to personify an idealized order of selfless nobility, creating a contrast to the many other more Machiavellian figures, among whom Margaret is prominent. Her unrepentant adultery, selfish politicking and petty squabbles over status render her more straightforwardly unattractive than Jeanne is ever made to appear. On the other hand, the repeated, public rudeness she is made to suffer from the English courtiers, before she has even done anything to give them a chance to make a valid judgement on her personally, provides a persuasive motivation for her bitterness and a reason for audience sympathy to be engaged, and her parting from her lover and grief at his death are not written in such a way as to allow for the possibility of audience sympathy.

Her largest role occurs in *3 Henry VI*, which includes York's famous description of her as a 'tiger's heart wrapped in a woman's hide'. If this play is taken independently it becomes much more difficult to treat Margaret as any simple kind of villain. Lord Suffolk being dead in part two, there is no more representation of her sexual betrayal of her husband, and as the first thing to happen in the play is Henry's disinheriting of their son, her involvement in the country's politics is no longer a trivial grasping for greater influence over the King, but a desperate and deadly fight for survival. In taking command of her husband's army she is unquestionably usurping a masculine role, but the necessity for her to do this is not equivocal. The political realities of the time made Henry's handing of the succession over to York a death sentence for their son.

It is worth noting that there is one other character in these plays who could legitimately fall within a discussion of shrew figures. Eleanor, the Duchess of Gloucester, is a woman who is verbally transgressive (in this case treasonous), and whose husband

seeks to curb her speech. Appearing only in the first two acts of part two, she is not a dominant figure in the plays like the two Frenchwomen, but she does provide another foil to Margaret, and another example of the illusion of female power, which at first appears to include some real power to influence the course of events, but turns out to be a power that dwells but in the tongue.[82]

Numerous productions of Shakespeare's histories have combined the three parts of *Henry VI* and *Richard III* into some kind of cycle, and Margaret's position as the only character to appear in all these plays has, in the last half-century, made her one of the great challenges of the Shakespeare canon. This despite the often disproportionate cutting of her role in the transition to the stage, which has been observed by Martin.[83] He found that Hands's 1977 version, for example, despite a stated brief of presenting the plays 'in full', cut 34% of Margaret's lines, despite cutting only 6% of the plays' lines overall.

The *Henry VI* plays are the least frequently performed of the plays discussed in this thesis. By far the most common way for them to be staged these days is for the three parts to be compressed into two. Northern Broadsides did such an amalgamation in 2006,[84] as did Australia's Bell Shakespeare Company in 2005,[85] both called *Wars of the Roses* for the purposes of the exercise. An exception is Michael Boyd's 2000 production for the Royal Shakespeare Company, with Fiona Bell doubling the roles of Jeanne and Margaret.[86] This production gave all three plays in full, and was revived for the 'Complete Works' festival in 2006, with Katy Stephens in the roles. Before examining these three core performance examples, contextualizing them within the

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[82] For a fuller examination of this aspect, see Irene Dash, *Wooing, Wedding and Power: Women in Shakespeare's Plays* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981): 153-207.
[83] Randall Martin, 'Queen Margaret Thatcherized in Recent Productions of *3 Henry VI*' in *Shakespeare and His Contemporaries in Performance*, ed. Edward Esche (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000): 321-338.
[84] Archival material used: edited script, production photographs, programme and notes (kindly supplied by Northern Broadsides).
[85] Archival material used: edited script, production photographs, programme, education kit and peripheral materials (kindly supplied by the Bell Shakespeare Company).
[86] Archival material used: video taken press night, 13 December 2000, production photographs, promptbook (held by Shakespeare Centre Library).

frame of a number of other prominent productions will be illuminating, particularly of the issue of staging ambiguity.

Using the ambiguities of the text as a resource for performance instead of a problem has been tried. In John Barton and Peter Hall's 1963 *Wars of the Roses*, Janet Suzman played both sides of Joan. Her victory over the Dauphin was based on strength, energy and skill, not mysticism: 'With a galvanising energy she erupted into the French court scene... and proceeded to defeat the Dauphin in a convincingly strenuous single combat conducted with heavy longswords.'[87] Her 'turn and turn again' line was dryly cynical and directly to the audience. Her soliloquy was directed to fiends, but was delivered with a passionate sincerity, cutting her hand to offer them her blood, and opening the neck of her tunic to offer them her body and soul, in such a way that an audience would hesitate to condemn a warrior for being prepared to go so far for their country's good. Nicholas Grene has tackled the effect of watching a performance based on making moments work within individual scenes, rather than striving for a unified character arc that may not be supported by the text:

> This performance made a strength out of the inconsistencies of the text. Instead of trying to establish a single through-line for the part, Suzman's Joan fulfilled a number of roles, as tomboy rough diamond and female victim, as enigmatic leader (perhaps inspired, perhaps only shrewd actor/manipulator), as iconoclastic onlooker and farseeing prophet of doom. Each of these worked potently within the individual stage moment without being subordinated to any one controlling reading of the character.[88]

Grene sees this performance as responding to undeniable contradictions within the text, which he regards as a facet of the textual counterpoint between the presentation of the English and French in general, represented in the particular by Talbot and Joan respectively, with the stable, straightforward Talbot a contrast to Joan's confusing mystery.

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[87] Nicholas Grene, *Shakespeare's Serial History Plays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 72.
[88] Ibid.

Curiously, Barton changed the line 'Now France thy glory droopeth unto dust' to 'Now *Joan* thy glory droopeth unto dust', implying that her chief concern was for her own glory, a position that was not elsewhere suggested by Suzman's performance.

As Margaret in this production, Peggy Ashcroft turned in a performance that was lauded and remembered perhaps beyond any other aspect of the production. Managing to mould the Margarets of four separate plays into one psychological arc, she engaged the audience by giving them a fascinating and credible personality to observe over the course of a lengthy journey, rather than by specifically playing for sympathy. As Patricia Lennox speaks of the televised version: 'It is a riveting performance... her passion for Suffolk is palpable; her grief as she cradles his severed head is wrenching.'[89]

By contrast, when Terry Hands staged all three plays in 1977 he seems to have diminished rather than featured these two key female roles. It has already been noted how greatly the part of Margaret was truncated. It also appears to have been one of those productions in which the director required the actor playing Joan to base her performance on the way King Henry's English forces depict her. The *Daily Telegraph* summarized Charlotte Cornwell's Joan as 'sexy and flamboyant',[90] and the *Evening Standard* described her as 'a provocative, mocking, red-headed witch, pirouetting about the stage like a flirtatious gypsy ... as credible a martial figure as Carmen Miranda.'[91]

Of course class politics are just as important here as gender issues; Michael Bogdanov and Michael Pennington's anti-establishment English Shakespeare Company would never have presented Joan and her arch rival the English Lord Talbot in a similar vein to the RSC's frequent games of heroes and villains. The 1988 ESC production, directed

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[89] Patricia Lennox, '*Henry VI*: A Television History in Four Parts' in *Henry VI: Critical Essays*, ed. Thomas Pendleton (London: Routledge, 2001): 235-252, 244.
[90] John Barber, *Daily Telegraph*, 13 July 1977.
[91] Milton Shulman, *Evening Standard*, 13 July 1977.

by Bogdanov, did not fall into the pattern of assuming the veracity of the insults levelled at Joan, but did also seek to eliminate the contradictions of the role. Her speech to the 'fiends' was modified to be addressed to the Virgin Mary, creating in Francesca Ryan an 'earnest peasant warrior' much closer to modern perceptions of the character.[92] Both approaches show an unwillingness to engage with the inherent contradictory nature of the character. Hodgdon did see in Bogdanov's production, however, in its unromanticized images of brutality against women, both named and anonymous, a foregrounding of gender and its role in conflict: 'Bogdanov's performance text reprivileges the series of betrayals that result in the uneasy French peace treaty to foreground the way in which males – subjects as well as rulers – contain the threats of female power by expressing their own power through women.'[93]

An illuminating contribution to observing the process involved in creating these characters is supplied from Adrian Noble's 1988 compression of the plays, referred to as *The Plantagenets*. Penny Downie performed the role of Queen Margaret and wrote an analysis of the experience for *Players of Shakespeare*. There is an interesting tension in Downie's writing between a stated determination not to judge her character, and what that resolution reveals, namely, that she has already judged her, or been handed a judgement on her. She comments on the burden of the character's reputation as 'mad Margaret', and is very willing herself to label Margaret's behaviour towards York as 'monstrous'. She uses words like 'animal', 'atrocity', 'depravity'. She insists: 'we hear her speak with queenly dignity (and she *is* a queen)',[94] but why is an insistence on this point even necessary? Here Downie seems to have absorbed the slights made by her enemies towards the legitimacy of Margaret as an appropriate candidate for marriage to the king, over and above her own character's insistence on her aristocratic status. In her final paragraph she says that she 'spent a lot of time scraping away the preconceptions',[95] but the impression left is that she is rather trapped

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[92] Edward Burns, Introduction to *1 Henry VI*, Arden 3rd Series (London: Thomson Learning, 2000), 32.
[93] Barbara Hodgdon, *The End Crowns All* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 90.
[94] Pennie Downie, 'Margaret of Anjou' in *Players of Shakespeare 3*, ed. Robert Smallwood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993): 114-139, 133.
[95] Downie, 139.

by them, instinctively struggling against the labels traditionally applied to this character, and then unconsciously invoking them herself.

An illustration of the gap between a literary or academic understanding of the text and a performative one occurs in her analysis of the scene of young Edward's death. Downie says: 'She has to channel the pain somewhere or her brain would explode, so she seeks relief in cursing, which turns into prophesying'.[96] This shows a great deal about the dominant methods of thinking about a role. Obviously the part has been written in retrospect by someone who knew the outcome of the Wars of the Roses, and Margaret's curse upon York that his children may be similarly cut off was included by the playwright as a device to inject a kind of dramatic irony, probably not primarily as an indication of Margaret's emotional state. At least in this instance, however, the actor speaking the lines does not consider performing them with rhetorical detachment, but looks for a suitable emotional impetus. Even Margaret's eventual exit from the plays in *Richard III* is incorporated into a unified and resolved emotional journey. Downie feels that Margaret passes on her role as the one who grieves and curses to Elizabeth, and leaves released from this burden.

Editing will always influence the impression given to an audience of a character, and in performance in the modern age the *Henry VI* plays have tended to be more heavily edited that any others of Shakespeare, in that they are most often compressed from three plays into two. This approach has a particularly significant impact on Margaret, who has very different relationships to the characters around her in part two from those in part three. If the three plays are reshaped into two then Margaret's adultery with Suffolk and grief at his death can occur in the same play as her defence of her husband's title and their son's birthright, and the vindictiveness of her treatment of York in the third part may appear an echo of that she has shown to Gloucester, instead of being fuelled by a very different imperative. It was an unusual step for the RSC to stage *3 Henry VI* alone and in its entirety as it did in 1994, directed by Katie Mitchell in The Other Place. Of the three parts of *Henry VI* it is the third that shows the queen in

[96] Downie, 134.

her most androgynous role, and without her lover Suffolk encouraging a sense of her as *femme fatale*, motivated by lust and/or dependant on a man for political help. Mitchell used the opportunity to emphasise the Queen's role as leader and politician, rather than temptress and social climber. Barbara Hodgdon discerned much that was radical and counter-hegemonic in the resulting production, especially in comparison with the triumphalist *Henry V* taking place on the main stage at the same time.[97] The presentation of Margaret was pragmatic. Here was a queen and a mother who was doing what had to be done, with no time spent focussing on her sexuality. Hodgdon also noted that Mitchell cut far fewer of Margaret's lines than any of the previous RSC productions. More broadly, though, she saw in the production a challenge to the kind of self-important view of history that supports heroics and ignores the collateral damage. All deaths were treated as calamities to those close to the victim, whether this was the death of Prince Edward or a nameless extra. With regard to Margaret, this meant that the pressure of her personal risks were kept in balance with her political concerns.

Not long after this English production, the New York Public Theater performed an amalgamation of the three plays into two, in 1996, that seemed to explore similar questions about the self-perpetuating cycle of brutality, and the possibility of misogyny having a greater role in the ultimate treatment of the female characters than ordinary political retribution. This company has an impressive history of challenging the received knowledge about Shakespeare's plays. In Karin Coonrod's production, while Joan's lines were not cut or adjusted to make them more palatable, she was provided with a context that problematised the reading of her as evil. The brutality of the English became key here. Richard, Duke of York is the character who eventually captures Joan and plays a key role in her execution, and here it was hinted throughout that York was a figure who had a particularly antagonistic attitude to women. He was shown as the instigator in all the scenes where powerful women are attacked: Joan, Queen Margaret, the Duchess of Goucester.[98] The image used to represent Joan's death also prompted

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[97] Barbara Hodgdon, 'Making it New: Katie Mitchell Refashions Shakespeare-History' in *Transforming Shakespeare*, ed. Marianne Novy (London: Palgrave, 1999): 13-34.
[98] Thomas A. Pendleton, 'Talking With York: a conversation with Steven Skybell' in *Henry VI: Critical Essays*, ed. Pendleton (London: Routledge, 2001): 219-234.

reflection on the innocent cast of her first scene. Joan wore a simple blue smock over her army clothes. After she was led away to execution a paper version of the smock was suspended above the stage and went up in flames. The colour associated with innocence and the Virgin Mary, and the fragility of the paper, which could be incinerated in an instant emphasised both the symbolic role of Joan and her vulnerability.

As Coonrod's production demonstrates, it is not only the English who have found ways to make effective use of these English histories to tell a story or further an agenda. One of the more overtly political versions of the plays on record was produced in Belgium as *Ten Oorlog* ('to war'), and then translated, as *Schlachten!* ('battles' or 'slaughter'), for performance in Germany. Adapted by Tom Lanoye and directed by Luk Perceval, James Loehlin called it 'the most influential European production of Shakespeare's history plays in the late 1990s' which 'cut all eight Plantagenet histories into a twelve-hour marathon of gangsterism, sex and violence'.[99] Ton Hoenselaars saw the production as having dual goals, one directly, locally political, the other more cultural: 'Rewriting the tetralogies as an indictment of Belgian politics in the 1990s, they also attempted to subvert Shakespeare's own supremacy in the field of historical drama.'[100] The scope of this production was much broader than just the *Henry VI* plays, using all the English History Chronicles from *Richard II* through to *Richard III*. Bloody struggle between those in power at the expense of the ordinary people, and the abuse of children were dominant themes in all the sections. Queen Margaret, here referred to as Margaretha di Napoli, was represented as driven to her affair with Suffolk by her husbands infantilism. 'Suffolk is beheaded during his copulation with Margaretha, and Margaretha's resulting pregnancy is communicated by the way in which she carries Suffolk's bloody head under her clothes.'[101] Taking Margaret's taunting of York with a

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[99] James N. Loehlin, 'Brecht and the Rediscovery of Henry VI' in *Shakespeare's History Plays: Performance, Translation and Adaptation in Britain and Abroad*, ed. Ton Hoenselaars (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004): 133-150, 147.
[100] Ton Hoenselaars, 'Introduction to Part III' in *Shakespeare's History Plays: Performance, Translation and Adaptation in Britain and Abroad* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004): 191-195, 193.
[101] Ton Hoenselaars, 'Two Flemings at War with Shakespeare' in *Shakespeare's History Plays: Performance, Translation and Adaptation in Britain and Abroad* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004): 244-261, 248.

napkin stained with the blood of his son to a greater extreme, in this version 'Margaretha is cruel at the assassination of the youngest scion of York, and presents his father with the corpse of his son in a plastic bag, dripping with blood'.[102] At the time of this production Belgian society had been traumatised by a series of child abuse scandals, and Lanoye and Perceval identified much in this text that would make an effective comment on the links between power, corruption and the conscienceless harming of the innocent.

Edward Hall's Propeller theatre company gave a production in 2001 that adopted the usual solution of compressing the three *Henry VI* plays into two, and dubbed the exercise *Rose Rage*.[103] This production would seem to offer interesting material for the study of the presentation of Joan and Margaret as representations of women, as Hall employs only male actors in his company. However, although Robert Hands was praised for his interpretation of Margaret, sustained examination of this example for this chapter is made unsuitable by its complete elimination of the role of Joan. Though a token gesture was made at including part one, this central character was utterly obliterated, giving the English the ultimate victory in their battle to silence the troublesome woman.

So it appears that no one image of Joan and Margaret has dominated in productions from the latter half of the twentieth century, and clearly there is significant flexibility in the text allowing for such a range of possibilities. Looking at these examples there is some indication that a production's political interests will be reflected in its presentation of the major female characters, evidenced by the ESC's class warrior Joan, or Mitchell's gritty Margaret in a production focussed on de-romanticizing war. The three following, very recent, examples all show how the director's consciousness of the need to communicate a strong message played itself out in the persons of Jeanne and Margaret.

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[102] Ibid.
[103] Edward Hall, *Rose Rage: A Propeller Production Adapted from Shakespeare's Henry VI Plays* (London: Oberon, 2001).

Michael Boyd, the current Artistic Director of the RSC, made an unusual choice in the modern age when he staged all three parts of *Henry VI* in the Swan theatre in 2000. This production was then adapted and remounted in the new Courtyard theatre in 2006. Doubling of roles was an important thematic strategy for Boyd, as were strong visuals, and what might be considered a simplification of the characters into 'good' and 'bad' categories, to aid clarity of storytelling. It is easy to see how the destabilising of a secure audience position for Joan might appear to a modern director to be a flaw in the construction of a play, particularly when there is a struggle to make such an obscure and complicated narrative clear. Boyd's production provides a vivid example of how this can result in the director taking the easy way out. It was made clear through his staging from the beginning that Joan's power came from a combination of witchcraft and sexual bribery, expanding on any opportunities in the narrative to show her performing magic or behaving promiscuously, and minimizing or trivializing points where she demonstrates physical skill or verbal mastery. Boyd took the finely constructed elusiveness of the Joan of the text and bludgeoned her into vulgar certainty. Margaret was visually identified with Joan's 'fiends' and also clearly marked as a demonic presence. Fiona Bell, who performed both roles, articulates the director's position thus: 'I think it was Michael's intention that Margaret was, to an extent, a conduit for evil. Joan was alive and had crossed the Channel and until we encounter Richard III no-one can match her for badness.'[104]

Boyd employed a definable strategy of presenting the narrative from the point of view of a traditionalist English history of good versus bad. Both Joan and Margaret were played very much from the assumption that Shakespeare, as an Englishman, would portray these women as clear-cut villains. But is this assumption well founded? Significantly, Boyd used the technique of historicizing the play selectively to confirm a negative presentation of the characters. Rather than looking to contemporary writing on Joan and Margaret, Boyd derived his authority from a non-specific sense that the English of the Elizabethan period would have expected an unproblematic villain, and

[104] Fiona Bell, 'Joan of Arc and Margaret of Anjou' in *Players of Shakespeare 6*, ed. by Robert Smallwood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004): 163-184, 172.

probably a whore, in the shape of Joan of Arc. This assumption has been directly challenged by Hardin, who found 'no specifically English legend hostile to Joan' and an ambivalence among the English historians who do begin to chronicle her story in the sixteenth century.[105] In the case of Margaret, her inclusion in Thomas Heywood's list of 'nine female worthies' demonstrates that it was considered reasonable at the time to admire her as an historic figure.[106] Historicizing seems to have been Boyd's excuse rather than his guide.

Fiona Bell provides an intriguing case study in her analysis of playing the double roles of Joan la Pucelle and Margaret of Anjou. She mentions both as having a 'manipulative sexuality', locking herself into repeating the pattern that bad women are sexual and sexual women are bad. She reflects the common tendency to consider the woman responsible for the man's sexual response to her. Examining the text makes clear that it is the Dauphin who introduces a sexual element to their interaction, and it also suggests that her response is to deflect this kind of speech.

CHARLES. Stay, stay thy hands! thou art an Amazon
And fightest with the sword of Deborah.
PUCELLE. Christ's Mother helps me, else I were too weak.
CHARLES. Whoe'er helps thee, 'tis thou that must help me:
Impatiently I burn with thy desire:
My heart and hands thou hast at once subdued.
Excellent Pucelle, if thy name be so,
Let me thy servant and not sovereign be:
'Tis the French dauphin sueth to thee thus.
PUCELLE. I must not yield to any rites of love,
For my profession's sacred from above:
When I have chased all thy foes from hence,
Then will I think upon a recompense. (I.2.104-116)

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[105] Richard F. Hardin, 'Chronicles and Mythmaking in Shakespeare's Joan of Arc' *Shakespeare Survey 42* (1989): 25-35.
[106] John D. Cox and Eric Rasmussen, Introduction to *3 Henry VI*, Arden 3rd Series (London: Thomson Learning, 2001), 141.

The way Bell saw this meeting, however, was that Joan is exploiting her sexual power over the Dauphin. If this were the case, there would seem to be more direct ways to go about it than to challenge him to single combat. To Bell, Joan is just a liar. She does not explore what happens to the text if it is not assumed that Joan is always lying: 'she is putting on a pious act, feigning the sort of bold timidity of one who is driven by, and herself given over to, a higher power. Behind this façade she is undoubtedly self-possessed.'[107] Of course an actor has to work within the choices made in the full framework of the production, but Bell's quotations from Boyd suggest a very one-dimensional understanding of Joan in particular that Bell seems not to question. When she is 'bad' she is her 'true' self, when she is noble she is 'lying'.

When Joan made her first entrance in this production she was wearing a long, creamy-coloured shift, the first light colour seen on the stage (a metal breastplate was added for later scenes). She enters the French court, and the text implies that there are numerous characters on stage. The Dauphin seeks to disguise himself among his courtiers and Joan calls for him to come 'from behind', showing that she can pick him out in a crowd. In this production (which did not skimp on extras as a rule) only the speaking characters, numbering three lords in addition to the Dauphin, were on stage for this scene, 'from behind' was taken to mean that he should come from upstage to down, and when Joan and the Dauphin 'talk aside' the others exited the stage completely. This meant that Joan's defeat of the Dauphin in single combat did not take place in the public domain, as might be expected. This seems an uncalled-for diminishment of Joan's power, especially given that she is supposed to be impressing the French army enough for them to follow her into battle. The combat concluded with the two of them lying on their backs in the middle of the stage, laughing and panting in a very post-coital fashion. Joan's indication that later on she will 'think on a recompense' was quite openly seductive.

[107] Bell, 164.

Boyd found ways to make sure the audience would side with the male characters who disbelieve Joan's professed role as a holy virgin. Until the scene of her execution the only hints in the text that she is not the chaste woman she claims to be are name calling by her enemies and the fact that she enters at the same time as the Dauphin in II.1 when the French have been attacked at night. It must be stressed that *all* she does with the Dauphin in this scene is enter at the same time, and it is important not to be distracted by the frequent commentary in criticism that implies that there is some more explicit indication of a relationship. Boyd made clear through the staging that Joan had been having sex with not only the Dauphin but several other French lords. Shakespeare's very subtle ambiguous moments were used to authorise a version of Joan that removed any need to question the moral superiority of the English.

Both actor and director took the appearance of 'fiends' as a revelation of what has been happening all along, a statement that the Virgin Mary has never appeared to Joan, and she has been lying from the beginning. Boyd introduced the fiends to earlier scenes with Joan, and Bell sees this as simply making clear what an Elizabethan audience would have assumed: 'By objectifying her magic in the shape of the "fiends", Michael relieved me of the burden of having to give a modern audience hints as to her true nature.'[108] The fiends were represented by three women, and sometimes also a man (the 'keeper', a recurring figure in Boyd's production) dressed in long, red robes. It was made clear that these were supernatural forces working with and for Joan, although they did not seem to carry explicit indicators that they were evil, unless this was the function of the choice of red garb (the traditional colour for pantomime devils).

Joan's single combat with the Dauphin and later with Talbot both included sequences where ringing sounds and the circular motion of Joan's sword seemed to have a hypnotic effect on her antagonist. Boyd obviously wanted to emphasise the mystical element of Joan's military power, but it borders on the misogynist to take a scene where a woman demonstrates exceptional physical skill and ensure that it can only be interpreted as witchcraft. Joan even drew one of her mysterious circles on the floor

[108] Bell, 167.

with the point of her sword before her speech persuading Burgundy to change sides. Even her rhetorical power here was not permitted to be seen as 'real' power, but trickery.

Bell's willingness to subsume her character's point of view to that of others extended even to giving to her enemies the sole claim to the understanding of what nobility is, as in her description of Joan's encounter with Young Talbot. Bell accepts Young Talbot's own presentation of himself as noble in his declaration that it would be beneath him to fight with Joan: 'something in Joan knows that she will never achieve the status she needs. She is put face to face with pure nobility, who can see her for what she is, or for what she feels herself to be. I think it crushes her.'[109] But if Bell is looking for a convincing psychology for Joan for this scene, this is surely not it. If Joan really saw her encounter with Young Talbot this way, is it likely that she would tell her compatriots about the incident at all?

> PUCELLE. Once I encount'red him, and thus I said:
> 'Thou maiden youth, be vanquish'd by a maid.'
> But with a proud majestical high scorn,
> He answered thus: 'Young Talbot was not born
> To be the pillage of a giglot wench':
> So, rushing in the bowels of the French,
> He left me proudly, as unworthy fight. (IV.7.37-43)

Someone less accepting might see, rather than nobility, vanity and superciliousness in the young man's arrogant words, or concealed fear to face the humiliation of being beaten by her, as his father was. Bell sees the big talk of the male characters as nobility and that of Joan as arrogance, perpetuating one of the classics double standards of attitudes to male and female power.

Boyd cut the appearance of Joan's father before her execution, which was not mitigated in its brutality. Certainly he showed no attempt to romanticize or valorize the English here. Jeanne was tied to a ladder and hoisted above the ground. York at one point

[109] Bell, 166.

shoved his dagger up her skirt, and withdrew it bloodied, to make a joke about her claim to virginity to the other lords. Dobson notes the significance, given the production's strategic use of doubling, of York being the one to do this, 'as if founding in advance his enmity with Margaret, the same actress, who would avenge it in kind in part three'.[110] (An interesting aside on the matter of ambiguity and audience perception: Nicholas Grene remembered York as using only his hand in this assault. He writes: 'There can be little real sympathy for Joan at this stage, though York's violent examination of her virginity bringing his bloodied hand out in triumph is brutal enough.'[111] The archival video confirms it was done with a dagger for at least some of the run, but it is apparent that audience members must have got a very different impression of what the incident says about Joan's claim to have had lovers, depending on what they saw in this moment.) As she burned she was lowered into the trapdoor space, and disappeared in a swirl of red light and smoke, in time for Bell to reappear as Margaret a few moments later. Boyd's choices in presenting Joan operate within the context of a broader pro-England take on part one, in which he appeared to be attempting some kind of 'authentic' version of the play as he envisions the English would have received it when it was first performed. Grene reflects on how this was done:

> As Peter Holland said to me yesterday, one can see how it was the patriotic hit that Nashe applauded in 1592. What is startling, in the light of past productions, is how unequivocally pro-English it is. No ambiguities here. So, for instance, Joan from the time of her first encounter with Talbot is attended by spirits, a chorus of three red-dressed women who mimic and echo her actions as she fights with Talbot – fights most energetically as she did with the Dauphin. The French are cowardly, treacherous, without redeeming features. In the underhand capture of Rouen, they cut off the arm of Bedford, and Joan brandishes it triumphantly from the walls at the anguished wounded B. [112]

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[110] Michael Dobson, 'Shakespeare Performances in England' *Shakespeare Survey 55* (2002), 289.
[111] Nicholas Grene, unpublished notes kindly supplied to the author, 9 December 2000.
[112] Ibid.

If this was Boyd's goal, he embraced it with a gusto far exceeding Shakespeare's, illustrated by features such as those described by Grene, and by the blocking that made explicit Joan's sexual relationships with the French lords.

After her transformation into Margaret, as in her discussion of Joan, Bell's essay does not question her director's impression that the play is divided into good and bad characters, and that the women are bad. In parts two and three her sympathy is all with York, and she does not seek her own character's point of view. For example, she refers several times to Margaret's 'torturing' of York, but does not use similar language for the scenes of Joan's capture or the scene where Margaret's son is killed before her eyes. This is not a theoretical stance based on a position that a fully developed character would be an anachronism – she still looks for motivation and personality traits, and describes 'plotting Joan's emotional and mental journey'.[113] Rather it is an example of the recurring pattern of male actors being encouraged to find their own position, the women to understand the position of the men.

Bell herself does not see the production as limiting in its presentation of the characters she played. In fact, she praises Boyd for having 'shaped both the text and my performance in such a way as to remind me always that first and foremost these women are only human',[114] despite offering no example of this perspective in the details she gives about the production, or her reports of Boyd's directives. The particularities of her description of the process and the result bring into question her assessment. Is she perhaps protesting too much?

For a company producing Shakespeare's history plays in Australia, the concern is not that the audience will associate the Wars of the Roses with schoolbook history, but that the story is completely unknown: British history is not taught in schools. This can result in an even greater than usual emphasis on simplifying complex twists of plot and character, and finding a strong narrative thrust and moments that will be recognisable

[113] Bell, 167.
[114] Bell, 184.

to a modern audience. The advantage for Australian productions of Shakespeare can be the absence of a weight of preconception or performance history, when assumptions about characters that are frequently seen in British productions are not made, simply because there has been no local precedent. However, there is a corresponding disadvantage in the pressure to avoid presenting anything in a way that might seem obscure or hard to follow. The Bell Shakespeare Company, named after its founder and Artistic Director, veteran actor John Bell, places great emphasis on touring (to both larger cities and regional centres) over the whole country, and takes its educational arm very seriously. It runs workshops for students, and always includes designated schools performances for its shows. Casting itself in the role of reaching out to non-established audiences, it sees itself as 'founded on the ideals of uninhibited access to the great classics for as many Australians as possible'.[115] In 2005 Bell's company staged an amalgamation of the three parts of *Henry VI* and, although the available primary source material is patchy, I feel it is important to include the production here as a valuable example in its illustration of a paradox that emerges from this philosophy. The company's mission statement is socially progressive, in that it advocates theatre for all, Shakespeare for all, and the unequivocal belief that the plays in performance can communicate something of value to people regardless of their geographical or educational background. However, to validate this belief the imperative becomes to prove that the performances can be popular with everyone, which becomes an attempt to make them attractive to everyone, which usually results in drawing on popular culture for images and references, with all its attendant conventionality. In order for this production to be seen as accessible it became socially conservative. The piece was toured in Australia as two two-hour parts, which were usually performed one after the other, so the audience could see them separately, or could choose to experience them as one four-hour production, with a substantial interval, allowing for a meal break.

Joan was presented as a martial arts movie 'girlpower action heroine who can fly through the air and kickbox in slow-mo'.[116] The style was something like a Manga

[115] See under headings Company/Introduction at http://www.bellshakespeare.com.au/ (at 31 July 2007).
[116] John McCallum, *Australian*, 15 March 2005.

cartoon, with combat trousers, a plastic breastplate bearing a sacred heart design, and rollerball knee and elbow pads. The other French characters performed with comically exaggerated, Monty-Pythonesque French accents, but Joan was exempted from this.

Her scene speaking to fiends was cut altogether, as not fitting in with the modern caste of the piece, or perhaps the director simply didn't know what to do with such an unusual moment. This removed a speech that is usually an opportunity for a virtuoso performance by a woman in a play dominated by men, and also any questions about whether or not Joan is genuine. Instead the production made reference to the Abu Ghraib torture scandals that had recently erupted by covering her head with a bag and wheeling her around in a shopping trolley, while the English soldiers took photographs and jeered. Some of the less sophisticated reviewers were impressed with the up-to-the-minute politics, others felt it was a cheap and easy grab at 'relevance' that was not supported by the context. Local blogger Alison Croggon was one who thought through the dramaturgical implications of the staging decision:

> This snatch at contemporary events is gratuitously shallow: are we now supposed to equate France with occupied Iraq? And if so, why are we caricaturing the enemy? Or is the whole issue of torture merely the occasion (as I fear) for a jokey aside? ... Aside from a scene showing Joan's dealings with demons and witchcraft (absent from this version), Shakespeare is fairly even-handed in his portrayals of the French and the English, with both armies demonising each other. Dehumanising the enemy is one of the time-honoured (or dishonoured) staples of warfare, and Shakespeare clearly demonstrates its mechanisms. By eliciting easy laughs at the expense of the French, Bell neatly fillets out this moral equivalence, and with it a great deal of tragic power.[117]

In this climate it was inevitable that Margaret would be reduced to that other female cartoon staple, what one reviewer called a 'blood-lusting rock 'n' roller: big hair, boobs

[117] Alison Croggon, http//:theatrenotes.blogspot.com , 28 May 2005.

and leather',[118] and another a 'leather-clad dominatrix'.[119] Croggan summarized her simply as a 'manipulative sex bomb', and noted that this was 'an interpretation that, like her outrageous accent, obscures her warrior ruthlessness'.[120] Like Fiona Bell, Blazey Best played Henry's warrior queen as 'outrightly sexual and manipulative',[121] but with even less subtlety this approach was signalled in costume by her 'tottering about in stilletos and wearing a vinyl/leather raincoat of amazing tartishness'[122] in the early scenes, and then changing into more bondage-style leather once she began to lead Henry's army. Best used an unabashedly fake French accent, and enthusiastically reduced herself to a stereotype mainly aimed at making it easy for an audience to pigeonhole her, on the grounds of making it easier for the audience to understand the play. Best demonstrates the tangle of issues at work for an actor trying to see her character's point of view in the way she chooses to defend her character in interview. Her main interest is in arguing for Margaret's ultimate femininity: 'Generally, the way Western society views women in power is that they have to be de-feminised. Think of Margaret Thatcher or Condoleezza Rice – people think of them as ball-breakers', but Best believes 'There's a very feminine quality to the power Margaret wants' in that 'She doesn't want it for herself, she wants it firstly for her husband so he can rule the kingdom, and secondly for her son (Edward), so he can become king. At first she's quite sexually manipulative, but in the second half she's like a lioness protecting her cub. Once the rule of her family is threatened all hell breaks loose.'[123] The only choices Best seems to see open to her are portraying Margaret as a woman without sexual or feminine qualities or a woman who uses these qualities manipulatively.

The greatly reduced role of the female characters in this production was born of a very specific set of priorities. Bell does not seem to have been antagonistic towards women, but his anxiety about whether his audience would follow and respond to the story led him to disregard the hard questions about what message is communicated by the use of

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[118] Colin Rose, *Sun Herald*, 13 March 2005.
[119] Martin Portus, *Sydney Star Observer*, 17 March 2005.
[120] Croggon.
[121] Keith Gallasch, www.realtimearts.net , 17 May 2005.
[122] Neil Whitfield, http://ninglun.wordpress.com/my-canon-whats-yours/the-bard-a-rabbit-and-ninglun/ , 8 March 2005.
[123] Blazey Best interviewed by Luke Benedictus, *Age*, 15 May 2005.

stereotyping. These two characters were far from being the only ones who were reduced in scope or caricatured in this production, and it would be unfair to imply that male characters were not treated similarly (that is, similarly in terms of being stereotyped. They were not similarly sexualised). However, the direction taken in the production says a great deal about the social context within which Bell was working. When the goal was to find images of powerful women that would be comprehensible to his audience, what the director (in conjunction with the designer and presumably with input from the actors) came up with were comic book types. This is what the company felt it had available to draw upon in looking for a visual language with which to communicate with its audience. The production did not treat it as a component of its brief to critique these perceptions of gender roles, they were merely regarded as useful.

There are both underlying similarities and striking differences in Barry Rutter's 2006 Northern Broadsides production at the West Yorkshire Playhouse, given the same title: *Wars of the Roses*. Both companies frame their work around the idea of a core ensemble of actors who work repeatedly with the company, local accents, regional touring, and a philosophy of creating a 'people's Shakespeare'. Rutter was most interested in these plays as a reflection and investigation of a Britain divided against itself, and consequently was perhaps least interested in the sequences involving Jeanne. Her appearances were heavily cut, as were her longer speeches. This de-prioritizing of her story, however, resulted in a presentation that did not seek to make judgements on her character: the audience was simply shown two groups of warriors in opposition, without a 'concept' or implications that either side was wrong or right, evil or virtuous.

Her costume was a simple blue tunic and loose trousers (the French wore blue to distinguish them from the English in Lancastrian red and Yorkist white) and she carried a broadsword (the production used weaponry from all periods). There was no attempt to sexualise her character or make her seductive. In fact, two reviewers commented (disparagingly) that she looked most like Peter Pan.[124] Though her Act V soliloquy was severely truncated, it was also ambiguously situated. There were no

[124] *The Stage Inc*, 27 April 2006; J.D. Atkinson, *British Theatre Guide*, 5 April 2006.

changes to re-address the speech to the Virgin Mary (as in the Bogdanov production), but the 'fiends' were two singing women who were clearly more angelic than demonic: dressed in long robes and carrying a cross and a palm frond.

The text was trimmed to the point where entire scenes would sometimes be represented by a single speech. So it was that Joan's first appearance was only to recite, in isolation, an amalgamation of several of her speeches in I.2:

> I am by birth a shepherd's daughter
> My wit untrained in any kind of art;
> Heaven and Our Lady gracious hath it pleased
> To shine on my contemptible estate.
> Lo whilst I waited on my tender lambs
> And to sun's parching heat displayed my cheeks,
> God's mother deigned to appear to me
> And in a vision full of majesty
> Willed me to leave my base vocation
> And free my country from calamity:
> Her aid she promised and assured success.
> In complete glory she revealed herself.
> I am prepared.' Here is my keen-edged sword
> Decked with five flower-de-luces on each side,
> The which at Touraine in Saint Katherine's churchyard
> Out of a great deal of old iron I chose forth.
> And while I live I'll ne'er fly from a man.
> With Henry's death the English circle ends:
> Dispersed are the glories it included.
> Assigned am I to be the English scourge.

Her recognition of the Dauphin, her challenge to him and their fight, indeed, all her interaction with the people she is to lead, disappeared. The scene of Joan's persuasion of Burgundy was cut entirely. The battle scenes were all performed in various symbolic and ritualistic ways, generally involving clog dances or the beating of drums, rather

than as actual swordfights. All the scenes set in France were greatly reduced, group battle scenes were not played out, and individual confrontations between Joan and Talbot were what remained. Talbot was wheeled on in a kind of simple cart, beating a large drum 'while Joan clog-danced around him brandishing her sword.'[125] The drastic nature of the cutting was not unique to Joan, other characters with prominent roles in part one were similarly affected (Talbot was trimmed, the Dauphin did not appear until the section derived from *2 Henry VI*, which began halfway through the first play in Rutter's two-part amalgamation, and Burgundy was cut altogether), but for anyone familiar with part one the difference made to the presentation of Joan was staggering. There was really no remaining representation of the range or extraordinary nature of her powers.

The ensemble nature of the company's approach meant that all twenty-one actors appeared in all three parts of the cycle (which consisted of the three *Henry VI* plays compressed into two, with the split occurring after the reporting of the death of Suffolk, followed by *Richard III* in its standard form), and the programme lists the actors in alphabetical order with the three plays listed across the page from them, and the names of the characters each played under each one, in a kind of grid. This makes it instantly apparent that Helen Sheals as Queen Margaret is the only actor playing just one role, and the only one playing the same character in all three plays. For an audience watching the whole cycle, this makes her the only figure that can be followed from the beginning of the story to the end. Again, there seems to have been no attempt to imbue her with an obvious sexuality. Rather, reviews refer to her in terms such as 'diminutive but indomitable',[126] 'brash, almost vulgar toughness'[127] and 'diminutive spitfire'.[128] The heavy textual editing did not affect Margaret in quite the same way as Joan. She did not lose any full scenes, plot points, or representations of the scope and variety of her powers. However, the consistent thinning out of her many speeches removed some of the most articulate and emotive writing in these plays. Passages that, in full, are

[125] Kate Wilkinson, *Shakespeare Bulletin* 24.3 (2006): 113-120, 116.
[126] Dominic Cavendish, *Daily Telegraph*, 5 April 2006.
[127] Peter Whittle, *Sunday Times*, 9 April 2006.
[128] J.D. Atkinson, *British Theatre Guide*, 5 April 2006.

passionately poetic (such as her separation from Suffolk, or the death of Edward) were narrowed to be tightly functional in moving the plot along.

Reviews of the production, hampered by the need to reflect on seven hours of theatre in a few hundred words, make small mention of the female roles, even Margaret, and many do not speak of them at all. Susannah Clapp, of *The Observer*, found that the production's goal of dynamic, action-driven storytelling came with the price of reduced subtlety and inflection, and that this was particularly apparent in the changes to the roles of Joan and Margaret: 'The women's parts have been reduced: Maeve Larkin's piping Joan of Arc has little more than a twirl of a fight, and mostly sounds petulant; Queen Margaret's lament for her dead son is severely stripped down so that a layer of feeling in the plays is diminished.'[129]

Though it is a shame to see roles of such extraordinary sinew and distinctiveness curtailed, at least Rutter clearly did not come to the plays with an interest in channelling our society's hostility to women who display skills and achievements that fall outside traditional gender roles. There was a willingness to engage with the women exhibiting a variety of forms of power, spiritual, political and physical, if less of the rhetorical than they show in uncut versions. There was no attempt to limit them to sexual power alone, or to identify sexual power as 'bad' power.

In the discussion surrounding both the Boyd and Bell productions, it is hard to miss that the phrase 'sexually manipulative' and its variants crops up repeatedly, in the former relating to both Joan and Margaret, the latter only in relation to Margaret. Can such a description of these characters claim to be textually based? Joan has only one line in which critics have argued for the presence of sexual innuendo: 'When I have chased all thy foes from hence, / Then will I think upon a recompense.' (I.2.104-116) Tenuous at best, especially given its placement immediately after a flat rejection of the Dauphin's quite explicit advances. It is harder to be definitive about Margaret, who is definitely shown as a sexual being. But does she use that sexuality to achieve her ends?

[129] Susannah Clapp, *Observer*, 9 April 2006.

Liebler and Shea notice a pattern in her interactions with Suffolk where she 'flatters her admirer in order to secure his support',[130] but she hardly needs to manipulate Suffolk, who shares her agenda already. In fact, in the concluding lines of part one he declares his plan to use his seductiveness to control her:

> Margaret shall be Queen and rule the King;
> But I will rule both her, the King and realm. (V.6.107-8)

(I have not yet found an account of the play or a performance of it that describes Suffolk as 'sexually manipulative'). In her relations with her husband Margaret's approach seems to be based around complaint and command, rather than seduction and the conditional promise of sexual favours. She does tell him, in part three:

> ...I here divorce myself,
> Both from thy table, Henry, and thy bed,
> Until that act of parliament be repeal'd
> Whereby my son is disinherited. (I.1.250-253)

But the very public, very angry nature of this declaration does not suggest she is using her threat as a seductive tool to win him over to her wishes. Actors may find the means to give a convincing stage performance in which these characters are portrayed as using their sexuality for barter, but it needs to be a deliberate goal that indicates having come to the text with a desire to see the characters this way. It requires the director and actors to take a few lines of text, interpret them a very specific way, and expand on them with costume, gesture, blocking, tone of voice and so on. In a series of plays that seem to be exploring the possibility of female martial, administrative, rhetorical and political power, seeking to reduce these many things to sexual power alone makes a strong statement about the interpreter's attitude to women and power.

The reductive drawing of Joan and Margaret as the fear/fantasy of a woman whose mastery over men resides in her sexuality displays a need to render them knowable and therefore safe. Shakespeare writes them unknowable, and therefore powerful. I make no claims for whether this was a deliberate authorial goal, merely that the ambiguity is a presence which could have a discernable effect in performance. Productions such as

[130] Liebler & Scancella Shea, 84.

Barton and Hall's of 1963, or Coonrod's of 1996, show that staging ambiguity is possible, and yet the instability of the textual realisation of the characters has just as frequently gone altogether unacknowledged on stage, or been treated as a flaw that needs to be corrected. Of the three most recent productions here, it is notable that the one that was least interested in dwelling on the female characters (Northern Broadsides) gave, perhaps as a result, the least narrow or judgemental presentation of them. It is easy to question whether Boyd's selective historicization is an excuse, allowing him to stage a fear of female power. Bell's reliance on the populist to sell the plays to a potentially resistant audience shows that the most common images of female power currently in circulation for him to draw upon are cartoon staples. When these plays are performed today they are almost always subject to heavy cutting for all the characters, and commercial imperatives prompting a fear of the over-complicated can understandably lead into the temptation to over-simplify. Still, what a shock it would be to find that a four hundred-year-old text offers us a greater capacity to represent complex and sophisticated images of women exhibiting many different kinds of power than we, with all our advances in critical discourse and theatre practice, know what to do with.

Chapter Two
"My Tongue Will Tell the Anger of My Heart": *The Taming of the Shrew* and *Much Ado About Nothing*

The modern theatrical practitioner, when faced with texts full of gender politics from previous eras, does not have a realistic option to ignore them. The audience will inevitably bring its own understandings of the world to the performance, reading a commentary on the ideas raised in the play into the most apolitical of productions. Given its most overtly stated themes, and its continued popularity in performance, no examination of the presentation of gender conflict and female speech in Shakespeare could possibly skirt around the modern minefield that is *The Taming of the Shrew*. This is a play that invites a position on its sexual politics, and that prompts analysts of all kinds to feel the need to not just explain, but defend their position, whether that position is that the play is comic and appealing, or offensive and tragic. This is the play that makes a feature and an issue of the idea that it is a flaw in a woman to make the wrong kind of noise. *Much Ado About Nothing*, on the other hand, has a more subtle historical relationship with gender politics. Always popular, it was often treated as comedy without problems any more difficult than that Claudio doesn't really deserve Hero. It is only in the last few decades that the many issues it raises about gender power balances have become areas of major interest for theatre practitioners. The figure of Beatrice in *Much Ado About Nothing* makes an interesting comparison to Katherina in *The Shrew*, both in terms of the history of her presentation and her critical and audience reception. The relatives of both exhibit fears that their shrewish characteristics will make it impossible for them to find husbands, but while everyone within the play agrees that Katherina is flawed and in need of reform, everyone except Benedick apparently thinks Beatrice is wonderful. It would be over-simplifying to imply that the fact that both are dubbed 'shrewed' and 'curst' means the two do not have substantial differences in character. Beatrice is never violent towards anyone, and loses her temper only out of protectiveness for someone she loves. Katherina, we know from the text, ties her sister's hands and strikes her, hits her tutor over the head with her lute, and slaps Petruccio. What is surprising about Katherina, in her role as shrew, however, is how little she speaks. Beatrice talks a great deal, Katherina is silent for

long stretches. As covered in detail in the Introduction, all the available definitions of the word 'shrew' relate to the idea of a woman who is unruly, rather than just unruled; a woman who rails, who creates scenes. Stubbornly resisting authority or refusing to participate in the norms of society is not enough for a woman to be labelled a shrew. The term is specifically attached to a brawling, bad-tempered or argumentative woman, a noisy woman (notice Benedick's referral to Beatrice as 'My Lady Tongue'). And yet when it comes to Katherina, Fiona Shaw, who played the role at the RSC in 1987, observes: 'Supposing we said "shrew" equals "noisy one". Along comes a man to tame the noisy one. And for almost five acts we never hear her speak… People have criticised my Kate for not putting up more of a fight. I'm dying to put up a fight, but look at the text – it ain't there'.[131]

In addition, these are two of Shakespeare's most pervasively metatheatrical plays. Shakespeare played with metatheatre throughout his entire career, of course, so I do not suggest that these are unique in this aspect, but when he uses the play-within-a-play conceit in *Hamlet*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* or *Love's Labours Lost* it is in a very different style from *The Taming of the Shrew*, in which we are explicitly told that the main action is, in fact, a play. *Much Ado About Nothing* is more subtle in its use of internal theatre, but frequently throughout the play conversations are staged in order to be interpreted by a spectator who is kept at a remove from a full understanding of the mechanics of the action. As Clare McEachern puts it: '*Much Ado About Nothing* is rife with representations of theatre, not merely, as in some of Shakespeare's works, as a metaphor for human experience, but as an actual practice of the play's characters.'[132] Given how much the female is marked by its capacity to be staged (not least in that, in the original performances, there could be no actual female observed), the intersection between this metatheatricality and the presentation of the female characters is bound to be instructive. Their other notable link is the emphasis in the plots on women as the currency of exchange for forging and sealing relationships between men, rather than between men and women. This is almost celebrated in *The Taming of the Shrew*, more

[131] Fiona Shaw, quoted in Carol Rutter, *Clamorous Voices* (London: Women's Press, 1988), 8-10.
[132] Clare McEachern, Introduction to *Much Ado About Nothing*, Arden 3rd Series (London: Thomson Learning, 2006), 78.

closely interrogated in *Much Ado About Nothing*. Placing these two plays, and two characters side by side is not out of the ordinary; comparisons are drawn by Michael Friedman,[133] Penny Gay,[134] and particularly Marion Wynne-Davies, in her *New Casebooks* volume that teams the two plays together.[135]

The productions of *The Taming of the Shrew* discussed in detail here will be the 2003 Royal Shakespeare Company production (in the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre) directed by Gregory Doran,[136] the Globe production of later that year directed by Phyllida Lloyd,[137] and the 2006 Rough Magic production (at the Project Arts Centre in Dublin) directed by Lynne Parker.[138] *Much Ado About Nothing* will be examined through the 1998 Declan Donnellan Cheek by Jowl production,[139] the 2004 New York Shakespeare Festival production, directed by David Esbjorson,[140] and Marianne Elliott's 2006 Swan Theatre production for the Royal Shakespeare Company.[141]

It is in observing and analysing this intersection between old texts and modern performance that the usefulness of standpoint theory becomes apparent. An example of this approach (though it is not so labelled) appears in Margaret Kidnie's 'Handbook' of contextual material surrounding *The Taming of the Shrew*. Kidnie details Jonathan Miller's approach to his three productions of the play (two theatrical, one for television), and finds that his objection to imposing a modern viewpoint masked just as powerful an interest in authorising his own point of view on history, marriage and Shakespeare.

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[133] Michael Friedman, *'The World Must Be Peopled': Shakespeare's Comedies of Forgiveness* (London: Associated University Press, 2002).
[134] Penny Gay, *As She Likes It: Shakespeare's Unruly Women* (London: Routledge, 1994).
[135] Marion Wynne-Davies, editor, *New Casebooks: Much Ado About Nothing and The Taming of the Shrew* (New York: Palgrave, 2002).
[136] Archival material used: video recorded press night, 11 April 2003, production photographs (held by Shakespeare Centre Library).
[137] Archival material used: video recorded press night, 22 August 2003, programme, Globe newsletter (held by Shakespeare's Globe Archives).
[138] Performance observed live 7 March 2006, Project Arts Centre, Dublin.
[139] Archival material used: video recorded June 1998 (held by Victoria & Albert Museum).
[140] Unfortunately (and perhaps surprisingly, given its artistic philosophy) the New York Public Theater does not keep publicly accessible archives, so this analysis is taken solely from reviews and production photographs.
[141] Performance observed live 22 June 2006, Swan Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon; 26 December 2006, Novello Theatre, London.

> The idea behind all three of Miller's productions was to try to recover in performance the way Shakespeare might have thought about the family… Miller's production seeks to present to a modern audience a foreign historical moment, interpreting the taming of Katherina as a benefit to society on the grounds that actual Elizabethans would have advocated, with Petruccio, a husband's 'right supremacy' within marriage. [142]

To do this, however, Miller cut the Induction scenes, with their implicit reminder that the scenes between Katherina and Petruccio are fiction, and created a romanticized, picture-book world based on Flemish Old Masters.

> Ironically, the realization that Miller's conception of an Elizabethan world-view only works if the Induction scenes are cut suggests strongly that his production is no less an imposition on a 400-year-old text than the feminist interpretations he dismisses as 'silly' on the grounds of anachronism… [The production's] imprecise muddle of national and cultural influence – English playwright, Italian setting, Dutch pictorial allusions, all located within an ill-concealed studio set – reproduces history as nothing more precise than a generic "Renaissance" effect.[143]

What I believe will become apparent in examining the abovementioned productions is just what Kidnie found in Miller: that a director's interests and attitudes will create an implied message for the play whether or not he or she has made it a conscious goal, and that sometimes it is those productions that are most generated by a belief in the possibility of historic or textual integrity, or political neutrality, that offer the most revealing socio-political agendas.

However, applying a feminist standpoint to staging or watching these plays is no simple matter, and can lead down several paths, some of them contradictory. Does a feminist sensibility inevitably mean a version of *The Taming of the Shrew* that lacks comedy, or where the comedy can only be of the darkest, bitterest kind? In Charles

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[142] Margaret Jane Kidnie, *Shakespeare Handbooks: The Taming of the Shrew* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 131-132.
[143] Kidnie, 132-133.

Marowitz's version of the play, developed in 1974, Katherina is raped by Petruccio while Grumio holds her down.[144] In a Turkish production from the 1980s, Katherina delivered her final 'submission' speech with all apparent sincerity, until she made the offer to place her hand under her husband's foot when, as she dropped the shawl she was holding and extended her hands the audience could see that she had slit her wrists.[145] If a performance aims to interrogate the play from a feminist perspective, is this the best way to do it? Or does this simply imply that the only option for an unruly woman is to be broken? More recent productions have most often indicated in one way or another that Petruccio doesn't really want submission from his wife, sometimes with the implication that this was his position all along, in other instances that he discovers this only when Kate makes her final speech describing what form that submission would take. The idea is to acknowledge the play as a male fantasy, hopefully without endorsing it. This was the approach taken by Gale Edwards in 1995, that recast the whole play as Sly's dream, in which he played Petruccio, but there have been numerous other versions suggestive of the same idea. Even the less politically perilous *Much Ado About Nothing* has some people considering whether we can accept the gender politics of the story today, without some kind of disapproving commentary. This directorial attitude was largely what seems to have provoked the vitriolic reactions of many newspaper critics to Di Trevis's 1988 production.

From a feminist standpoint, ever since Kathleen McLuskie wrote of being inevitably excluded from the comedy of the moment, those who feel that a modern understanding of gender-based power structures cannot be cast aside at whim have been searching for ways into these plays that allow us to keep what is good in them without sacrificing a political conscience. McLuskie believes that feminist criticism:

> ...is restricted to exposing its own exclusion from the text. It has no point of entry into it, for the dilemmas of the narrative and the sexuality under discussion are constructed in completely male terms ... and the women's role as the objects of exchange within that system of sexuality is not at

[144] Charles Marowitz, *The Marowitz Shakespeare* (London: Marion Boyars, 1974).
[145] Directed by Yücel Erten, discussed in *Is Shakespeare Still Our Contemporary?*, ed. John Elsom (London: Routledge, 1989), 75.

> issue, however much a feminist might want to draw attention to it. Thus when a feminist accepts the narrative, theatrical and intellectual pleasures of this text she does so in male terms and not as part of the locus of feminist critical activity.[146]

Accepting this premise, there are theatre practitioners who believe it is better to abandon the plays altogether. Conversely, reactionary critics such as Brian Vickers[147] believe that applying a declared standpoint, particularly one such as feminism, will ruin Shakespeare by narrowing the scope of implied meanings. Many others have not felt inclined to give up so easily, and their efforts make for a telling commentary on the limits of what people are prepared to accept in the performance of material with such a powerful cultural history.

A feminist performance could be regarded as one that privileges the perspective of the female characters as subjects in their own right, rather than as objects constructed by the male observer. Some, like McLuskie, would argue that this can never be done with a text written by a man before the primacy of male perspective was seriously challenged; others, that strategies do exist that make this possible, provided an awareness of gender power issues is maintained when interpretative decisions are being made. McLuskie undeniably has a point that a text will inevitably be shaped by the system that produced it, but she may be underestimating the potential of performance to render behaviour the subject of criticism and debate. That is, the actions of a character in a play will not necessarily be received by an audience uncritically, and can provoke questioning, rather than confirmation, of the status quo. For example, the role of the woman as an object of exchange in plays from *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* to *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, let alone *The Taming of the Shrew* and *Much Ado About Nothing*, is likely to appear disquieting to members of a modern audience, and even the theatrical pleasure of the comedy the play produces will provide many points of reflection, and possibly discussion. There is an alternative position that holds that

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[146] Kathleen McLuskie, 'The Patriarchal Bard: Feminist Criticism and Shakespeare' in *Political Shakespeare*, editors Jonathan Dollimore, Alan Sinfield (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985): 88-108, 97-98.

[147] Brian Vickers, *Appropriating Shakespeare: Contemporary Critical Quarrels* (Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1994).

women have a right to the best theatrical writing, and that these texts can be opened up to new ways of reading them, provided that women are granted the power to bring their own perspectives to the work.

Given that *The Taming of the Shrew* is one of Shakespeare's earliest comedies, and that it is usually accepted that his later ones show more developed and sophisticated writing, it is astonishing the stage time and critical attention this play has amassed. What we are looking at is an early piece from a playwright who went on to write better material, and yet it is difficult, in the space available, to give a true sense of the vastness and variety of analysis lavished upon this little farce. For this reason I have tended towards selecting illustrative examples to discuss in detail, rather than attempting a thorough overview. Phyllis Rackin has observed the way the comparative interest levels between this play and *The Merry Wives of Windsor* seem to have less to do with the literary or theatrical value of the plays, or historic opinion on their worth, than with what those writing about the plays enjoy seeing portrayed. Rackin quotes contrasting critical responses to what happens to Falstaff and what happens to Katherina, and seems to demonstrate effectively that to many of the senior critics still writing today, to see a man humiliated by women is inartistic and unfunny, whereas to see a woman humiliated by men is heart-warming and humanist.[148] Or perhaps it is no more than that, in an age when Shakespeare is assumed to be difficult, this play is so simple, with an outlandishly basic plot and little complex language. But there is also an unmistakable sense that people cannot let go of the desire to rescue it from its apparent moral crassness (Davies examines this phenomenon in a chapter entitled 'Shakespeare can't have meant it (can he?)'[149]). Germaine Greer, famously, included a reading of the play in *The Female Eunuch*, in which she sees it as exposing that society requires women to develop manipulative skills to survive.[150] She sees Katherina as instinctively above such behaviour, and Petruccio as appreciating that. Ironically, the Australian playwright David Williamson later appropriated parts of Greer's reading and presented it in his anti-feminist play *Dead White Males* as a challenge to conventional feminist

[148] Phyllis Rackin, *Shakespeare and Women* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 51-71.
[149] Stevie Davies, *The Taming of the Shrew* (London: Penguin, 1995), 43.
[150] Germaine Greer, *The Female Eunuch* (London: Flamingo, 2003), 234-235 (originally published 1970).

ideology.[151] His play is one of many expressions in evidence of the simple belief that the play can't be sexist, because it was written by Shakespeare. The editor of *Theatre Record*, for example, blithely asserts that 'a writer who understood women as well as Will could not pander to chauvinism'.[152] It is assumed that if we take the play as sexist, we must have missed something. And the search for what it is we must be missing has absorbed people ever since.

Robert Heilman sought to end the fretful searches for a way to read what is happening between the protagonists as expressive of a more subtle psychology than a man using his legal power over a woman to break her will, by examining the role of the play's genre. He wishes to 'liberate' the play from this kind of criticism, and suggests that the formalities of farce require that the audience not be concerned that a character is really suffering, and that these characters show a 'somewhat limited personality that acts and responds in a mechanical way and hence moves towards a given end with perfection not likely if all the elements in human nature were really at work.' He believes that the continued interest people have shown in the play is sparked by the way Shakespeare has extended the drawing of the characters beyond the typing of farce: 'to have got so much of the suprafarcical into farce – this is the achievement of *The Taming of the Shrew*'.[153] His later point, however, seems to contradict his former. According to Heilman's thesis, it is the fact of the relative two-dimensionality of the characters that makes it possible and acceptable to laugh at their suffering and not treat it as a matter of serious concern, but this is the very element that he then praises Shakespeare for revising and removing. If the characters are no longer the simple types of farce, but are drawn as full and complex human beings, then surely we can no longer comfort ourselves with the idea that we are only watching the knockabout appropriate to the form.

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[151] David Williamson, *Dead White Males* (Sydney: Currency Press, 1995).
[152] Ian Herbert, 'Prompt Corner', *Theatre Record*, April 2003.
[153] Robert Heilman, 'The *Taming* Untamed, or, the Return of the Shrew', *Modern Language Quarterly*, 27 (1966): 147-161.

I discuss Heilman as an example, despite the comparatively early date of his piece, to illustrate the way that critics often try to redirect the question away from the instinctive one of whether or not Katherina's treatment and submission are offensive, suggesting that this is beside the point, and it is more appropriate to look at questions of form, genre or socio-political context, but that paradoxically, these matters always return the discussion to the original question. Margie Burns is somewhat more successful in arguing for the significance of Shrew's structure in determining how to take the play. Her interest lies in the parallels between the Induction and the main play, arguing that, rather than believing that Shakespeare's version is supposed to conclude with a return to the Induction framework (in the manner of the other extant version of the story known as *The Taming of a Shrew*) that has somehow been lost, the play's meaning in performance is better served by leaving the structure open-ended. She suggests that by avoiding closing off the frame, the playwright allows the play to continue to expand, and leaves the impression that the development of the characters still has somewhere to progress, perhaps actively encouraging that kind of speculation about what kind of relationship the protagonists will have after the close of the play that is as pervasive as it is futile.[154]

Stevie Davies has contributed arguably the most sophisticated modern analysis of *The Taming of the Shrew* as a whole, in a short book exclusively devoted to that play. She shows herself willing to engage with the undeniable fact that the play has both attractive and repugnant elements, and that neither of these can be argued out of existence. She looks in detail at probably the most seductive aspect of this play: its use of the conceit of falconry as a comparison with Petruccio's methods.[155] Petruccio's treatment of Katherina is closely modelled on traditional methods of breaking a wild falcon for domestic use in hunting. After capture, the bird is kept awake and starved for a lengthy period, following which the falconer is careful to become known to the falcon as the only person who provides her with nourishment, and builds up a system of rewards for obedience. The experience was treated as requiring the profound

[154] Margie Burns, 'The Ending of The Shrew' in *Critical Essays: The Taming of the Shrew*, ed. Dana E. Aspinall (London: Routledge, 2002): 84-105.
[155] Stevie Davies, *The Taming of the Shrew* (London: Penguin, 1995), 85-94.

involvement of both parties: when a falconer tames a falcon he too does not eat or sleep until both do. It seems most likely that Petruccio is not eating or sleeping either, as he is the one keeping her awake (he does not outsource this task, as he easily could), and in the scene where he gives and then takes away her meat he does not eat it himself, but asks Hortensio to do so. It is true that the text does not indicate that Petruccio's rather extraordinary energy flags, but still, it would be interesting to see a production in which an effect of this deprivation was discernable in Petruccio, too. What makes this conceit more intriguing than it first appears, when applied to Katherina, is that although the bird is trained to respond to its master's will, in traditional falconry the wild bird (called a 'haggard' before it is tamed, a word Shakespeare uses for both Katherina and Beatrice) was considered a far superior creature to a bird raised in captivity, because of its fiercer spirit. There is also the knowledge that, in the end, it remains possible for the bird to simply fly away if it chooses.

Another aspect of the text that prevents an easy dismissal of its most overtly stated socially conservative position is the complicating factor of the gap between what is said and what is staged. Though we may have few explicit statements regarding staging matters in the text, when analysing theatrical performance it remains indispensable to consider the physical relationships of the bodies on stage and the comparative dominance of the voices speaking, as well as the content of what is being spoken. While textual analysis implies an examination of the words, a text intended as a basis for performance is designed to generate non-linguistic material, too. What Katherina's final speech presents us with is a complete and staggering contradiction between the form of the speech and its content, between the dominance of the voice and figure on the stage and the submission they are describing. Thus, while the content of the speech suggests that it could only be supporting the status quo, its shape and context have always unsettled such an easy assumption. An audience in a theatre is getting only a minimal proportion of its messages from the direct meaning of the words spoken; it will always be absorbing information from the blocking, the sound, the responses of the performers to one another, and many other elements. Katherina is speaking the longest speech in the play, she is the centre of attention, she is speaking uninterrupted,

classical rhetoric, and will almost certainly be either centre stage or roaming freely over the full space of the stage while everyone else is still. In short, as an audience we are being told that Katherina is the most dominant personality by *everything except the words*.

This is far from being the only paradox in the drawing of Katherina, the nature of this text creates certain unusual difficulties for those charged with staging her as a character. To begin with, there is the fact that someone repeatedly described as having an uncontrollable tongue has so few lines. She does not interrupt or cut anyone off. What is more, her encounter with her sister in II.1 is the only instance where her hostility seems to be taking the initiative, rather than being a response to a provocation. The first time she appears, in I.1, she does not speak until she has been insulted by Gremio, and she then responds to a further insult from Hortensio. This gives a production something unusual to grapple with, as the director and actors must decide not only what constitutes a shrew, but whether this is somebody that will seem objectionable only to someone applying Elizabethan standards of behaviour, or also to the audience of the present day. Many prominent schools of acting technique tell the actor to go to the text to find how to play any role but, by modern standards at least, Katherina says very little that seems shrewish. Sticking too exclusively to the text runs the risk of criticism such as that made of the actor Josie Lawrence in the production directed by Gale Edwards, that 'It is as though either she or Gale Edwards or both of them found it hard to admit that there could really be such a thing as a shrew.'[156] Most Katherinas have instead filled in with extra business of one kind or another (Meryl Streep squashed daisies beneath her feet, Fiona Shaw used scissors to make gouges in the walls and cut chunks off her own hair, Gregory Doran always preceded Alexandra Gilbreath's entrances with a metallic clatter, presumably of thrown pots and pans). In performance, of all Shakespeare's plays, this would be the one most likely to throw out of joint the Cicely Berry school of verse speaking, which tells the actor that all the information he or she needs to perform a character is embedded in the text. Katherina speaks so little, and often not at all at what appear to be crucial points in the narrative,

[156] John Gross, *Sunday Telegraph*, 30 April 1995.

that an actor in practical terms has no choice but to make decisions from few or no textual clues. Katherina goes through several stages in the play that require a production to take up a definite position on changes occurring in her character, but these changes are rarely given a distinctly stated moment in the text, and there are often not enough lines for her to speak to give an unambiguous indication as to her attitude.

There is her initial presentation in the context of her family and her sister's suitors, before she has met Petruccio, in which an audience will form an opinion about whether the way she has been labelled is reasonable or not. When they do meet, their response to each other at their first meeting will influence the direction of the subsequent action; is there attraction or just antagonism, and is it mutual? Kate then goes through several scenes, beginning at the point where they come from her wedding, where she vacillates between speaking graciously and speaking angrily. Her full capitulation comes at Act IV scene 5, when she agrees to call the sun the moon, but is sealed in the final scene with her long sermon on wifely duty.

Much attention of necessity must be focussed on this final speech. Some kind of choice has to be made about how it is to be taken, or presented, and a general summary of the various possible conclusions might look like this:

- she is sincere, and this makes it a happy ending, she has become a better, happier and freer person;
- she is sincere, and this makes it a tragic ending, she has had her spirit broken and is now merely Petruccio's puppet;
- she doesn't really mean it, but is allowing Petruccio to think he has his way, knowing that this is the way to get the best of him;
- she doesn't really mean it, and is sharing a private agenda with Petruccio to score points on the others;
- she is stating the formal Renaissance position on marriage, explaining to the other women what their lot will inevitably be in this world and/or posing Petruccio the question of whether this is really what he wants; or finally

- the actual content of the speech is irrelevant, the important thing is the gesture where someone proves the unselfishness of true love by showing that they are willing to do and exceed whatever their loved one asks of them.

To distil this even further, the questions an audience asks of a performance will be both whether this Katherina thinks what she says is true and/or just, and whether the audience is being asked to believe it is true and/or just.

Part of the speech, of course, is unavoidably ironic, whether it is thought to be intended that way or not. Katherine characterizes a husband as:

> ...one that cares for thee,
> And for thy maintenance commits his body
> To painful labour both by sea and land,
> To watch the night in storms, the day in cold,
> Whilst thou liest warm at home, secure and safe,
> And craves no other tribute at thy hands
> But love, fair looks, and true obedience;
> Too little payment for so great a debt. (V.1.159-166)

At this stage, Petruccio has done none of these things for Katherina. She has not had a moment to lie warm at home, secure and safe, and she has been expressly denied all forms of maintenance, so she speaks out of fantasy, not experience. As for 'painful labour', the only work the moneyed idlers of this play ever carry out is the pretend work of being Bianca's tutors. There is much emphasis on how well set up they are through inheritance, not labour.

Actors playing the role of Katherina, along with some commentators, have put forward the possibility that Petruccio is inviting Katherina to join him in a game, and that once she realises this, and learns to play too, all is joyous. However, no one is harmed by calling the sun the moon, and no one for a minute really believes that it is. This is a fundamentally different thing from saying that a woman should place her hand below her husband's foot in a room full of people who are eager to accept that as the truth. Sinead Cusak, talking to Carol Rutter, is one who is convinced that Katherina is freed

rather than broken by what she goes through: 'She can say anything now and she's still Kate... This so-called submission speech isn't a submission speech at all: it's a speech about how her spirit has been allowed to soar free.'[157] It is easy to see how the desire for this to be true might be overwhelming for an actor, especially in the context of pressure from a director who sees the play as a romantic comedy. She goes on to say: 'She is not attached to him. He hasn't laid down the rules for her, she has made her own rules, and what he's managed to do is allow her to have her own vision.'[158] Given the nature of the scenes in question these seem extraordinary statements. If Cusak's interpretation is credited then the man who said 'I will not go today, and ere I do, / It shall be what o'clock I say it is' (IV.1.187-188) and 'It shall be moon or star, or what I list' (IV.3.7) has not been laying down rules, and 'Such duty as the subject owes the prince, / Even such a woman oweth to her husband' (V.1.167-168) does not indicate submission. Are RSC actresses sent on a course in doublethink before being employed by this company? Something of Davies's analysis of Katherina's conclusion may be discernable in some of those who have embodied her:

> Whereas before she became Petruccio's Tongue (whether in-cheek or not), Kate was sullen, dissatisfied, unamenable and unpopular, afterwards she is represented as radiant, powerful in utterance, a public success. Why then should we regret for Kate that she has lost the little matter of her own tongue...? Precisely for that reason: that it was *hers*.[159]

The critics that Davies categorises as the 'Pantaloons' derive much of their argument from the assumption that the audience will find Petruccio attractive in the last scenes of the play, that he has ceased to be a bully, showing either that he was 'curst for policy' only while it was necessary, or that he, too, has been reformed by the proceedings.[160] But Petruccio's last action, bar his exit, is to make sure he publicly humiliates (in the most literal sense, requiring her to make explicit the extremes of her humility) his wife.

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[157] Sinead Cusack, quoted in Carol Rutter, *Clamorous Voices* (London: Women's Press, 1988), 20-21.
[158] Rutter, 22.
[159] Davies, 42.
[160] These include the pieces by Heilman and Daniell quoted in this chapter.

This may be the act of a man who considers her better than the other women, but not one who considers her too good to abase herself in front of the other men. The trouble with trying to convince ourselves that the last scene actually shows Kate and Petruccio in an alliance against the others is that the image they present of themselves challenges only what the others thought of them as individuals, but does not challenge at all their idea of what a relationship should look like, so they clearly have not risen above the society from which they come, or got beyond concerning themselves with what people think of them.

These issues may not be thought through in such specific detail by those staging a performance, but directors and actors will have to make decisions about what will be presented positively and what negatively, and individual personal and professional agendas and world views will certainly influence these. At the RSC, *The Taming of the Shrew* has been directed by a woman twice in the company's history. Essentialism aside, it is unquestionably significant when a woman directs this play, particularly for such an established, mainstream company, as it affects its reception from critics and the director's feeling of what is being expected of her. It is rare for an RSC play to be directed by a woman, but much rarer for it to happen twice, which indicates a possible awareness of the significance of such a gender dynamic.[161] The first of these two productions was for the RSC's touring branch and was directed by Di Trevis in 1985. This received as a highly artistically successful production, that used the play's induction to emphasise the link between gender and economic oppression. The piece was performed in repertory with Brecht and Hauptman's *Happy End*, and the production style consciously evoked Brechtian staging principles, and could be described as materialist feminist in its approach. The induction was kept, with considerable emphasis on the troupe of travelling players, which included several

[161] The other plays that have had two female directors are: *King John*, *Titus Andronicus*, *The Comedy of Errors* and (as of this year) *Much Ado About Nothing*. As a comparison, 22 of Shakespeare's 38 plays have never been directed by a woman at this company, Buzz Goodbody is the only woman ever to direct *As You Like It*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Julius Caesar*, *Coriolanus* or *Hamlet* for the RSC, Nancy Meckler, this year, is the first woman to direct *Romeo and Juliet*. Statistics from Royal Shakespeare Company website: http://www.dswebhosting.info/Shakespeare/dserve.exe?dsqserver=localhost&dsqApp=Site11&dsqDb=Catalog&dsqCmd=SearchRSC.tcl (at 31 July 2007).

women. The players, hired by the Lord to perform for the bamboozled Sly, were obviously poor and struggling, hauling a cart holding all their possessions without the benefit of a horse. At the end of the performance the Lord contemptuously threw some coins to Sly before leaving, and as the drunkard stooped to gather them up he shared them with the woman who had played Katherina, aligning himself to her as those who are kept powerless by the privileged who will continue to treat them only as fodder to feed their amusement.[162]

The second woman hired by the RSC to direct this play was Gale Edwards, this time for a mainstage production. The play was not Edwards's choice, and she in fact attempted to persuade Artistic Director Adrian Noble to let her do something else. In her words: 'A woman directing *The Taming of the Shrew*, whoever she is, might as well get a loaded shotgun and put it against her temple… you cannot possibly win. You're absolutely fucked.'[163] What she eventually produced, however, was probably the most critically discussed stage production of this play since Kemble's. Most of, though certainly not all, the newspaper critics attending the initial press night were harsh with an odd note of the personal. Some of the criticisms did not hold up to rational examination, namely in that they faulted the production for altering Shakespeare's script, which it did only to the extent of cutting a minimal number of lines, which is standard practice in modern stagings of Shakespeare, and regularly passes without critical comment (and which was clearly trivial compared with the editing done, for example, by John Barton tackling the cycle of history plays, or Michael Boyd and Trevor Nunn's rearrangements of the final scene in their respective productions of *Troilus and Cressida*). John Peter criticised her ending, in which Petruccio, becoming Sly again, kneels and clasps his wife with the relief that the play was only a dream, as 'not a Shakespearean ending at all. Not because Shakespeare is a male chauvinist or a cheery optimist, but because this ending is like a sermon.'[164] Peter's argument appears to be that sermons are not Shakespearean, but it is hard to see

[162] Detailed in Elizabeth Schafer, *Ms-Directing Shakespeare: Women Direct Shakespeare* (London: Women's Press, 1998), 59.
[163] Quoted by Schafer, 57.
[164] John Peter, *Sunday Times*, 30 April 1995.

what the ending Shakespeare wrote for Kate is, if not a classic Renaissance sermon on the duties of a wife. A sermon is never a sermon to the ears of a believer.

Michael Siberry, who played Petruccio, described their interpretation of what is going on between Katherina and Petruccio as a process that Petruccio starts, but then finds he can no longer control. By IV.3: 'He wants the game to end now. He is ready to move on, aware that what he is doing is becoming irrelevant; and yet he is trapped within it because he doesn't quite know how to stop the 'taming'. [165] Then, by the final scene, he believes that he has won Kate over to his way of looking at their relationship and their place among the others in their society, and that she will therefore be happy to join in his betting on her with the other men.

> What he doesn't understand is that he has abused her trust and used it to humiliate her... she therefore humiliates him and the whole of the assembled company; she humiliates him by telling him what he expects to hear... And she does it over and over again, with increasing intensity, until it becomes obvious that by stating the idea of marital relationships that Baptista, Petrucchio and the rest of their world believe in, and that Kate is required to subscribe to, and by stating it with such power and passion, the very force and repetitiveness of the statement make it clear that something is wrong.[166]

A particularly carefully considered assessment of this production comes from Peter Holland, who includes a piece on it in his *English Shakespeares* collection. Holland had disliked the production when he first went to see it, but on later reflection became convinced that he had missed the point, and he now appreciated what Edwards had achieved.

> Edwards had imaginatively found a worthwhile way of setting up the misogyny and female oppression that is for us such a troubling feature of the play... It was only in retrospect that I felt any confidence in

[165] Michael Siberry, 'Petruccio in *The Taming of the Shrew*' in *Players of Shakespeare 4*, ed. Robert Smallwood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998): 45-59, 54
[166] Siberry, 57.

> having followed the meaning that was unfolding. I came to respect the thoughtfulness of Edwards's production... my high opinion of its intellectual rigor only came after the event, overcoming my doubts.[167]

Holland's comments demonstrate what seems to be the most notable feature of this production: its capacity to provoke serious consideration of the sexual politics in play. Numerous other critics have given considerable attention the relationship of this production to its socio-political environment, including Elizabeth Schafer,[168] Penny Gay[169] and Sarah Werner,[170] who have all examined both the dramaturgy of the production and the nature of its reception to draw conclusions about the dialogue currently surrounding gender power relations in our society, demonstrating the usefulness of a challenging production as a focussing lens to turn on these issues.

There could not be a greater contrast with the most recent production of this play for the RSC, a deeply conservative production directed by Gregory Doran in the Royal Shakespeare Theatre in 2003. Framed by a theatrical experiment of a sort, this *Shrew* was paired with John Fletcher's later companion piece to Shakespeare's play, *The Tamer Tamed*. The director may have felt that this in itself assured his credentials as a balanced presenter of the themes, allowing him the freedom to present an astonishingly uncritical *Shrew* without the risk of appearing reactionary, on the assumption that Fletcher's play shows a progressive, counterbalancing approach to early modern sexual politics (a belief which is in itself questionable). *The Tamer Tamed* shows Petruccio several years on, Katherina dead, deciding to marry a woman called Maria, who employs a few taming tactics of her own. Although the victory is hers by the end of the play, the two of them agree that a marriage is best when its partners hold each other in equal respect. Knowing that this was what would be seen by those who went to both performances, it is possible that Doran felt that subverting or deconstructing the ending of *The Shrew* would have negated the perceived necessity of doing the companion piece at all. However, the two were not played as a double bill, so it must be

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[167] Peter Holland, *English Shakespeares* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 236-240.
[168] *Ms-Directing Shakespeare: Women Direct Shakespeare* (London: Women's Press, 1998).
[169] 'Recent Australian Shrews: The "Larrikin Element"', *Shakespeare and the Twentieth Century*, editors Jonathan Bate, Jill L. Levensohn, Dieter Miehl (London: Associated University Presses, 1998): 168-182.
[170] *Shakespeare and Feminist Performance: Ideology On Stage* (London: Routledge, 2001).

considered appropriate to take the production of Shakespeare's play on its own merits. If the idea was to do the play as an historical exercise, the most obviously perplexing staging choice was to cut the Induction entirely. Susannah Clapp, writing in the *Observer*, was grateful that this production 'doesn't put twentieth-century quotation marks around the action'.[171] This play, however, is significant for having been originally written with sixteenth-century quotation marks included, and the choice to reject those is not a neutral directorial decision, it is a political act. As *Evening Standard* critic Nicholas de Jongh put it: 'The Christopher Sly Induction, which enables the play to be understood as a game of illusion, pretence and disguise, is cut... Ignoring decades of critical theory about the play's grim sexual politics and psychology, Doran passes off *The Taming of the Shrew* as a farcical romp.'[172]

At their first meeting, Alexandra Gilbreath's Katherina seemed predisposed to be won over by Jasper Britton's Petruccio (who showed some qualms about his task before her entrance, which he quelled with courage from a hip flask). Perhaps she had been willing to be nice all along if any man had shown her the right kind of attention, or perhaps she just liked his jokes (she laughed uproariously at his 'with my tongue in your tail' gag). This eventually turned into a rough-and-tumble session that concluded with him getting her shoe off and sitting on her while he tickled her foot, and she squealed with laughter. It has been noted with surprise by critics that after saying she will see Petruccio hanged before she will marry him, she makes no further protest, as he declares to her father and Bianca's suitors that 'it is agreed betwixt us twain she will still be curst in company', and that this may imply that she is already agreeable to the idea of marriage. Katherina does not, like Beatrice, declare that she does not want a husband, but rather complains to her father of her fear that one will be found for her sister, but not for her. In this production, on 'give me your hand', Petruccio gave her his hand, and she bit it, long and hard, but masking so that from where the others were standing upstage it could have been a kiss, and Petruccio was forced to pretend it was. Thus she was already showing him that she could play by his rules, and create a joke

[171] Susannah Clapp, *Observer*, 13 April 2003.
[172] Nicholas de Jongh, *Evening Standard*, 10 April 2003.

between the two of them that those surrounding them were not aware of. He seemed to have already got what he wanted from her, so it was unclear why all her further humiliations were necessary. If Katherina has already fallen in love and reformed herself in II.2, then everything following is just sadism and window-dressing.

Katherina got her gentlewoman's cap in this production, so as to have the benefit of the opportunity to throw it underfoot in the last scene (which she did with gusto, treading on it decisively), but she did not get her new dress. Her appearance in the last act called to mind the Roaring Girl, with a skirt tucked up over breeches and boots, and her feathered cap at a jaunty angle. This was a bold contrast to her stiff and farthingaled white wedding gown (this production, otherwise entirely set in the Elizabethan period, employed the careless anachronism of having both Katherina and Bianca wear white to their weddings) suggesting, perhaps, an abandonment of concern with appearance, or with fitting in.

One choice that seems bizarre at first glance, but is quite revealing of the production's conservative politics, was for Katherina to use a lower-class accent for the first four acts, despite her well-spoken relatives. Her accent seemed closer to London Cockney or what is generally referred to as 'Estuary' than anything, and bore no relationship to anyone else's except Tranio's before he began to play Lucentio, and acquired an RP accent for the purpose. Kate, too, was miraculously transformed into a lady in the last act, speaking her submission speech in the finest tones of Received Pronunciation, inexplicably finding the *Pygmalion* in *The Shrew*. The audience was shown that Kate can be a comic wench in her original state, but can only achieve the status of romantic heroine once she has accepted Petruccio's corrections.

This is particularly odd, given that Jasper Britton's Petruccio was no kind of gentleman. He was drunk at his first entrance, more so at his wedding, and again during his wager with the men at the play's conclusion. It was strongly implied that his grief at the recent death of his father had driven him to his extreme behaviour. His 'Now have I politically begun my reign' speech was addressed to his father's portrait,

which he placed on the chair next to his own. Several reviewers found his grief a very moving explanation for his 'mad' behaviour, showing a willingness to be seduced by a sentimentalised relationship between two men to the point where the effect this has on the woman is of minimal consequence. In her summary of the attitudes of productions, Elizabeth Schafer divides stage Petruccios into three broad groups: 'brutes; therapists or in therapy; mavericks and bohemians'.[173] This Petruccio would fit the category of being both therapist and patient, but how successful, or indeed appropriate, was his programme of therapy? Michael Dobson saw this as the only solution to the difficulty created by the approach to II.2 described above:

> Petruccio had to suggest here that he had relapsed into some sort of overwhelming personal neurosis since successfully and cheerfully betrothing himself to Kate, because otherwise his humiliation of her on her wedding day and thereafter looked, in this show, entirely unnecessary and unmotivated.[174]

Showing less critical acuity, the *Guardian*'s Michael Billington saw this scenario more simply, as showing Katherina's loving commitment to rescuing a potential alcoholic: 'This *Shrew* is a life-enhancing comedy about the triumph of marriage over paternal repression.'[175] Billington felt that both Katherina and Petruccio were lost to the influence of their respective fathers until saved by each other, but the production did not seem to indicate at any point that Petruccio was giving up his maudlin reverence for his forebear. He still looked firmly entrenched among the men in the last scene, even to making sure that Kate was willing to follow through on her pledge to place her hand beneath his foot. After she concluded her speech, before his response, Britton stuck out his foot and indicated that she should do what she had said she would, and Gilbreath, after a look of shock that he was going to actually make her do it, complied. At the last moment he caught her hand in his, but only after she had proved that she would not baulk at fulfilling the literal act.

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[173] Elizabeth Schafer, *Shakespeare in Production: The Taming of the Shrew* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 46.
[174] Michael Dobson, 'Shakespeare Performances in England, 2003' *Shakespeare Survey 57* (2004), 260.
[175] Michael Billington, *Guardian*, 11 April 2003.

Billington was far from being the only critic to be absolutely besotted with the sight of a production that allowed him to feel for the hero, and watch an adoring heroine fall at his feet and eagerly take the medicine that was so clearly for her own good. He was delighted by Doran 'uncovering the humanist subtext to Shakespeare's supposedly misogynist comedy.' To call any situation in which a person is forcibly deprived of food, sleep, clothing, the opportunity to clean herself (Doran followed the indications in the text to the letter: when Kate and Petruccio arrived at his house he knocked over the bowl of water brought by a servant, in which she was attempting to wash off the mud of the journey, and Hortensio had all but a bite of the food Petruccio brought her), and most importantly independent voice, 'humanist' is deeply problematic. John Peter, in the *Sunday Times*, also used the word 'humane'. The reviews seem to reveal a substantial body of spectators who experience an immediate sense of enjoyment in seeing a woman brutalised, and then are prepared to work very hard to find reasons to justify it. A curiously ill-thought-through variant on this theme was the review from Georgina Brown in the *Mail on Sunday*. Brown spoke of her dislike of the play and resolve not to go to see it again, and of being won over by Doran's 'emotionally intelligent reappraisal'.[176] Brown's misapprehension seems to be that the play is only misogynist if the audience is being asked to glory in a woman being made unhappy. If, instead, she is shown to be unappealing at first, and made happier by the way she is treated the play is 'humanist'. But the most insidious aspect of a production that chooses this direction is not that it asks us to laugh at a woman's misery, but that (like Cressida in her entrance to the Greek camp) the woman is required to show herself happy at being abused. It asks us to infer that independent-spirited women are by nature miserable, and the way for a woman to become her best self is to submit absolutely to a man. Two o'clock is seven, the sun is the moon, and 'place your hand below your husband's foot' expresses mutuality and 'a rich, shared sanity'.[177]

Shortly after the opening of Doran's production, in August of 2003, London's Globe mounted its own version, directed by Phyllida Lloyd, after Barry Kyle withdrew early

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[176] Georgina Brown, *Mail on Sunday*, 13 April 2003.
[177] David Daniell, 'The Good Marriage of Katherine and Petruccio', *Shakespeare Survey 37* (1984): 23-31, 29.

in the rehearsal process. This production used only female actors, and seems to have regarded this as a replacement for the distancing effect that would normally be provided by the induction. As in Doran's production, the induction was cut in its entirety, replaced with a prologue explaining that here 'the girls do get the chance to wear the codpiece'. Janet McTeer, who played Petruccio, was asked in interview about this omission, and replied that, being a troupe made entirely of women, 'it seemed the bravest thing was simply to play the play'.[178] Like the pairing with Fletcher's play in Doran's production, it may be that a single production decision was taken to inherently challenge the material, and therefore suggested to the director that further deconstruction was inappropriate or unnecessary. The result was, once again, a deeply conservative treatment, but this time with a final scene that looked like an attempt to have it both ways.

The Globe theatre prompts divergent reviews more than most, as such a different impression of a performance can be generated depending on the viewer's location in relation to the stage, and reviewers varied enormously in their assessments. Most were charmed by Janet McTeer's swaggering Petruccio, though many not by the production as a whole. Several reviewers noted fears that this version would be a 'dour, stridently feminist staging, heavily underlining the fact that all men are bastards',[179] as if any all-female production would be foolhardy enough to court such inevitable critical suicide. Instead, this production was high on physical antics and cheap good humour, with such japes as McTeer ostentatiously unbuttoning her codpiece to relieve herself on one of the downstage columns, and extended hamming from Rachel Sanders as Petruccio's dog, Troilus. The closest the production came to a political comment was a silent hint at the completeness of male privilege in marriage. When Petruccio first appeared it was out of a centre stage trapdoor, kissing goodbye a woman dressed only in her smock. Later the audience saw her among his retinue of servants, 'a pregnant female who may indeed be his whore'.[180] When Petruccio received Katherina's dowry as a bag of coins from her father he threw it to this woman, but as she was not seen again after this point,

[178] Interview by Heather McNeill, programme notes.
[179] Charles Spencer, *Daily Telegraph*, 25 August 2003.
[180] Benedict Nightingale, *The Times*, 23 August 2003.

the audience were not told whether he intended to keep or discard her after the blossoming of his romance with Katherina, and she was not permitted to disrupt the happy ending.

Kathryn Hunter, playing Katherina, is a tiny, slight woman who reached barely to McTeer's shoulder, and the production used this height difference to construct the relationship between the protagonists as based on an infantilised Kate, who is actually being taught by Petruccio to be an adult. Lyn Gardner saw the lesson as going both ways: 'Katherina's behaviour – biting, scratching, tying up her sister – is that of the nursery. Petruccio has become the head of the family following the death of his father, but has not learned to act as one. This Katherina and Petruccio force each other to grow up'.[181] The main use to which this difference in stature was put, however, seemed to be to create comedy out of Petruccio's physical abuse of Katherina. 'Petruccio sits Kate on his lap as if she were a ventriloquist's dummy, then effortlessly turns her upside down before casually dropping her on the floor, where she lies in a heap with her dress over her head.'[182] He was repeatedly shown as able to restrict her movements, enfold her in his arms, prevent her leaving, and otherwise physically dominate her. The responsiveness of the audience to the comedy of such moments as these may rely on the awareness that they are actually watching two women (if not, then it is even more worrying). Interestingly, Michael Dobson seems to be the only reviewer who showed any concern that the use of female actors may not legitimise this picture of a man using his superior strength to control a woman and remove her agency.[183] This production and Doran's both relied on the trivialising of abuse, though Doran mined this approach for romance, Lloyd for slapstick comedy.

Though appearing to be rendered completely helpless by Petruccio's power over her throughout acts II to IV, When it came to Katherina's final speech, Lloyd seemed to attempt a last-minute switch. Katherina turned out to have only being playing at being

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[181] Lyn Gardner, *Guardian*, 23 August 2003.
[182] Spencer.
[183] Dobson, 261-262.

tamed, and her final submission took the approach of mocking the ideas in the speech by making them exaggeratedly literal:

> Hunter lies on her back inviting him to walk on her, yanks up her skirt to reveal the worthlessness of her body, comprehensively calling Petruccio's bluff, and transforming him from a domineering lout to a bourgeois prude. The production goes along so completely with the idea of male supremacy as to turn it into a laughing stock. [184]

The extreme length of the monologue was used as the basis for a series of gags, whereby the men were at first delighted with what she had to say, then gradually became embarrassed, and then appalled, as she carried on and on, climbing onto the banquet table and then lying prostrate on the floor, 'oppressing Petruccio with her submissiveness, just as he oppresses her with his "kindness"'.[185] Certainly, this is one legitimate way to negotiate this scene, but it is dramaturgically flawed if it bears no relationship to the rest of the performance. There was no implication that Hunter's Katherina was taking a risk by trumping her husband so publicly, although all the evidence of previous scenes would seem to suggest that he would find a way to punish her for behaviour like this, if the production was to be consistent in its characterisation.

It is tempting to view this production as the most shallow kind of unreflective comedy, most likely prompted by the fear of being criticised for humourlessness if it were to try anything challenging of the romantic comedy status quo, but this might be too dismissive. Elizabeth Schafer, who surely has a more complete knowledge of this play in performance than almost anyone, having edited the *Shrew* volume of the *Shakespeare in Production* series, called this production 'one of the most challenging, thoughtful and entertaining I have seen'.[186] McTeer's comments in interview (quoted above) show that the women involved did have a belief that they were giving a performance that was brave and subversive, parodying the assumptions of male entitlement that can be found in the play. What this production does is illustrate something about the tightrope walked by women seeking to enter the hegemonic space

[184] Irving Wardle, *Sunday Telegraph*, 31 August 2003.
[185] Liz Hoggard, *Observer*, 24 August 2003.
[186] Elizabeth Schafer, *Around the Globe* 25, Autumn 2003.

of Shakespeare performance: that the fear is still there of being under different obligations, of being judged differently, and of having something exceptional to prove. Ultimately, however, the work must stand on whether the participants were successful in their aims, and this performance sacrificed the subversive in the effort to prove a sense of humour, resulting in more trivialising of the realities of men's socially authorised power over women.

A contrast in many ways to these two basically conservative interpretations was the Rough Magic 2006 production, set in 1960s Ireland, with the tag line 'Women are from Venus, Men are from Mullingar'. This Irish independent theatre company, despite its name, has staged only two productions of Shakespeare in its more than twenty-year history. The first was *The Tempest* in 1985, and the second was *The Taming of the Shrew*, so there must have been something particularly compelling about the idea to inspire company Artistic Director Lynne Parker to return to Shakespeare with this play and no other. In this production, Italian location references in the text were let stand, but setting was nevertheless clearly Irish, and the actors used their own accents, which meant some were Dublin, others more identifiable as country. The decision to set the play in rural Ireland in the 1960s seemed to have the potential to be gimmicky but, in fact, Parker made a persuasive case for both the choice of play and for a localized setting as clever dramaturgical commentary. Parker's argument was that marriage in Ireland has always been a bargain struck between men, competitive about land and chattels: I have this much land, you have this many ducats, I am prepared to combine our assets by marrying your daughter, who will run my home and have my babies. The men collude, they bargain, they seal their deals with drink, and the women are normally excluded from the process.

The traverse stage of the Project Arts Centre's Upstairs theatre lends itself to dynamic blocking, and brought the audience close to the action. A set consisting of lots of lime green and yellow, wooden chairs and tables, and patterned linoleum created a sense of small town community halls, where refreshments would involve little triangle sandwiches, and large slugs of whiskey. In everyday speech, a somewhat old-fashioned

turn of phrase is still common in Ireland, and the accents, particularly those from the rural regions, have prominent iambic rises and falls. This means that the sounds of ordinary Irish speech fit the language of Shakespeare so well that the lines themselves seem to make more sense than when we hear them in English in accents more conventional to Shakespearean performance. The cadences of the Irish accent simply cleave to Shakespeare's language, particularly in its comic mode, and save the jokes from sounding as forced as they often do on the modern stage.

Emphasis on the play's marriage-market aspect gave the sub-plot unusual prominence. As the induction was excised entirely, the play began with Lucentio's entrance, seeming to set him up as the hero, and a charming and funny one at that. Bianca has long been recognized as the one who knows how to play the system, and this Bianca, a definite goodtime girl, knew exactly how to get the most out of remaining a chattel. She seemed both smart and reasonable for exploiting the opportunity to become involved in the business of deciding to whom she will be handed over. This production mocked the fervent repetition of the word 'modesty' as a mantra to describe female virtue: keeping quiet in public makes a woman modest, even if she is carrying on liaisons with both the master and his servant in private. In this context the subplot scenes, usually regarded as so slight, seemed at least as substantial as the plot of many a Restoration comedy.

As a consequence, however, Katherine and Petruccio were firmly displaced from the centre of the story. Both were in their forties, showing a sizable gap from Bianca and Lucentio who were in their twenties, so Katherina had good reason to believe that she was on the shelf. Showing her wiping down tables and clearing away glasses in the early scenes did not seem to indicate that we were in the presence of a rebellious spirit. Owen Roe's Petruccio was, at least, not short on swagger, and his appearance at his wedding in a cowboy-style suit, minus the trousers, would be enough to provoke hysteria in stronger women than Kate. On the whole, though, his manly but middle-aged Petruccio couldn't provoke much life out of Pauline McLynn's Katherina, who seemed whipped from the start, and minimally shrewish. This was certainly in part

because of the deliberate emphasis on marriage as a system that uses women to seal an exchange that is actually taking place between men. The case was effectively put, but it did come at the expense of a sense that Katherine and Petruccio are something different from the other couples. Like Bianca, this Katherine was busy working out a deal with her mate ('you give me that—I can get you this'), which meant that the audience was watching haggling instead of sparring. Given that Kate and Petruccio, in this scenario, were really just negotiating the terms of their relationship, much as Bianca and Lucentio were, perhaps it wasn't clear why it should be that they should end up happy in their marriage while Bianca and Lucentio should conclude by rowing and throwing their drinks in each other's faces.

It was clearly implied that the bet in the final scene was Katherine's idea. She whispered to Grumio, who carried a message to Petruccio and back. Her 'cap' was a scarf tied around her head, Grace Kelly style, and she threw it to Grumio, rather than actually treading it underfoot. During her main speech, she spontaneously bestowed a long kiss on Tranio, but then countered it with a pulled face and a shake of the head that showed he was no match for the man she had landed. The famous 'submission' speech was part of the bargain: Katherine will make Petruccio look like a real man, and in return she gets to look as if she has won a better mate than the other women, and the two of them make a tidy profit along the way. At the end of the speech her hand extended to her husband was not seriously to lay it under his foot, but rather to invite him to follow her upstairs.

This production seemed to step around the knotty problems of this play in a most creative way, rather than attempting to untie them. Although this did create a gap in the production, it was not necessarily a flaw; it seemed instead that it may have been foolish not to realize how much this is a play about navigating transactions that are simultaneously business and personal. It was a performance of great dynamism and clarity that was well received by an Irish audience who saw plenty they recognized in the competitive groups of bragging men, who then have to learn to negotiate with women.

Two things are notably absent from these three recent examples. First, the Induction, which was cut from all, despite its enormous potential to reveal the performative nature of gender roles, and to highlight the way the body of the play can be viewed as a commentary on, or critique of, the dynamics of sexual politics and power it plays out in its narrative. Secondly, there is an absence of any kind of radical deconstruction of the material, such as that seen in previous decades, in Bogdanov's of 1978, Edwards's of 1995 or that directed by Yücel Erten, mentioned above. This does not, of course, mean that no one is doing anything radical with the play or its controversial conclusion anymore, but it does show that a perspective that challenges a 'straight' reading of the play is not considered obligatory.

Both the plays in this chapter negotiate a highly unusual pathway through the most common contemporary characterizations of womanhood and marital relations, putting some to work and rejecting others. Like *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Much Ado About Nothing* centres at least as much on women's importance in facilitating relationships among men as it does on examining relationships between men and women. Both, obviously, are equally interested in the destabilising effect of female noisiness. *Much Ado*, however, is much more interested in male anxiety about female sexual unruliness. The handing of a woman from her father to her husband is the most apparent use of the female to forge a link from one man, or group of men, to another, but it is the fear of being cuckolded that truly unites men. This play is full of references to an assumed female faithlessness that then never occurs. The male characters continue until the final moments of the play to equate marriage with cuckoldry ('Get thee a wife. There is no staff more revered than that tipped with horn' (V.4.121)). The irony of this is that, as in so many of Shakespeare's plays, this truism about female behaviour is rendered absolutely false by the actual behaviour of the female characters represented. Shakespeare shows himself repeatedly willing to 'redefine the source of corruption, locating it not in the unstable female body, but in the diseased male imagination'.[187]

[187] Janet Adelman, *Suffocating Mothers*, *Suffocating Mothers: Fantasies of Maternal Origin in Shakespeare's Plays, Hamlet to The Tempest* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 69.

Curiously, despite their interest in both female verbosity and sexuality, both *Shrew* and *Much Ado* refuse to draw the accustomed link between female verbal and sexual liberality. No one at any point accuses Katherina or Beatrice of promiscuity, or suggests that this is the kind of danger their husbands will have to guard against, even when they are coming under the harshest criticism. Instead it is the almost silent Hero who is vulnerable to such accusations.

Again, like *Shrew*, *Much Ado About Nothing* is an excellent barometer for the attitudes of the society mounting the production. These plays invite a position on the way the men and women represented treat each other. 'The study of *Much Ado* in performance offers particularly rewarding insights into some of the changing constructions of gender between the Renaissance and the present day.'[188] The character of Beatrice has been popular throughout history, but with varying degrees of reservation or qualification. Certainly the Victorians found it hard wholly to like her, sinning as she does against decorum in both the volume and the content of her speech. An awareness of the prominence of male bonding as a theme has developed in the past few years, along with the fact that both plays turn on an attempt by society to coerce representatives of its disruptive elements to conform to social norms and be incorporated into conventional society through the socially regulating institution of marriage: 'The world must be peopled!'

> Despite Benedick's apparent libertarian bravado here, what he means and what the play means is a world peopled via the ceremony of Christian marriage only. The play's triumph is to make the audience assent to its vision of a community always to be revitalised from within, by the incorporation of rebellious energy, not its expulsion.[189]

Gay's assessment would apply equally to both plays.

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[188] John F. Cox, *Shakespeare in Production: Much Ado About Nothing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 1.
[189] Penny Gay, *As She Likes It: Shakespeare's Unruly Women* (London: Routledge, 1994), 143.

This is not to say that there has been a straightforward shift in the theatre world to the desire to politicise the play, or an unambivalent embracing of this goal by critics and the general public. Elizabeth Schafer undoubtedly has a point about the political implications of the contrast between the receptions given to Di Trevis and Judi Dench's 1988 productions.[190] Dench's production was noted for its 'warmth', its (large and small 'r') romanticism, and for its almost complete elimination of the more disturbing elements of the story. Trevis's digs both at the spoilt imperialism and self-involved triviality of the upper-crust protagonists, and at the mockery of a joyous union the reconciliation of Claudio and Hero can be (black confetti rained down on the couples at the conclusion), along with a Beatrice and Benedick who failed to conform to the physical ideals of a romantic hero and heroine, resulted in almost total critical loathing. Perhaps, though, the two productions whose receptions most invite comparison and contrast are Trevis's *Shrew* and her *Much Ado*: in both cases the director mined what is unsettling in the comedy, particularly in terms of class relations, but while critics were prepared to accept this as appropriate in the former play, with which they were already required by social norms to be uncomfortable, when it came to the latter they did not like having their comfort disturbed.

In an account written for the *Players of Shakespeare* series, Maggie Steed (who played Beatrice for Trevis) addresses the poor critical reception for this production in judicious and measured terms that are most insightful, in that she shows a willingness to engage with outside opinion, but tempers it with her knowledge of the process that was employed to arrive at their performances. She seems confident in the company's understanding of the roles and the way character works within the play, generally ascribing the production's problems to aspects of the *mise en scène*. Although very interested in the construction of the play, its balance between verse and prose and the technical aspects of speaking to these rhythms, Steed also places heavy emphasis on building up a detailed set of Stanislavskian given circumstances for her character. She puts a lot of thought into Beatrice's role in the family, assuming her to be without inheritance and that 'the role she has found for herself is that of clown – still the

[190] Schafer, 75-81.

outsider, singing for her supper'.[191] She constructs an elaborate and somewhat sentimental idea of her relationship with Leonato as a substitute father. In fact she gets quite carried away in considering the line 'my mother cried', going into long musings on how she thought that Beatrice's mother had had an unhappy marriage and experienced betrayal, and that for Beatrice 'the "star" that had danced is Leonato, the loving uncle who has taken her into his home and family'.[192] This is the kind of 'back-story' that some actors find indispensable, and most critics find humorous. She does not stop to consider whether it is possible to over-read the textual indications, for Steed such moments 'took me inside the character' so, in practical terms, the imaginative extrapolation of details is what bolsters her sense of how she should behave on stage.

Dench's production was for Kenneth Branagh's Renaissance Theatre Company, as part of his project to encourage experienced actors to try directing. Branagh played the part of Benedick, and the influence of this production could be discerned when he reprised the role for the film version he directed himself five years later.[193] The film gained a wide popular audience, including many people who would not usually regard Shakespeare as entertainment, and it is indisputably rollicking good fun to watch. Branagh makes it so, however, by ripping out everything in the text that might raise uncomfortable questions about power imbalances, and romanticizing every aspect of the production, from the soldiers' uniforms to the relationship between Claudio and Hero to the golden Tuscan (not Sicillian) landscape. Virtually every cuckolding joke was excised, and there was no treatment of a possible ongoing cultural anxiety about female infidelity. Nor was there any interest in where the power balances fell. Probably the most significant adjustment to the text is the interpolation of a scene showing Don John leading Claudio and Don Pedro to a place where they can observe Borachio, not merely talking, but actually having sex with Margaret, whom they take for Hero. The more extreme nature of what happens between them, along with giving the audience Claudio's perspective, takes the emphasis away from his willingness to believe the

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[191] Maggie Steed, 'Beatrice in *Much Ado About Nothing*' in *Players of Shakespeare 3*, ed. Russell Jackson and Robert Smallwood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994):42-51, 45.
[192] Steed, 47.
[193] Courtney Lehmann, 'As performed by the cast of the Kenneth Branagh film at Villa Vignamaggio, Tuscany' in *Sourcebooks Shakespeare: Much Ado About Nothing* (London: Methuen, 2007): 13-24, 20.

worst of Hero, allows the audience to identify with him, and suggests that it is reasonable for him to be deceived, rather than a sign of his weakness. Here the audience would be shown no hint that Beatrice's edgy alienation or Hero's abuse might arise from larger problems within the structures of their society: this Messina was an Eden from which only Don John the serpent would be expelled.

Bragnagh's simplistic take on the play, however, is more a relic of the nineteenth century than the modern norm, and Trevis is far from being the only director to have found this text full of ore to mine on gender and class politics. Cheek by Jowl's founder and Artistic Director Declan Donnellan has most often shown his strongest interest in the male dynamic in Shakespeare, having directed all-male productions of *As You Like It* and *Twelfth Night*, and found Mamillius infinitely more interesting than Hermione in *The Winter's Tale*, but his production of *Much Ado About Nothing* suggests that such an attitude can yield fruitful ideas for interrogating the relationships between men and women. His 1998 staging focussed on the destructive aspects of male bonding, that rendered the women marginal and struggling to register their experiences as important. As one reviewer assessed the situation: '"Sigh no more, ladies" becomes the evening's theme song. And one reason the ladies have for sighing is that they can't be sure that most of the men aren't basically gay.'[194]

Donnellan used an Edwardian setting, which is almost certainly the most popular period for setting Shakespeare in modern British theatre. Perhaps the reason for this is no more sophisticated than that this is the closest period to modern a director can employ while still putting the women in corsets and strapping swords on the men, thus avoiding some of the problems with anachronistic references in the text. Or maybe there are more substantial motives: if the director assumes an understanding on the part of the audience of the strict social codes and hierarchies of that period, such a setting may suggest a way to speak to many popular thematic concerns, in this case, class, gender roles and sexual repression.

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[194] John Gross, *Sunday Telegraph*, 14 June 1998.

This production did not seek to disguise the appalling treatment the women receive at the hands of most of the men. Where Branagh's movie version did everything it could to increase the impression of a genuine romance between Claudio and Hero, and make his behaviour more sympathetic, this production was more in keeping with Friedman's understanding of the Comedy of Forgiveness, in taking on the uncomfortable side of the romantic hero: 'When Bohdan Poraj's clueless Claudio is given Hero's hand in marriage, he rushes not into her arms but into those of Don Pedro (Stephen Mangan) the friend who wooed her on his behalf.'[195] Hero was clearly disconcerted by this neglect, and the incident drew attention to the character's lack of lines in this scene. Later, during III.2, Don Pedro and Claudio shared a long, obviously marked moment when the audience wondered if they would kiss. This production was noted for the way it revealed the common thematic elements in the two romantic plots, which were played as carrying equal importance. Rather than primarily turning on Claudio's brutal treatment of Hero, or Benedick's protestations of detestation for the sex, the production showed how each strand of the story illustrated a male retreat from women, out of fear, into the safety of their own company. By 'widening the focus to all the men's behaviour towards women in times of war, Declan Donnellan and Nick Ormerod reveal the play to be as tightly laced as Hero's wedding corset'[196] (a reference to the scene of preparation for the wedding, in which it took the combined efforts of Beatrice and Margaret to tight lace Hero, requiring her to lie on the floor while they heaved at long ties to get her into the restrictive garment).

In a minimalist set consisting mainly of hanging screens, characteristic of Ormerod's design style, the costumes were detailed and accurate to period, but movement and blocking were often stylised. Upper-crust accents for all the characters, in this instance, did not represent an idea about the proper way to speak Shakespeare, but rather made a specific comment about the class of the protagonists. The costumes indicated not only the repression and rules that required a young woman to allow others to arrange her marriage for her, but also the British public school 'guffawing and cavorting in

[195] Dominic Cavendish, *Time Out*, 10 June 1998.
[196] David Benedict, *Independent*, 11 June 1998.

homoerotic scrums'.[197] The *mise-en-scène* was a (not subtle) dramaturgical commentary on the social attitudes being portrayed, playing on an assumed recognition on the part of the audience of a certain bracket of English history.

> The soldiers, with their pristine bottle green uniforms, waxed short back and sides and daft moustaches look like out-sized escapees from a Victorian children's nursery. Their behaviour, however, is more redolent of boarding school types at a garden party: braying, sniggering and point-scoring, they freeze in group portraits of the absurd, latently homosexual horseplay. The women, in nondescript white skirts and blouses, share the same clipped enunciation, but they're from a different planet as far as the men are concerned. [198]

The scene Cavendish describes above is I.1 during which, as Beatrice enquired after who is the 'young squarer now that will make a voyage with him to the devil', the men enacted a series of tableaux involving Benedick wrestling Claudio to the ground and sitting astride him, and then being flipped over to the reverse, while their chums cheered them on. Crucial to this pattern, of course, is the fact that the gulling of Benedick has the unintended side-effect of causing him to reject these priorities and align himself with the women, thus growing into the more complete man.

Saskia Reeves, who played Beatrice, has written about her understanding of the play for the *Actors on Shakespeare* series. She and the director were very interested in what the play represents of how men are prepared to treat women, and of the question of competing loyalties. Ultimately, does someone's loyalty belong with their family, their loved one, or those who share their gender experiences and vulnerabilities? Reeves, for example, saw Leonato as having 'betrayed' Hero by believing the slanders about her.[199] She also felt, as Beatrice, disgusted by the arranging of Hero's marriage around her, without any call for her active participation or acquiescence, so that the line 'Speak cousin, or if you cannot, stop his mouth with a kiss and let him not speak neither', so often played as warmly humorous, was for her 'outspoken and lewd', fuelled by anger

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[197] Brian Logan, *Observer*, 14 June 1998.
[198] Cavendish.
[199] Saskia Reeves, *Actors on Shakespeare: Much Ado About Nothing* (London: Faber and Faber, 2003), 44.

at seeing Claudio make more of the Prince than of his new fiancée.[200] She proceeded to get drunk to the point of falling over, as an expression of resentment of the whole milieu.

One step Donnellan took to raise questions about gender roles, which Reeves found very effective, was to combine the parts of Ursula and Antonio. This changed both the gender and class dynamics at a number of points, as this made Ursula Hero's aunt rather than her waiting woman, and placed an older female figure as counterpoint and companion to Leonato. This meant that, where it would have been Leonato's brother who took up the challenge of Claudio he initiated, it was now his sister who did so, presenting a matriarch who was willing to stand up for her young relative, and perhaps showing that age could give the authority that Beatrice feels she lacks when she assumes she needs a man to challenge Claudio for her. Indeed, it was this scene that showed the gender switch to be such a powerful idea. After being shown such displays of male privilege and priorities, Ursula's (usually Antonio's) lines describing Claudio and Don Pedro as 'Boys, apes, braggarts, jacks, milksops' (V.1.98) and 'Scambling, outfacing, fashion-monging boys, / That lie and cog and flout, deprave and slander' (V.1.102) carried additional weight coming from an older woman.

Though Beatrice's union with Benedick was presented as a happy one, probably based on his proven willingness to change, the reuniting of Claudio and Hero did not relinquish its note of sadness, despite Claudio's obvious contrition. Reeves was so resentful of Claudio's treatment of Hero that her Beatrice refused to take his proffered hand in the final scene until Benedick's encouragement of 'Come, come, we are friends'. While not attempting to show all the problems being solved, Donnellan found a way to suggest a society that had begun to recognise that it would need to change.

Much Ado About Nothing is a staple of the New York Public Theater as it is such a popular piece for large crowds, and the company has given several productions in its fifty year history. The free performances as part of the New York Shakespeare Festival

[200] Reeves, 30.

have a prominent and beloved history in that city, but also have an ideological base in founding Artistic Director Joseph Papp's belief in making Shakespeare accessible, both physically and intellectually, to all who want it. That such an ideology has been sustained for fifty years and is reflected in so many other places makes it indispensable to consider its influence in a study of dramaturgical trends. It shows an important philosophical link to companies such as Britain's Northern Broadsides and Australia's Bell Shakespeare Company, arising from a committed belief on the part of practitioners that Shakespeare does not belong to any one group, and that virtually everyone will find something to love in his plays, if given the right opportunities. In the case of the New York Public Theater, this has resulted in a kind of foregone expectation of 'populism' that occurs repeatedly in the commentary of reviewers, with populist taken to mean broad in playing style and light in tone. The NYSF is also a popular forum for actors known to American audiences through work in film or television to prove their credentials as serious Thespians. In the 2004 production of *Much Ado About Nothing*, directed by David Esbjornson, Kristen Johnston and Jimmy Smits played Beatrice and Benedick with the lightest of good humour, to the point where some reviewers seemed unaware that the play is considered to have a dark side. The *New York Times* review referred to 'Shakespeare's inconsequential story', and the farcical elements preoccupied most critics.

Once again, the setting was nineteenth century fin-de-siècle and, like Donnellan's, put the women in long, white dresses, and the men in neat suits and cravats for the civilians and dress uniforms for those returning from war. However, in contrast with the female costumes in Donnellan's production, which were virtually unadorned, rather school-ma'amish signifiers of repression, the women here wore a great deal of softening lace, loose hair and many satin bows. This seemed to be a society that liked its men to be men, and its women to be schoolgirls. Physically, Smits and Johnston seemed an appropriate yet distinctive pairing. Working within a performance culture that generally asks women to be slight and fragile, Johnston is a tall, strapping figure who may be statuesque, but never slender. Even opposite Jimmy Smits she was kept in very low heels so as not to match Benedick's height. Smits, too, is taller and broader than

most leading men, and so the two together would have given the exchanges between Beatrice and Benedick a physically formidable edge.

Critics were quite drastically divided in their opinions of the performances, some praising their lightness of touch, others decrying their stridency and overplaying. Assessments of Johnston's Beatrice, for example, ranged from the appalled: 'he [Smits] gets the Beatrice he deserves, with Kristen Johnston playing so hard, vindictive, and shrill that their encounters suggest the simultaneous taming of a shrew and a swine',[201] to the adoring: 'She plays Beatrice with all the fire and wisdom the character deserves... Also lovely about Johnson's stage acting is her ability to think her way through Beatrice's predicaments, she allows us to see her work out barbs and ideas and fantasies as she speaks in real time. Only reptiles could not warm to her.'[202]

Few discerned much commentary on larger ideas or themes. The post-WWI setting, though, encouraged some to see commentary on a quickly changing world. Christopher Byrne noted that the younger couple seem to be the one most keen to cling to the old order:

> Claudio and Hero, though younger, want to fit into the social structure as it existed before the war. Claudio's shock that Hero has been unfaithful... seems not just to smear Hero's character but to destroy Claudio's faith in the social order. He is duped as much by the lies of Don John as by his sense of how things should be. Hero has remained faithful, but as a woman at home during a war that changed all the rules about roles, she may have had chances to stray... In his performance, we see more than a handsome, privileged man who escaped being killed in the war, we see a man who doesn't want the world he fought for to change.[203]

Observing the same fight to keep things as they always have been, Bryn Manion saw the production as drafting Don John into the role of revolutionary:

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[201] Michael Feingold, http://www.villagevoice.com/theater/0429,feingold,55225,11.html , 20 July 2004.
[202] Bryn Manion, http://www.offoffonline.com/archives.php?id=118 , 11 July 2004.
[203] Christopher Byrne, http://www.thevillager.com/villager_64/romamceinthenight.html , 21 July 2004.

> He doesn't commit evil for evil's sake, but for a Futurist agenda, a sort of socialist anarchy that disrupts the placid, conventional world of Messina… Esbjornson should be commended for letting Don John's bohemian hedonism and loose morals inform us of the world outside Messina, a world rapidly changing and challenging all that is precious about Leonato's domain.[204]

If this is so, then the Edwardian setting Esbjornson shared with Donnellan led them to diametrically opposed scenarios. Was it being implied that the forces of change really were the forces of evil? Are the societal norms that allow everyone so quickly to believe the worst of Hero to be let off the hook again? And where does this leave Beatrice, and her refusal to behave like a lady? Manion did notice the implications for her: 'It is also apparent that Esbjornson and Johnston understand the importance of Beatrice's background plight: how can an impossibly brilliant woman maintain her self-possession in a world ruled by men, mores and warfare?'[205] Perhaps it is not the job of such a production to offer a solution to this conundrum, but the question, while raised, does not seem to have been tackled seriously.

Of course, it need not be an either/or choice to explore the darker or quirkier side of the play, or look for commentary on class, as Trevis did, or to play for humour and romance. The 2006 RSC production, directed by Marianne Elliott, showed that it is possible to present a sexy and winning relationship between Beatrice and Benedick without the need to sacrifice all commentary on gender roles. The production was set in Cuba in 1953, apparently for almost purely aesthetic reasons. This period has the advantage for a designer and director of providing clear semiotic indicators of the types of women being represented. In this instance, Hero, Ursula and Margaret all wore full skirted dresses in floral prints, while Beatrice wore a slim-lined skirt, teddy-girl style. Clearly she was marked as the rebel, but perhaps also the vamp? Tamsin Greig was already taller than the other actresses, but this was further emphasised by her stiletto-heeled court shoes that contrasted with the more modest heels and espadrilles of the

[204] Manion.
[205] ibid.

other women. She was also the only one who wore sunglasses at several key points, so there were numerous ways she was being set apart physically. The 1950s was an era that marked women as 'nice girl' or otherwise by their appearance, and here, with ponytails, neat hairbands, cardigans, gloves, all the women who are not Beatrice were decisively marked as nice girls. This seems to have been a specific interest of the director. The programme notes include an article by Carol Chillington Rutter discussing the representation of the female. She notes the way the play frames the good girl/bad girl dichotomy with a cutting irony: 'that it's the "good" girl, the one who fulfils every male fantasy, submits to every misogynist stereotype, who's exhibited in the church as a slut'.[206] It is true that where silence is read as chastity, Hero must be thought to be as chaste as humanly possible, barely speaking at all during the entire process of her own marriage negotiations. Unusually for one of Shakespeare's romantic heroines, Hero's only indications that she has any feelings for Claudio consist of the exchange between Beatrice and Claudio: 'My cousin tells him in his ear that he is in her heart. / And so she doth, cousin', in which Hero herself takes no part, and her line regarding Benedick, that 'He is the only man of Italy, / Always excepted my dear Claudio.' Rutter is also particularly interested in the way the play toys with the traditional assumptions about women as shifting, mercurial, changeable as the moon, revealing in the end that the women have been 'true as steel' while the men are the ones who are 'deceivers ever'. Shakespeare may have given this message with more subtlety in his later plays, but never with more clarity. The idea of the play showing a woman's way to approach the world was important for the director, also. In an interview with the *Telegraph* she said: 'I'm very interested in the female perspective in *Much Ado About Nothing*, as I think it's a very imperialistic, patriarchal society at the beginning of the play, and through what the characters learn about love it becomes a more egalitarian, more open society.'[207]

The Cuban setting invoked about race and casting. The men showed a significant amount of racial variety, particularly among the 'watch', but of the women, the only

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[206] Carol Chillington Rutter, programme notes for *Much Ado About Nothing*, RSC, 2006.
[207] Marianne Elliott, quoted in Dominic Cavendish, 'Shakespeare and the Women: the Inside Story' *Telegraph*, 25 March 2006.

one who was not profoundly Anglo was Balthasar, who was turned into a West-Indian chanteuse. Her performance of 'Sigh No More' was a featured interlude, but her position within the story was as a servant. It seems the more valuable a woman here, the paler she is. It would be interesting to know whether the director in fact intended this as a commentary on the racial stratification of pre-revolution Cuba. Programme notes, by Tony Kapcia, giving historic context, discusses the conservative and hierarchical nature of Cuban society at this time, and Elliott in the same interview mentioned above shows herself aware of the implications of this for women: 'Women are right at the bottom of the pecking order, and there are only certain ways they can overcome that, one of which is to entertain constantly, as Beatrice does.' On the other hand, Don Pedro was black while all the other upper-class male characters were white, so colour does not seem to be an impediment to a man breaking into the upper echelons of this society. The line in which Claudio declares that he will wed Hero's replacement 'an she were an Ethiope' was, predictably, cut. In any case, what was apparent was that announcing an exotic setting will in no way make most actors of the RSC anything but indisputably English.

In the masqueing scene only the men wore masks, and entered as a group to begin a dance on their own, centre-stage, while the women giggled in the corners. Significantly, it was Beatrice here who began to weave her way through the men, eventually encouraging the other women to enjoy the dance.

Elliott perhaps succeeded where Trevis failed in managing the tricky balancing act of appealing to an audience while still keeping an eye on the play's darker elements, and political aspects. As in Trevis's production, the women remained in their mourning garb throughout the final scene, rather than putting on 'other weeds' more appropriate to a wedding. Hero's lines to Claudio were not gently spoken, but rather seemed a firm insistence that she would not accept any further signs of his doubting her. She also turned away from her father, apparently not having yet forgiven him for his siding with her accusers. All the same, this production did pull the occasional punch, cutting the

further jokes about cuckoldry that Claudio cracks in the final scene, when he still believes Hero to be dead (these rarely make it to production these days).

As a counterpoint to *The Taming of the Shrew*, the question arises of whether Beatrice is a shrew tamed during the course of the play. Beatrice herself does use the word 'taming', but crucially intends to implement the process on herself: 'I will requite thee, / Taming my wild heart to thy loving hand' (III.1.113-114). The image is again from falconry, which seems to have a special relationship with the idea of shrews. This is illuminating, as the falcon was such a profoundly admired creature, and a spirited, formerly wild specimen much more admired than one that was too tame. Beatrice, however, never really curbs her repartee, even her last line ('I would not deny you, but by this good day I yield upon great persuasion, and partly to save your life, for I was told you were in a consumption' (V.4.97-98)) is anything but submissive, or indeed taciturn. It is true that she does not speak again in the play after Benedick's response: 'Peace, I will stop thy mouth.' I say Benedick's response, but this is actually an emendation by modern editors. Both the Quarto and Folio assign the line to Leonato. Edward Berry suggests that Leonato is indicating to Benedick here that he should kiss Beatrice,[208] but until recently editors and directors have almost universally assumed it is simply an error. Two significant exceptions are Jonathan Bate in the RSC Complete Works (who adds the stage direction: 'Makes Beatrice and Benedick kiss') and Claire McEachern in the third series Arden edition. McEachern keeps the line assigned to Leonato in the text, with the addition of the stage direction 'gives her to Benedick', but speculates in her introduction that it may be appropriate to amend the line to 'mouths'. It is her feeling that it would be fitting to the shape and character of the play that Leonato conclude by silencing the quarrelling of the two of them by indicating that they should kiss (also echoing Beatrice's directive to Hero 'stop his mouth with a kiss, and let not him speak neither' (II.1.214-215)).[209] She has a point: why should we assume that we must be left with an image of Beatrice being dominated by Benedick, when the play seems more consistently interested in the domination of the patriarch?

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[208] Edward Berry, *Shakespeare's Comic Rites* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 185.
[209] Claire McEachern, Introduction to the Arden 3rd Series edition.

Michael Friedman considers this line most appropriate to Benedick as a step towards his assuming the role of patriarch, seeing this moment as a summary of his 'model narrative' of the Comedy of Forgiveness, which requires shrews to be silenced and rakes to become patriarchs, and believing that with this line 'in one fell swoop he both silences her for the rest of play and makes himself into a "married man".'[210] From an audience, rather than a literary perspective, however, there is little sense that Beatrice has given up speaking permanently. Elliott's production had Bertram close in for the expected kiss on this line, but let Beatrice dodge it until she makes the decision to bestow it herself. After the kiss had been going on for some time, the Prince tried to interrupt with his question for Benedick, but was initially hushed by a one-handed 'just a minute' gesture from Beatrice. These elements gave her a position as controlling the action that did not appear to be sacrificed for wifely submission.

One observable difference between *The Taming of the Shrew* and *Much Ado About Nothing* is in the relationships between the female characters. *The Shrew* is unusual (though not unique) in Shakespeare for showing the women in conflict with each other. A more common pattern in his plays is for the more outspoken of two female characters to seek to protect the other woman from the treachery of men. From comedies like *Two Gentlemen of Verona* and *All's Well That Ends Well* to tragedies like *Othello*, there is repeatedly an opportunity for an articulate woman to bewail the unworthiness of a weak man loved by a woman much too good for him. Beatrice, in her insistence that the wronged Hero should be avenged, echoes all these, but especially looks ahead to the role of Paulina as Hermione's champion in *The Winter's Tale*. Narrative conventions frequently present us with the final union of the romantic protagonists as their reward for sufferings overcome. The two plays in this chapter are not the only examples of stories in which this suffering seems to be disproportionately the burden of the heroine.

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[210] Michael Friedman, *'The World Must Be Peopled': Shakespeare's Comedies of Forgiveness* (London: Associated University Press, 2002), 208.

On the modern stage it is simply not possible to avoid treating the rewarding of Claudio and Petruccio with their hearts' desires, despite their reprehensible behaviour, as a problem that needs a solution (it may be that this was always the case, we have no way of knowing about responses to this aspect in the earliest productions). The solutions arrived at might be as simple as cutting Claudio's more offensive lines, or showing the bet at the end of the *Shrew* to be Katherina's idea, but it is possible for practitioners to look to more theoretical analysts for ideas on an approach. As mentioned earlier, there are numerous critics who have looked into form and structure to find a solution to *The Shrew* (particularly by examining the implications of the Induction). Genre has also been much discussed by literary critics, and this may be an aspect that performers can also relate to and use, being intimately connected as it is with systems of theatrical convention and audience expectation. Looking to genre can give practitioners clues as to how to make theatrical moments work. A solution to the problem of *Much Ado* has been posited by Michael D. Friedman in his examination of the 'Comedies of Forgiveness' as a subgenre. Friedman took his term from Robert Grams Hunter's earlier work, whose looser definition includes *Much Ado About Nothing*, *All's Well That Ends Well*, *Cymbeline*, *The Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest*,[211] but by delineating a more specific set of characteristics instead includes *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *All's Well That Ends Well* and *Measure for Measure*. Between the two we see a good selection of those plays that people have not been comfortable classifying as comedies, despite their ostensibly happy resolutions. Although Friedman's more precise definition raises interesting points for this study, most particularly in his assertion that a 'shrew' figure is required by the structure, his exacting structural outline requires him to work hard on the texts to make them fit (including classifying Sylvia in *Two Gentlemen* as a shrew, which he admits is not strictly appropriate), and also results in him excluding plays like *The Winter's Tale* (which seems to be the ultimate example of using forgiveness as a crucial, driving concern). Each of the plays that Friedman classifies as a Comedy of Forgiveness shows a man who mistreats the woman who loves him rewarded with a happy ending, despite a sense that he only inadequately reforms. He notes a literary and

[211] Robert Grams Hunter, *Shakespeare and the Comedy of Forgiveness* (New York: Columbia, 1965).

performance history of dissatisfaction with this, of regarding it as a flaw in the play, and of attempting to 'narrow the gap between what the Comic Hero deserves and what he gets by using elements of performance either to reduce the Comic Hero's blameworthiness or to increase the sincerity of his repentance and the severity of his punishment'.[212] He argues that this perceived gap is not a flaw, but an integral aspect of the form, and that it is a mistake to try to ignore, gloss over or diminish the perception of this gap by the audience. Treating the unworthiness of the Forgiven Comic Hero as a fault in the execution of a Romantic Comedy:

> ...misjudges the plays by applying to them generic standards that Shakespeare is not trying to meet. Instead of assuming that Shakespeare stumbled four times in precisely the same fashion, it may be time to hypothesize that the conclusions of these plays are designed, not to elicit joy at the reunion of heroes and heroines, but to draw attention to the contrived nature of the pardons that bring about these matches. Therefore, I propose that the four plays in question maybe more fruitfully assessed with reference to a different comic subgenre I will call the Comedy of Forgiveness.[213]

One of the things that distinguishes such plays from Romantic Comedies is an emphasis on the incorporating of rebellious elements into socially and legally sanctioned unions that will go on to perpetuate the legitimate family, and confirm the bonds between potential patriarchs. Instead of the Senex providing the obstacle to the mutually desiring hero and heroine, the hero and heroine themselves create frustrations that must be subsumed into a union that controls female unruliness and male lust and/or anxiety about female sexuality. 'The operation of this social and biological imperative toward self-perpetuation characterizes the Comedies of Forgiveness far more accurately than does a drive toward the culmination of romantic desire.'[214]

In the light of this definition, let us re-examine *The Shrew*. The paradox of *The Taming of the Shrew* has seemed to be that if we are meant to take Katherina's experiences as

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[212] Friedman, 25.
[213] Friedman, 22.
[214] Friedman, 29.

funny and the final scene as moving and romantic, then the play is offensive, but if it is not meant to be funny and romantic then it obviously is not a romantic comedy. The idea of the distinctive characteristics of a Comedy of Forgiveness, however, may provide an exit strategy from this bind. Just as comedy works its way into the very sinews of tragedy in plays such as *Titus Andronicus* and *Romeo and Juliet*, so there are comedies that will not allow the tragic to be dispelled. These have conclusions that seem to emphasise the way that women are sacrificed in the enthusiasm for cementing bonds between men and restoring the conventional social order. Friedman argues that it distorts the form of the pieces to attempt to recuperate the Forgiven Comic Hero by cutting his more offensive lines or adding (wordless) passionate reconciliations; that the form asks us to remain questioning. If the pattern is that a man sins unforgivably against a woman, but is forgiven anyway, due to a combination of her love for him and society's need to reincorporate them both into its social structures, then *The Taming of the Shrew*, by this measure, is a Comedy of Forgiveness. Friedman also notes the element of taming the shrew figure into socially controlling marriage as an essential component of this genre and, in fact, repeatedly refers to *The Shrew* to illustrate points of his theory of the genre, but fails to take the final step to classify this play as one of those he is talking about. When looking at the action of the play from this point of view, we are not being asked to approve of Petruccio's treatment of Katherina, quite the contrary, but we are being shown that abominable behaviour can be forgiven for the sake of love and a strong community. Kate's last speech is the required gesture of forgiveness to the Forgiven Comic Hero, and if we are not left feeling somewhat queasy when we watch this in performance then, as with those versions of *Much Ado About Nothing* that seek to exonerate Claudio, the production has made things too easy for us.

Could such a perspective make its way into a performance? It is certainly perceptible to an audience when those who put together a production have decided it has something to say about gender power relations. The tacit support of the status quo is equally apparent in the productions that try to avoid such an engagement. Although the structure Friedman proposes is a very specific one, as are the conclusions he asks us to

reach, his approach does model the kind of questions the artist and the spectator can ask during this process. That is, a production will (consciously or not) invite an audience to sympathise or identify with some characters over others, and to judge some characters and events in a certain way, and will offer some indication as to how seriously or light-heartedly it should treat the whole story, and Friedman's model suggests a way of thinking through some of the consequences of these choices. None of the *Shrew*s examined here attempted a strategy of asking the audience to question the rewarding of a flawed hero by the social system (even though it might have been a way out of a deeply reactionary hole for Doran), but Donnellan's *Much Ado* clearly played within such a philosophical framework, while Elliott took the alternative path of showing a Hero changed by her experience, and more likely to demand a future conducted on her own terms. All three versions of *Much Ado* presented a Beatrice who was attractive and admirable because of, not in spite of, her sharp tongue.[215] If there is a trend in performative approaches to these plays in the twenty-first century, it seems to be that directors are trying to avoid reading too much into *The Taming of the Shrew*, while *Much Ado About Nothing* is coming into its (ambiguous, subversive, challenging) own.

[215] While we have no record of what aspects of Beatrice charmed Shakespeare's contemporaries, Jackson has noted the nineteenth century preference for emphasising her 'heart' and 'sensibility' and minimizing the prominence of her sharp wit and disruptive tongue.
Russell Jackson, "Perfect Types of Womanhood: Rosalind, Beatrice, Viola in Victorian Criticism and Performance", *Shakespeare Survey 32* (1979): 15-26.

Chapter Three
"Well She Can Persuade":
Measure for Measure and *Pericles*

If Jeanne and Margaret represent the dangerous side of the female tongue, virtuosic in its artfulness, but apt to mislead, and if Katherina and Beatrice show that virtuoso tongue as being at its best when regulated, Isabella and Marina put on display the ability of the female tongue to be a guide to others. Isabella is certainly the more complicated and controversial of the two, but both begin by persuading others to a moral course of action, and conclude by speaking for reconciliation and the healing of the community. Isabella is neither the instigator nor the concluder of the action, but the pivot around which it turns. Marina operates more as a link: though she is not even born until the end of Act III, she then draws the play's various elements to a meeting point. What is remarkable about these two when attempting to assess the way they are drawn as characters, however, is not just their use of speech. Isabella and Marina present an extraordinary anomaly in the nature of female characters in Shakespearean drama. Every other one of Shakespeare's plays that ends happily involves the central female character being or becoming focused on one of the male characters as an object of romantic love. As female characters written for a play during the early seventeenth century, Isabella and Marina are almost unique in their lack of interest in the male characters. This redirects the focus of their language towards moral and metaphysical questions not usually assigned to female characters to discuss. Is this in itself enough to make them 'shrews'? It is certainly enough for other characters to be written as attempting to silence them, and to prompt later critics to ask questions about what their use of speech and their attitude to men indicate of the kind of women they represent.

Measure for Measure was, for most of the eighteenth and nineteenth, and even the early twentieth centuries, generally seen as distasteful due to the sordidness of its plot, its explicit discussion of sexual matters, its insufficiently punished villain, and everybody's questionable motives. These features probably contributed to the ambivalence of producers that resulted in a performance history that is complex and unusual (they also caused many literary critics some significant spiritual pain). Unlike

some other plays from Shakespeare's middle period, it never disappeared completely from the stage, but was performed sporadically, and was generally seen as too dark, too distasteful and too ambiguous to become really popular. It is difficult for the observer to feel secure in imposing a moral structure on the images it presents, and Isabella herself, in her refusal to be bartered and, perhaps more importantly, her absolute refusal to treat men as if they are the most important thing in the world, poses an outrageous threat to the natural order of drama.. In the latter half of the twentieth century, however, such characteristics were precisely those that became most fashionable in the theatre, and the play began to look remarkably modern. It is now more prominent in the canon than at any other period in history, and is staged by the RSC as often as some of the most traditionally popular plays, such as *Hamlet*.

The status of *Pericles* within the Shakespearean canon has never been entirely secure. The play is not included in the First Folio, and current opinion tends to the belief that the last three acts are mostly by Shakespeare, the preceding two mostly by another playwright. Only bad Quartos of the text are extant, and these 'originals' do not divide the play into acts at all, but rather into twenty-two scenes. Roger Warren suggests that George Wilkins wrote scenes one to nine, and Shakespeare the rest, starting with the scene of the storm in which Thaisa gives birth and apparently dies.[216] Such questions remain both irresolvable and of only the most limited relevance to questions of performance; the more significant factor, for the purposes of this study, is that it remains one of his less frequently performed plays. There are seven female characters in *Pericles*, which is an exceptionally high number. The one that is of chief concern here is Pericles' daughter, Marina, as she shows parallels to Isabella in her role as a kind of virtuous shrew. It should be acknowledged here that critics have never labelled her as a shrew, she is too clearly a model of righteousness in her endeavour to avoid rape in a brothel. However, her choices of speech over silence, action over passivity, and determination to change others over acquiescence to the views of those around her artfully show how behaviour that would get a young woman labelled shrewish in any other circumstances can be turned into something desirable and praiseworthy.

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[216] Roger Warren, Introduction to *Pericles* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 4.

Of the two plays, *Measure for Measure* is performed considerably more regularly. The play has so much obvious potential for political and sociological comment that directors who choose to mount a production typically have a strong, and easy to identify, angle that dominates. This makes choosing three case studies particularly difficult, as almost all productions have some distinctive feature, illustrative of the director's understanding of the play's priorities. To show some of this variety of approaches, the productions here have been chosen for their contrasts in ideology, as much as production style, with the emphasis varying from the psychological to the political to the aesthetic. This begins with the Melbourne Theatre Company production of 2000, directed by Simon Phillips, which approached the play as a series of personal journeys for the characters that could be represented in the way they moved through the symbolism of the set.[217] Secondly, there is Simon McBurney's production for a Complicite guest spot at the National Theatre in London, which was staged first in 2004, which had many comments to make about the political workings of the modern world. The performance commented on here is the revised staging in 2006, with the director taking the role of the Duke.[218] The third production is a contrast with the other two in almost every way (except perhaps its interest in breasts). The small-scale, independent theatre company Flagship gave a production in 2006 that was site-specifically designed to be performed in a nightclub, with a stated interest in the tradition of burlesque.[219] The play was here seen as a vehicle for an aesthetic experiment. Cut down to a running time of just one and a quarter hours, the piece toured to Dublin for a one-off performance, and involved several Trinity College graduates, but is still most appropriately categorised as a British independent production for the purposes of this study, as the company is based in London, and the production was first mounted there.

For *Pericles* I will also be looking at an independent company visiting Britain's National Theatre, but in this case the production by Yukio Ninagawa's Hori Pro

[217] Performance observed live 30 March 2000, Playhouse Theatre, Melbourne.
[218] Performance observed live 16 March 2006, Lyttleton Theatre, London.
[219] Performance observed live 17 November 2006, Pod Nightclub, Dublin.

company is being treated as a non-British production, because the company was brought from Japan (in 2003) as an entire unit by the National's international producer, Thelma Holt, rather then being generated by the National, and the piece was performed in Japanese.[220] I will also look at the London Bubble 2002 production directed by Jonathan Petherbridge in the outdoor setting of a number of London parks (an excellent example of modern community theatre),[221] and finally the 2006 production directed by Dominic Cooke in the Swan theatre, as part of the RSC's Complete Works Festival.[222]

Shakespeare only rarely ventured into the tragicomic genre, which underlies the structure of *Measure for Measure*. The ancient nature of the 'monstrous ransom'[223] theme, upon which this play is based, demonstrates how long the moral questions at its core have troubled human society, as much as the answers arrived at have differed. The earliest version is attributed to St Augustine, but more direct sources of Shakespeare's play are Cinthio and Whetstone, who each wrote a novella and a play on the theme. These sources are mainly useful in making clear which elements of *Measure for Measure* Shakespeare invented himself. In the St Augustine version of the story a wife gives herself to a man in return for a bag of gold to pay her husband's debt to a judge. She does not give herself to the judge, which removes the bribery element and makes her action more like conventional prostitution. Augustine also specifies that the reason her decision to do this was morally acceptable was that her body is not really her own, but her husband's property, and as her husband told her to accept the offer, it was her duty to act accordingly.[224] While Cinthio and Whetstone both make use of the corrupt judge, each has the equivalent of Isabella succumb to the demand of the equivalent of Angelo, and then marry him, not the equivalent of the Duke. With the introduction of the refusal, the bed trick and the heroine as a novice nun, Shakespeare has gone to a

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[220] Archival material used: video recorded 30 March 2003, production photographs, programme (held by Archives of the National Theatre, London).
[221] Archival material used: video recorded July 2002, programme, press kit (kindly supplied by London Bubble Theatre Company).
[222] Performance observed live 21 December 2006, Swan Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon.
[223] This phrase was coined by Mary Lascelles, *Shakespeare's Measure for Measure* (London: Athlone, 1953).
[224] Reproduced in Ivo Kamps and Karen Raber, editors, *Measure for Measure: Texts and Contexts* (Boston: Bedford/St Martin's, 2004), 227-228.

tremendous amount of trouble to divert the story from the simple path where a woman's wrongs could be redressed by marrying her to her abuser.

Isabella is defined throughout the play, from before she appears, in terms of being a blending of body and voice. Her brother Claudio seems almost unable to separate the two aspects of her usefulness as an advocate:

> …for in her youth
> There is a prone and speechless dialect
> Such as move men; beside, she hath prosperous art
> When she will play with reason and discourse,
> And well she can persuade. (I.2.172-176)

The nun, in giving Isabella instruction on how she must conduct herself once she has taken vows, attempts to construct a separation of these two things, as if it is understood that the combination of the two is what will create the dangerous chemical combustion:

> Then, if you speak, you must not show your face,
> Or, if you show your face, you must not speak. (I.4.12-13)

Angelo, as if to prove both Claudio and Francesca right, cannot separate the desire for her voice from that for her physical attributes, in his response to her:

> …What, do I love her,
> That I desire to hear her speak again,
> And feast upon her eyes? (II.2.177-179)

This intersection between the virtue or otherwise of the female body and the female voice was much discussed at the time *Measure for Measure* was written, and so it can be assumed that the play communicated ideas to its original audience within a discourse on this topic that would have been to some degree familiar to its educated members. Kamps and Raber examine the contemporary attitudes surrounding the relationship between speech, silence and the perception of a virtuous woman, particularly an unmarried one, and consider the imperative towards silence for any woman wanting to be considered virtuous: 'When all the metaphors and advice used to encourage young women to virtue revolve around guarding, enclosing, protecting and

limiting themselves, opening the mouth to speak takes on negative and sexualised connotations.'[225] Though the premise was not accepted by everyone, the hypothesis was generally known that silence was to be equated with virginity. Modern productions will here have to negotiate a shift in the assumed shared understanding of the audience. An early modern audience would have been familiar with the idea of a woman risking her reputation for sexual virtue by making the decision to speak. Women today are generally not taught (apart from in some strands of Islam[226]) that their voices are implicitly sexually provocative; they are more likely to be taught that their silent bodies are where the danger lies, and their speaking, particularly in a learned or articulate manner, is likely to render them less attractive.

Isabella's use of speech is complicated further by the very fact of Angelo's lust upon hearing it. The play tests the limits of the belief that women must be responsible for the response they arouse in men. Isabella is put in a position where she must speak, but the act of speaking is what puts her virtue in danger. It is, however, also what gets her out of danger, in the end. Angelo considers this tradition of blaming the object of temptation, but rejects it:

> What's this, what's this? Is this her fault or mine?
> The tempter or the tempted, who sins most? Ha?
> Not she – nor doth she tempt – but it is I
> That, lying by the violet in the sun,
> Do as the carrion does, not as the flower,
> Corrupt with virtuous season. (II.3.193-198)

And Isabella, too, shows a relationship with sexual politics that can be read as quite progressive even today, by refusing to play the role of guilty party to another's behaviour. Modern critics, on the other hand, have at times been more willing to take a reactionary stance: 'She herself offers unconscious sexual provocation',[227] 'Her appeal to the true Christian principle of redemption is tainted by her unconsciously seductive

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[225] Kamps and Raber, 201.
[226] Geraldine Brooks, *Nine Parts of Desire* (London: Doubleday, 1995).
[227] Arthur Kirsch, *Shakespeare and the Experience of Love* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 87.

language.'[228] Kamps and Raber, in their analysis, do acknowledge what a dilemma this poses for Isabella, who is specifically called upon to speak and yet wishes to maintain her virtue, but the play, and commentary like the examples above, show just how hard a thing this is to do.

As we see here, the convention of representing the female voice as dangerous is openly discussed by historians and historicist critics. And yet other critics have often missed the applicability of this tradition in revealing the possible motives behind their own responses to Isabella's voice.[229] It is not only Angelo who finds Isabella's rhetorical skill, adherence to her principles, and willingness to speak out, disturbing. Some of the names she has been called are of a different class from the condemnation even outright villains such as Iago or Edmund have acquired. Edward Bond, in his programme notes for the RSC's 1974 production called her 'a vicious sex hysteric',[230] echoing Anne Barton's notes of four years earlier, in which she claimed that 'Isabella's purity conceals an hysterical fear of sex'.[231] To G. Wilson Knight she is 'a fiend' who 'lacks human feeling',[232] and to Bertrand Evans an 'icy prude' who behaves with 'inhuman coldness'.[233] The general practice of being judgemental and dismissive in character analysis of Isabella is by no means confined to older critics like these. When Macdonald writes that,

> In her bland assumption about Claudio's willingness to sacrifice his life for her virginity, Isabella can hardly be imagining the scene of her brother's impending execution, the severed head, for instance, its mouth set in a rictus of agony, the trunk spurting blood, slick, wet, and all too palpable[234]

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[228] Stephen Marx, *Shakespeare and the Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 84.
[229] I discuss this in greater detail in 'Writing About Motive: Isabella, the Duke and Moral Authority', *Shakespeare Survey 58* (2005): 48-59.
[230] Edward Bond, programme notes for production directed by Keith Hack, RSC 1974.
[231] Anne Barton, programme notes for production directed by John Barton, RSC, 1970.
[232] G. Wilson Knight, *The Wheel of Fire* (London: Methuen, 1930), 92.
[233] Bertrand Evans, *Shakespeare's Comedies* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1960), 216, 196.
[234] Ronald R. Macdonald, '*Measure for Measure*: The Flesh Made Word', *Studies in English Literature*, 30 (1990): 265-282, 278.

the tone of condescending nastiness is itself palpable, and echoed in the work of other recent writers such as Mark Taylor,[235] Peter Lake[236] and Stephen Marx.[237] Some of this censure undoubtedly comes from discomfort with the manner in which she responds to the situation. Those who feel she is not upset enough at the prospect of her brother's death are not as far removed as one might think from those who call her hysterical. The problem is that she does not react in a 'womanly' way, with weeping, grieving and piteousness, but instead usurps a male privilege – anger.

There is an ongoing implication in much criticism that Isabella is a shrew who needs to be tamed, exemplified by the many readings that centre on (despite a lack of textual support) the idea that Isabella needs to be 'taught', or 'cured' of her harshness, her coldness, or her pride, by the Duke. These include the majority of the most quoted traditional critical authorities, such as Dowden, Quiller-Couch, Tillyard, Lawrence and Frye, but also those as recent as Macdonald, Taylor, Lake, and Marx, already mentioned above. Marx is one of the most recent and most enthusiastic of these:

> Isabella's staged testimony carries out the Duke's intentions for her... This is a lesson to her about the difference between apparent and real holiness which requires her to gain a real rather than a masqueraded sympathy for her brother and Juliet... But the play audience has been shown a secret still hidden from everyone else in Vienna. They have seen how the inner light which she now casts was kindled by the machinations of the Duke.[238]

There are plenty of examples of Isabella demonstrating humbleness, sincerity, warmth and humanity to be found in the text before she even meets the Duke, for those who would look, but the one thing he does seem to get from her in this final scene that

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[235] Mark Taylor, 'Farther Privileges: Conflict and Change in *Measure for Measure*', *Philological Quarterly*, 73 (1994): 169-193.
[236] Peter Lake, "Ministers, Magistrates and the Production of 'Order' in *Measure for Measure*", *Shakespeare Survey 54* (2001): 165-181.
[237] Stephen Marx, *Shakespeare and the Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).
[238] Marx, 94, 98.

seems out of keeping with her character, as presented earlier in the play, is silence. Is this actually why Marx finds her so improved?

Just as common as the argument that Isabella's protesting voice denotes pride, is that it denotes fear, and the labelling of her behaviour in this way serves the same end: to cast the unruliness of her voice as a negative thing, and deflect the possibility of it being seen as a strength. There is Barton's 'hysterical fear of sex', but also Jardine's 'obsessive fear of her own sexuality',[239] Thomas's 'fear of sexual violation',[240] and Rossiter's 'scared souls are small souls; and as she leaves Angelo, Isabella's soul is scared'.[241] In II.4, Isabella confronts and defies the most powerful man in Vienna. In any other context this would be seen as an action requiring tremendous personal grit and courage. Reading her action as fear seems an obvious attempt to disarm the truly frightening prospect of her speaking in a way that runs counter to notions of what is acceptable for a woman. It may be worthy of note that these critics are all literary scholars, who do not discuss the effect of the play in performance. Generally speaking, reviewers who have seen the play on stage have been much more hesitant to tell Isabella that her decision has no sound basis, or that she should have given in to Angelo, than those dealing with it exclusively on the page. Perhaps studying Isabella in performance, in physical relationships with the many men who try to control her, goes some way towards rendering flesh both her vulnerability and her courage.

A highly significant work for those looking for an approach to Isabella that bears in mind both performance issues and sexual politics and the circulation of power is Carol Rutter's *Clamorous Voices*. In this series of interviews with RSC actresses on their interpretations of parts they have performed, Rutter places great emphasis on the way the power relationships in Shakespeare's plays have been staged in modern productions. Her belief is that those who had the power to determine the overriding interpretation of the production (these days the director) frequently diminished the

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[239] Lisa Jardine, *Still Harping on Daughters: Women and Drama in the Age of Shakespeare* (Brighton: Harvester, 1983), 191.
[240] Vivian Thomas, *The Moral Universe of Shakespeare's Problem Plays* (London: Croom Helm, 1987), 177.
[241] A.P. Rossiter, *Angel With Horns and Other Shakespeare Lectures*, ed. Graham Storey (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1961), 160.

complexity of both the female characters and the overall narrative by making assumptions about characters not substantiated by the text.[242] Isabella is one of the characters she examines in detail, and the insider perspective of politically engaged actors such as Juliet Stevenson is revealing, encompassing as it does such a comprehensive combination of textual matters, character development, performance questions and rehearsal politics. Penny Gay's *As She Likes It*, though confined to the RSC for its examples, gives a more straightforward, performance analysis summary of the presentation of the role of Isabella by that company since the Second World War, which gives a sense of the influence of socio-political changes on interpretation. George Geckle, who has made an extremely detailed analysis of the full history of the critical debate surrounding *Measure for Measure*, concludes that even the most recent discussion has tended to retrace the ground explored in previous centuries, but acknowledged that there have been significant new contributions coming from the approaches of new historicism and performance analysis.[243] These, however, have resulted in no greater consensus than in earlier times, and feminist contributions have produced opinions just as contradictory: there are those who see Shakespeare as having created a woman of great personal power ('She's wonderful, the most courageous character in the play'[244]), whilst others regard him as having set up an essentially powerless female character in a position where she is reduced to fetishized object by the gaze of both the male characters in the play and of the audience ('Like Angelo, we are witnesses to Isabella's performance so that we understand, if we do not morally approve of, his reaction to it'[245]).

Much as it seems impossible when discussing *The Taming of the Shrew* not to return to the question of whether Katherina's capitulation is a good thing, it seems that the presentation of Isabella's voice cannot be discussed without perpetually returning to the issue of whether she is a sympathetic character on stage or not, if only because this

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[242] Carol Rutter, *Clamorous Voices: Shakespeare's Women Today* (London: Women's Press, 1988).
[243] George L. Geckle, *Shakespeare: The Critical Tradition: Measure for Measure* (London: Athlone, 2001), 11-25.
[244] Juliet Stevenson, quoted in Carol Rutter, *Clamorous Voices* (London: Women's Press, 1988), 26.
[245] Kathleen McLuskie, 'The Patriarchal Bard', in *Political Shakespeare*, ed. John Dollimore & Alan Sinfield (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985): 88-108, 96.

question has preoccupied so many previous critics. In their recent contribution to the Texts and Contexts series, Kamps and Raber entitle an entire chapter 'Understanding Isabella'. They eventually conclude: 'Perhaps we should not be asking, though, whether Isabella is right or wrong, but why the play puts her, and us, in the position of having to answer such questions',[246] but they do so only after endorsing David Stevenson's assertion that 'a partial not liking of Isabella is written into the play'.[247] It is hard to imagine a similar discussion about whether it is written into the play that we not like Prospero or King Lear, and the debate about the Duke centres on whether he is justified or unjustified, not on whether he is liked. There is an echo here of Harriet Walter's comment that '[Shakespeare's] men can be compromised or compromising. The women can be neither. The women have to be "liked".'[248] For theorists of all varieties, then, Isabella's body remains the battleground it always has been.

There is an important knock-on effect here to performance decisions about how Isabella's experience is treated and framed, in relation to that of the other characters. In the 1970s Penny Gay discerned in Barry Kyle's production 'the *force majeure* which declares that men's experience is important and meaningful, women's merely the product of hysteria and ignorance about the real world.'[249] Her observation is applicable far beyond this single example, and describes many critical interpretations of the play that have persistently cast male anger as anger, female anger as 'hysteria'. Observing how the issue is discussed is in itself instructive in what it says about the commentators: those who criticise Isabella most harshly seem complicit, through the manner of their phrasing, with the trivialising of female experience. Despite her complex and articulate lines, suggesting someone who is still in control of her means of expression (by contrast, for example, with Othello or Leontes during their most distraught moments), to J.W. Lever, Anne Barton, Edward Bond, and even Janet Adelman, she is merely 'hysterical'.[250] Is this the way a performance of this text will

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[246] Kamps and Raber, 198.
[247] Kamps and Raber, quoted page 195.
[248] Harriet Walter, quoted in Carol Rutter, *Clamorous Voices* (London: Women's Press, 1988), 73.
[249] Penny Gay, *As She Likes It: Shakespeare's Unruly Women* (London: Routledge, 1994), 136.
[250] J.W. Lever, Introduction to *Measure for Measure* (London: Methuen, 1965), lxxx; Anne Barton, programme notes for production directed by John Barton, RSC 1970; Janet Adelman, *Suffocating*

inevitably be read? And will any production of this play that attempts to employ a feminist standpoint be undermined by the prominent and controlling role of the Duke? Kathleen McLuskie feels that this quality is inherent in the text, making it inevitable in performance: 'Isabella, for all her importance in the play, is similarly defined theatrically by the men around her for the men in the audience... The radical feminist "interpretation" floated earlier would require a radical rewriting both of the narrative and of the way the scenes are constructed.'[251] But perhaps this is only the impression inferred from watching productions that have sought to curtail rather than celebrate Isabella's more challenging aspects? Or perhaps the effect arises from examining the text in an imagined performance, when actual performances may result in unexpected permutations of power and status balances?

There are several key points where performance decisions will have a powerful role in answering the questions an audience is likely to ask of it, and even using the same lines a widely varying effect can be produced. Among these are Isabella's encounters with Angelo, particularly the second, where he makes his immoral proposition to her.[252] Whether or not he is physically violent with her, or indeed, whether he touches her at all, along with the emotions she expresses in response, will influence the audience's sense of whether her almost instant determination to reject Angelo's demand is justified. A lengthy scene with a key part to play in both character and plot development is that which begins with Isabella's confrontation with Claudio, and is immediately followed by the Duke's suggestion to her of the bed trick. How much affection is apparent between Isabella and Claudio, the degree and expression of her anger with him, and then the comparative eagerness or reluctance with which she embraces the Duke's plan will all shape the perception of her character. It is also the

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Mothers: Fantasies of Maternal Origin in Shakespeare's Plays, Hamlet *to* The Tempest (New York: Routledge, 1992), 96.

[251] McLuskie, 96-97.

[252] This scene suggests such intriguing multiple possibilities that the 2006 Dublin Theatre Festival invited six of its participating theatre companies to present rehearsed readings of this single scene for a one-off, late night benefit performance, with some exciting results. The dramatically varied versions showed how the balances between control and frenzy, power and helplessness, verbal and physical violence, and so on, can be shifted within the same textual moments to create vastly differing impressions of the action.

first meeting between Isabella and the Duke, so if the production chooses to unite them at the end the groundwork may begin to be laid down here.

Simon Phillips directed a heavily symbolic production for the Melbourne Theatre Company in 2000, that used a set incorporating a large pipe flowing into a trench that ran with milk, blood or mud at different times. Whenever Isabella appeared, and only at these times, it flowed with clear water. Paula Arundell wore a heavy, white habit that became progressively more stained from the hem upward, as Isabella made her way through the filthy world of Vienna. Her garb was not an accurate period replica of any kind, but showed some kind of Orientalist influence, as did the other costumes. It seemed that the intention may have been to indicate that the events were occurring somewhere that was no one particular time and place, but was most assuredly not here and now. The costume included a long head covering, and full wimple. The fabric of the gown was bulky, the sleeves full. This rejection of showing Isabella as obviously physically tempting (apart from her undeniably beautiful face) is a significant directorial choice, contrasting with some of the more prominent productions in modern history, such as Barbara Jefford in figure-hugging medieval garb for Peter Brook in 1950, Judi Dench in a low-cut Renaissance gown in 1962, and Francesca Annis and Juliet Stevenson (1974 and 1983 respectively) who were both in corseted, glittering black.

Otherwise eschewing naturalism, Phillips cast a black actor as Claudio so that he looked like a feasible brother to Arundell, but did not seem to be making a comment on race in any broader sense, except perhaps in the expressly positive depiction of the interracial relationship between Claudio and Juliet. This couple framed the play with a prologue showing them in bed making love (one way to get sex front-and-centre without involving Isabella) and an epilogue showing them holding their new baby up to the light in a clearly hopeful final image. However, the advertising for the production, which showed Juliet from the waist up, naked, head thrown back, with Claudio resting his head between her breasts, hinted that audience titillation, and upping the sex appeal

of the production, were more the motivation behind these choices than the wish to make a political statement.

This production provides a good example of the difference in the reception of Isabella's choice between those who read the and those who watch the story. Although all the reviews of this production summarise the nature of Isabella's dilemma, not one makes any suggestion that she is wrong to make the decision she does. Neither is it suggested by anyone that such a decision is a manifestation of sexual repression, although this is a response that has frequently arisen not only from textual critics, but from performance spectators. Is it possible that in the decade since Trevor Nunn's 1991 production with Claire Skinner, reviewers have become more educated about sexual abuse?[253] Or it may be that Arundell, as an actor, carries an enormous amount of conviction and authority in her voice and bearing, such that it simply never occurred to a reviewer to question her. Arundell endowed her Isabella with a regal comportment, and there was no question but that her refusal of Angelo emanated from strength, not weakness. She did not give the suggestion of someone above human feeling (she did collapse, weeping, into the arms of the Duke upon hearing of her brother's 'death') but certainly of someone above the power of temptation that this dark world seemed to exert on everyone else. Reviewers praised her as 'bursting with energy and emotion'[254] and 'ranging across the emotional and philosophical spectrums [sic], and compelling in moments of stillness and silence'.[255] The feeling of one that 'her warmth and vigour seem at odds with her holy calling'[256] raises questions about why the commentator might think a nun shouldn't exhibit these qualities. Is it unthinkable that a woman with attractive attributes might still feel drawn to a higher purpose?

Publicity photos taken from the final scene show Isabella with her arms protectively around Mariana, illustrating a characteristic focus of many recent productions on the

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[253] In Nunn's production, several reviewers perceived sexual repression in Skinner's distress at Angelo's proposition, despite the scene being staged as a near rape. Jeremy Kingston, *Times*, 20 September 1991; John Peter, *Sunday Times*, 22 September 1991; Charles Spencer, *Daily Telegraph*, 20 September 1991.
[254] Adam Zwar, *Herald Sun*, 19 March 2000.
[255] Lee Christofis, *Australian*, 17 March 2000.
[256] Helen Thomson, *Age*, 17 March 2000.

relationship between the women. Much of Isabella's strength in this last scene seemed to emanate from a sense of duty towards the other woman, and there was a stronger sense of a significant relationship having developed between them than between Isabella and the Duke. Arundell resisted the complete identification with the character encouraged by much Shakespearean voice training, and admitted to finding that 'at times I was just so angry with her', but also recognized that 'hers is the only way, the only way for wars to end and the world to change'.[257] When she accepted the Duke at the end of the play it seemed clear that it was not a decision made out of emotional attachment to him personally, but another moral choice, to be a part of the team fighting to help and improve the world.

When Simon McBurney first brought his attention to this play in 2004 his company already had a respected twenty-year history of work that draws on competing aesthetics of British and European theatrical traditions. His actors were mostly English, with a few Europeans, the performance style showing a conscious decision to push out of naturalistic delivery into a more heightened style, with a more extreme physical component. When the production returned in 2006 the set, for the large stage of the National's Lyttleton Theatre, used few elements of detail or human scale, no more than a couple of chairs, concentrating instead on large-scale panels and screens, and a floor lit from below to create a range of expressive effects. The piece was in modern dress, with conventional suits and overcoats that did not tend to draw attention to the costumes (except for Pompey's more flamboyant purple, and the now-ubiquitous Guantanamo-orange jumpsuits for the prisoners). Only a few directors and designers have attempted to transfer the setting of the play to the later twentieth century. There seems to be a sense that the conservative moral laws of the Vienna represented in the play are incompatible with a modern society. McBurney's interest, however, was most firmly with the questions of how power corrupts and how a state controls the individuals that comprise it, and so keeping the setting close to something recognisable to the audience became important. To underline this concern there was extensive use of CCTV cameras, projected on both television and flat screens. This idea was earlier

[257] In interview with the author, 10 January 2003.

employed on this play by Rex Cramphorn in his Adelaide production of 1988,[258] and seems to have an appeal for a take on the play that casts the Duke is a 'big brother' figure, keen on observing his subjects' private behaviour, and policing public morals.

McBurney's Isabella, with short hair, a navy dress falling a little below the knee, and sensible shoes was not presented in a manner to titillate by her appearance, though the other characters never allowed her to forget the effect of her physical presence. In her first interview with Angelo she wore a veil over her hair, which Lucio removed when sending her back with 'To him, I say!' (II.2.51), making it clear that he saw her appearance as an important tool for achieving their ends. Later, when Angelo made his threats, he used the razorblade he had previously employed to cut his own arms to slice away her bra and expose her breasts, in profoundly malicious gesture that suggested his desire was as much to see her humiliated as anything else. As he stood behind her and reached around her to cut open her dress, her naked bosom was exposed for the benefit of the audience, not for his own eyes. This presents some interesting questions about the purpose of the gesture. Given that the action was not for the gratification of his own gaze, what was it for? Was it done without consciously acknowledging the audience? In which case Angelo's purpose seemed less to feed his newly discovered lust than to demonstrate to Isabella her own powerlessness. Or was it done with an acknowledgement of the presence of the audience? If so, were her naked breasts there for the gratification of our gaze? To make us complicit with his exploitation of Isabella? The exposure of naked flesh on the stage always carries political implications, though the intention is often difficult to interpret with confidence. This was a strong way to signify her vulnerability visually, but it also felt like a director looking for moments that would be confronting for his audience, without necessarily anchoring these moments in the requirements of the scene. If McBurney's main motive here was to arrest attention the number of reviews that describe the incident indicates that he

[258] Mark Minchinton, "Experiments in Shakespeare: Rex Cramphorn and *Measure for Measure*, 1973 – 88", in *O Brave New World: Two Centuries of Shakespeare on the Australian Stage*, ed. John Golder and Richard Madelaine (Sydney: Currency, 2001): 200-208, 205-206.

succeeded,[259] but such a moment will inevitably be read very differently by spectators with different experiences of the world. Charles Spencer reveals the problematic places this can lead, when he writes 'It's vile, but the scene is also, rightly, arousing.'[260] It is the word 'rightly' that gives pause, as it implies that the 'correct' way to respond to a scene depicting sexual abuse is to identify with the abuser, or that sexual abuse is inherently erotic. It was clearly not experienced as arousing by this Isabella, or by any audience member more inclined to identify with her. What Spencer's comment shows is that some performance analysts have still not accepted that the default position for a spectator is not that of a heterosexual man with dominance fantasies.

McBurney cut the text considerably. The rationale behind these cuts may have been largely based on perceptions of intelligibility to a modern audience; obscure phrasing and complicated imagery were frequently removed. He may also have been cutting for pace, with scenes that are long on speeches and short on action cut substantially, to make way for certain wordless sequences with a strong visual aesthetic. This did have a significant impact on the shaping of Isabella's character. Perhaps with the motive of moving the story along, the long sequence in III.1 where the Duke describes his plan to Isabella included most of his lines, which are needed to set up the plot, but cut many of her responses. Thus, as in Brook's production fifty years earlier, the audience did not hear 'I have spirit to do anything that appears not foul in the truth of my spirit.' (III.1.211) or 'What a merit were it in death to take this poor maid from the world!' (III.1.241-242). This certainly reduces the impression of an Isabella who continues to maintain her independence of thought, even once the Duke has stepped in. Naomi Frederick's Isabella was able to reclaim a certain amount of this independent spirit through her acting, even with these cuts in place. She gave a performance that indicated that, while Angelo's assault and Claudio's betrayal were experienced by her as deeply traumatic, 'neither experience seemed to fundamentally violate her sense of herself.'[261]

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[259] Michael Billington, *Guardian*, 16 February 2006; Nicholas de Jongh, *Evening Standard*, 16 February 2006; Quentin Letts, *Daily Mail*, 16 February 2006; Robert Hanks, *Independent*, 17 February 2006; Charles Spencer, *Daily Telegraph*, 17 February 2006.
[260] Charles Spencer, *Daily Telegraph*, 17 February 2006.
[261] Michael Dobson, 'Shakespeare Performances in England', *Shakespeare Survey 58* (2005), 276. Dobson is referring to the 2004 production, but the same actor appeared in both.

There was strength in her continuing lack of doubt. McBurney also cut Claudio's request for the chance to ask his sister's pardon for his earlier behaviour, and therefore the audience did not see them reconcile.

Even more significant was the cut made to Isabella's Act II soliloquy. Commentators on the play have historically focussed on Isabella's line in this speech 'More than our brother is our chastity' as evidence of her 'obsession' with this virtue. When the speech is examined in its entirety, however, it is revealed to be much less simple in its issues. Isabella is so far from being preoccupied with the matter of chastity that, in a seventeen-line soliloquy, only four lines are actually about the assault on her virtue. The first seven lines are about the horror of a situation where the person with the power to judge a case is corrupt, and the helplessness of the private individual in the face of governmental hypocrisy. Unfortunately, despite aspects of this production that suggested McBurney's interest in the theme of official corruption, he cut almost all this section of the speech, redirecting the focus of Isabella's concerns her personal situation and away from the larger issues at stake. This section of the speech was entirely cut:

> … O perilous mouths,
> That bear in them one and the self-same tongue
> Either of condemnation or approof,
> Bidding the law make curtsey to their will,
> Hooking both right and wrong to th'appetite,
> To follow as it draws! (II.4.181-186)

The absence of these lines presents the audience with a markedly different Isabella; one who is less involved mentally in the nature of the trap she has been placed in, and more focussed on the decision she has already made about her own conduct.

As the play went on, Frederick seemed only more and more trapped by the complications and corruption she saw rising up around her. There were no suggestions of an incipient relationship with the Duke, or implications that she was becoming more interested in the world outside the convent. When the Duke made his proposal to her, in the closing moments, it was as if a steel grill had dropped down on her last exit

point. As Robert Hanks observed: 'her expression makes it clear that she has walked into a trap every bit as dangerous as the deal Angelo offered.'[262] Isabella's concluding silence definitely suggested a curtailing of her previously independent voice. Although McBurney's focus was less on what this meant for Isabella than on the corrupting nature of power for figures like the Duke, this was at least a production that was willing to let her be something other than a romantic heroine, which is no small thing.

Phillips's and McBurney's were both high-profile productions that took place in large, state-sponsored theatres. This kind of support allows a director, not only to count on substantial resources, but to incorporate certain assumptions about audience expectations when making staging choices: the audience will presume that it will see superior production values, and will generally be prepared for a lengthy running time, and perhaps for entertainment that requires a certain amount of work on the part of the spectator. Such is not the case for all productions of Shakespeare, and in the theatre industry today it is important not to underestimate the different pressures involved for the large number of small, independent theatre companies that mount professional but low-budget and often profit-share performances. These troupes frequently tackle pieces from the traditional canon, but are much more likely to deconstruct them radically than most more established companies. Extensive cutting and extensive doubling are standard. The work of such companies plays an important part in the dialogue about who 'owns' Shakespeare, and what can be done with the text while still presenting the result as 'Shakespeare'. The 2006 production of *Measure for Measure* from London-based independent company, Flagship, was a highly typical example of this kind of work. Performed in a Dublin nightclub, the Pod, when it visited Ireland, this version also provides a good example of that modern phenomenon often referred to as a 'concept production', meaning that the director chooses to stage the play with a specific and unified design and presentation style, or even 'gimmick'. The selection of this unifying style feature may be motivated by the context that a particular setting offers, or be more meta-theatrically self-referencing by being based in a particular performance genre. The Flagship production was billed as a 'burlesque' version of the

[262] Robert Hanks, *Independent*, 17 February 2006.

play, meaning not that it intended to satirise the text, or modify it to make it comic or parodic, but rather that the piece would use the design aesthetics of modern strip clubs that reference the style of nineteenth century burlesque theatre.

Director Fiona McGlinchey was looking for a play that seemed a suitable vehicle with which to explore her interest in the traditions of burlesque. This play lent itself to her interest, mainly due to the scenes interspersed among those telling the main story, that depict the seamier side of Vienna, with pimps, prostitutes and their clients. Around the second half of the twentieth century sexual politics began to be regarded as an important theme in this play, and consequently these scenes have commonly been given greater prominence than in earlier periods (when they were more often regarded as inconsequential or a blot on the artistry of the play). They have thus become a useful site for analysis of a production's attitude to the depiction of sexual trade and corruption, so pivotal to the narrative. Michael Friedman divides the styles of staging the scenes involving prostitutes into the conventional (comic, happy, vulgar whores), the lascivious (presenting women's bodies in a way that will be titillating for the audience) and the adverse (highlighting the exploitative nature of prostitution by making the scenes unattractive).[263] These scenes provide the context within which the audience sees Isabella, and so will influence the presentation of her character. The second of these, the lascivious approach, was tested to its extreme by this production. All the costumes, including those of Isabella, Angelo and the Duke, were based in the burlesque style of bustiers, fishnets, tulle skirts and elaborate hair and makeup. The piece was performed in a nightclub, rather than a theatre, and used music commissioned for the piece to back a number of short dance routines based on conventional striptease moves, choreographed by the actor playing Mistress Overdone, who worked as a stripper for several years.

Such an aesthetic strategy, of course, has a huge impact on the presentation of the female voice, and Isabella specifically. Sarah-Jayne Quigley's Isabella was not

[263] Michael Friedman, 'Prostitution and the Feminist Appropriation of *Measure for Measure* on the Stage', *Shakespeare Bulletin* (Spring 1997): 14-17.

required to join in the bump and grind routines, but remained aloof during these sequences. This created a curious sense that Quigley was in a different play from everyone else, an impression also helped by her very 'straight' delivery of her lines. While all the other roles (with the sometime exception of Angelo) were being played for high-camp farce, Quigley performed as if unaware of the broad comedy going on around her, or the unusual garb that encased her. Isabella wore a shoulder-length black-and-white nun's veil, but to top off a dress that, while plain black, and less ornamented than those of the other women, incorporated a bustier and above-the-knee tutu, with cream sock/stockings reaching just over the knee, and the same high-heeled back shoes worn by all the women, but her demeanour lacked the element of display apparent in the other performers. Quigley seemed to be playing Isabella directly, without an intermediary persona, while everyone else was playing-a-burlesque-stripper-playing-Escalus/Mistress Overdone/Mariana, etc.

Mirroring McBurney's editing of II.4, this production also cut from Isabella's soliloquy everything between 'Should I tell this, who would believe me?' and 'I'll to my brother'. (II.4.181-186) This was less surprising than in McBurney's version: while his production seemed very interested in the nature of power and corruption, McGlinchey's paused not at all over political or metaphysical questions. Instead, this play seemed to have been chosen for its plot rather than its themes, of interest because its storyline incorporates sex and sexual trade, thus providing an opportunity to present these things, rather than to comment on them.

The Duke, inexplicably, did not disguise himself as a priest, but rather as a drag queen, and one who was clearly meant to be unconvincing, his moustache boldly visible beneath a bright pink wig. It wasn't clear why Isabella would think his authority trustworthy. This created certain problems of coherence in Act V, to which the heavy cutting of the text also contributed. Isabella's final speech, pleading for Angelo to be pardoned, did remain intact. At the end of this production, Isabella reluctantly accepted the Duke, taking his hand with apparent trepidation, but not protesting. During the Duke's final speech her eyes would sometimes catch Claudio, and she would smile, but

then would seem to notice again who was holding her hand. She did seem to remain untouched and unsullied by the goings on around her.

This production was directed by a woman, with a mostly female production team, and seemed to intersect curiously with the phenomenon that Ariel Levy has identified as 'raunch culture'.[264] This is a recently observed development in Western culture, whereby women willingly participate in the sexualization of the female body for public consumption, on the grounds that this is empowering for women. The director seems to have chosen to do this play, not out of any intention to question or interrogate the use of women for sexual trade, but more to celebrate it, or at least its aesthetics, as filtered through the safer worlds of art and middle-class popular consciousness: prostitutes don't really wear colour-coordinated red and black accessories, beautifully constructed corsets and layers of pretty tulle. The production was a vehicle for an idea of style that by its nature belongs to the world of theatre, not the actual world. It now also belongs to a world of theatre that legitimises and glorifies the sexual exploitation of the female form in the name of art and empowerment. In the end, this production was unable to find anything to say about virtue or vice, about prostitution or the objectification of the female form, let alone about the female voice. Choosing to enter such political territory in order to pretend it isn't there does not function as a genuine abstention from the debate, but as a vote in support of the status quo, and raising issues relating to the commodification of the female body without having a comment is tantamount to trivialising them.

The commercial imperatives of such an exercise also make their presence felt. For companies whose target demographic is not the middle-aged, middle-class and tourist audience relied on by the RSC, the pressure to prove that Shakespeare is 'sexy' and 'relevant' is enormous. Unfortunately, however, it is quite common for those who have set themselves this task to feel that they can only do it by taking out most of the Shakespeare, and frequently anything ideologically challenging, with it. In this instance

[264] Ariel Levy, *Female Chauvinist Pigs: Women and the Rise of Raunch Culture* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2006).

what becomes apparent is the futility of a decision to depoliticise a play that foregrounds sexual trade. The act of behaving as if there are no political implications to sexualising the female body and presenting it as an object for commercial consumption is in itself an inescapably political act, as it supports this kind of economy and even goes so far as to frame it as a positive thing.

Perhaps, instead of resisting the urge to speculate on what components of Isabella's personality might cause someone to make the decisions she does, and the usual turning of that speculation towards her sexuality, it might be useful to examine the urge to speculate itself. A text that encourages this kind of conjecture can direct audience members towards examining their own investment in the sexual economy represented. Simon Palfrey tackles this phenomenon directly when he suggests that 'supposedly inadmissible curiosity about a character's "secret truths" can be a pathway to ethical or thematic purpose.'[265] Palfrey is discussing Desdemona here, but he identifies this use of a heroine to construct a situation where 'speculative voyeurism takes the place of evidence'[266] as a favourite technique of Shakespeare's. In a play like *Measure for Measure*, in making judgements about Isabella's sexuality, the audience might be led to consider its own complicity in the way the male characters treat the female.

Fears surrounding sexuality are still very much present in *Pericles*, but are much more elusive than in the earlier play. As positively as *Measure for Measure* frames Isabella's voice, its potential to seduce a man into licentious thoughts remains one of its intrinsic aspects. In *Pericles*, Marina's voice is presented solely as an instrument for the seducing of people to good. Marina is not nearly so confronting or controversial as Isabella, but she is not short of many similar personal characteristics. Both are credited by other characters with having physical charms as well as great skill in rhetorical speech. Both are prepared to stand up to anyone, even people with great personal power, if they see those people using their power improperly. At the simplest level, Marina seems an idealised portrait of virtuous womanhood, but the play shows some

[265] Simon Palfrey, *Doing Shakespeare* (London: Arden, 2005), 253.
[266] Palfrey, *Doing*, 254.

more complex, and occasionally confused, ideas about the female that problematize this reading in some unusual ways. It is made clear that preaching is not Marina's only proficiency; she can also sing, dance and embroider. This puts her among Shakespeare's class of learned heroines, of which Isabella is but one other (Portia and Helena also spring to mind). All demonstrate that passive virtue will not do the job of active skill.

As Marina is not born until the end of Act II, she is not nearly so much a force shaping the direction of the play as Isabella is in *Measure*, and the part is much smaller, but if the argument that Shakespeare is responsible for Acts III to V is given credence, then the character of Marina is entirely his creation (though this aspect remains of minimal pertinence to the performance analyst). More significantly, it has been argued that portions of the play are missing from the Quarto, including, crucially, speeches between Marina and Lysimachus. Gary Taylor and Macdonald P. Jackson reconstructed a version of these from Wilkins's own prose account, which has been used by numerous productions since the 1980s. Roger Warren has since modified and extended their version (printed in the Oxford *Complete Works*) for the individual Oxford edition.[267] Drawing on the Wilkins prose work in some way is now common, but very much at the discretion of the directors of individual productions. It is not all that surprising that there seems to be a need felt to give Marina more to say. Without the extra lines a production has to negotiate Lysismachus being converted, and specifically attributing that conversion to Marina's persuasive use of speech, with very little actually being said by her. This is the portion of their conversation in which Marina makes her case to Lysimachus:

MARINA If you were born to honour, show it now;
If put upon you, make the judgment good
That thought you worthy of it.
LYSIMACHUS How's this? how's this? Some more; be sage.
MARINA. For me,

[267] The process is discussed in Roger Warren, Introduction to *Pericles* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 1-8.

That am a maid, though most ungentle fortune
Have plac'd me in this sty, where, since I came,
Diseases have been sold dearer than physic-
That the gods
Would set me free from this unhallowed place,
Though they did change me to the meanest bird
That flies i' th' purer air!

LYSIMACHUS. I did not think
Thou couldst have spoke so well; ne'er dreamt thou couldst.
Had I brought hither a corrupted mind,
Thy speech had altered it. (IV.5.99-114)

Shakespeare wrote many plays in which his heroines are praised by other characters for speaking well, but never with such paucity of reason as Marina's meagre seven lines. She opens with a persuasive argument but, on being called upon for more of this, offers no further line of reasoning, but only the observation that she is in an unpleasant place, and she wishes the gods would release her from it. The interpolation of additional lines for Marina can present an alternative to a director concerned about giving an audience the puzzling spectacle of Lysimachus enthusiastically praising Marina for eloquence she hasn't shown. There is also an extra speech for Thaisa in this version in which she gets to state her love for Pericles, rather than having it merely reported by her father. The Oxford version remains seriously speculative, but its usefulness to a modern production is apparent at several such junctures in the play.

Marina is a character who has so much work to do as a symbol that there is little remaining space for the representation of an individual, though this is in keeping with the play's fairytale style. Her name is given from the conditions of her birth, but in such a play as this a character with such a watery title must inevitably shoulder much broader figurative work. She is not the sea: engulfing, fickle, changeable, dangerous; instead she is the sea's elusive bounty, that can be given but is just as likely to be snatched away. Parted from her mother at birth, from her father as a baby, cast out by Cleon and Dionyza, sold on by pirates, trafficked by the brothel keepers, then

ultimately proffered up by her father again, she is the trophy of the sea, to be given or taken away at the whim of forces that are always more powerful than her, except for that one extraordinary moment when she is bestowed on Lysimachus by the Bawd, but finds a way to be able to choose to withhold herself.

Unlike Isabella, Marina has no history of being criticised personally. Commentators have more often noted how insubstantial and underdeveloped she is as a character. Skeele found that 'the sweet and virtuous heroine has been thoroughly above reproach in the twentieth century'. He also discovered, however, an interesting modern twist on the presentation of the character: 'In the 1990s, when directors Michael Greif and Phyllida Lloyd sought to add a hard, angry edge to their respective Marinas, they each unleashed torrents of outraged invective.'[268] This suggests the possibility of a closer link with Isabella than might be apparent in many productions. It would be difficult to play Isabella without implying feelings of anger during some passages ('Die! Perish!' (III.1.143) springs to mind), but though Marina's words do not demand it so explicitly, it is not hard to see how anger might emerge as an actor works to give life and conviction to her lines. If choosing to show anger at some points is as recent a development in performance as Skeele implies, it is significant, as it raises the question of whether there has historically been a reluctance on the part of the director, the actor and/or the audience to deal with female anger, or at least the anger of an admirable heroine, even when it has good cause. The *New York Times* reviewing Greif's production for the New York Public Theater in 1991 said: 'As Marina, Ms. Plimpton is a frightful scold, for a creature whose shining purity is supposed to speak for itself.'[269] The phrasing is interesting (not only for its implication that a woman fighting off a sexual predator should still be nice about it), as Marina's purity most emphatically does not speak for itself: Lysimachus is titillated by her beauty, but not therefore inspired not to sully it. It is her ability to articulate that persuades him. Though an isolated example, this review does suggest that Marina has the potential to be judged as Isabella

[268] David Skeele, '*Pericles* in Criticism and Production: A Brief History' in *Pericles: Critical Essays*, ed. David Skeele (New York: Garland, 2000), 21.
[269] David Richards, *New York Times*, 1 December 1991.

has been, when she shows a little of the latter's lack of inclination to be mild-mannered in the face of abuse.

Pericles, of all Shakespeare's plays, is the one that is most directly about the business of storytelling (a theme that weaves in and out of many others, of course). Gower is called forth for his experience in telling stories, his role as narrator is much more prominent than comparable examples of the technique (even than the Chorus of *Henry V*), and the whole plot is constructed along fairytale lines. Given this, Marina's role as a teller of stories should not be neglected in the process of seeing how she operates as an element in the storytelling of others. Stephen Mullaney notes a reduction in Marina's fulfilment of the role of storyteller, in comparison with her equivalent in one of the sources (Twine's Tharsia, when in the brothel, avoids selling her body by repeatedly telling her story for money, rather than merely converting men with her nobility).[270] But it is still her manipulation of language that extricates her from her most threatening situations, and her revelation of her story that facilitates the return of Pericles to the world: 'the sense of Marina as a scrupulous shaper of words maintains the play's concern with verbal transmission.'[271] The way she uses speech in order to wield a kind of power stands out in its atypical quality for a virtuous young woman. A lady is supposed to avoid speaking of anything improper, but Marina has no time for euphemisms, and when faced with impropriety her tactic is to try to make people call it what it is.

LYSIMACHUS Now pretty one, how long have you been at this trade?
MARINA What trade, sir?
LYSIMACHUS Why, I cannot name't but I shall offend.
MARINA I cannot be offended with my trade. Please you to name it.

(IV.5.71-76)

'This insistence on having the literal names of the intended acts spoken keeps Marina safe… Lysimachus, like all the brothel's clients, cannot bring himself to name what he wants and therefore cannot perform it.' As in so many points, Marina is here a

[270] Steven Mullaney, 'All That Monarchs Do: The Obscured Stages of Authority in *Pericles*' in *The Place of the Stage: Licence, Play and Power in Renaissance England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988): 135-151.
[271] T.G. Bishop, *Shakespeare and the Theatre of Wonder* (Cambridge, 1996), 111.

reflection and a contrast to the Daughter of Antioch 'who could find no clear route into speech for what was done to her', but spoke only in riddles.[272] Note the contrast also with the tactful Pericles who discreetly told Antioch: 'Great King, / Few love to hear the sins they love to act.' (I.1.92-93)

The question of the play's attitude to sexuality, and particularly female sexuality, merits further examination. Female sexuality and fertility are undeniably present as important themes, but as to the play's position on them, reasonable arguments can be made for diametrically opposed interpretations. Adelman sees *Pericles* as seeking to remove women from the process of birth, thus making birth 'clean' of the taint of both sex and femininity.[273] Thaisa is revived by a male priest, and can only be restored to her family after penance as a votress of Diana, goddess of chastity. Pericles is able to reclaim his women only after they have proved their separation from all sexuality, Thaisa by serving Diana as a priestess, Marina in an inverted mirror-image of this, by proving herself an apostle of Diana in the place that reveres her the least, a brothel:

> MARINA: 'Diana aid my purpose!'
>
> BAWD: 'What have we to do with Diana?' (IV.2.160-161)

Adelman's assertions, however, can be challenged from several directions. Caroline Bicks considers the fact that Diana was well known to represent many facets of womanhood, with sexless chastity far from her only aspect. As a moon goddess, Diana is also Luna, who grows fertile and pregnant each month, and Lucina, the midwife figure.

> Pericles makes Lucina central to his wife's survival, crying out to the goddess to help Thaisa in her 'terrible child-bed'; in the next scene Thaisa calls out to Diana on the shores of Ephesus. In Shakespeare's tale, then, Diana returns to her ancient reproductive function and foundation – evoked by a mother who will enter her temple.[274]

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[272] Bishop, 111.
[273] Adelman, 195-199.
[274] Caroline Bicks, 'Backsliding at Ephesus: Shakespeare's Diana and the Churching of Women' in *Pericles: Critical Essays*, ed. David Skeele (New York: Garland, 2000): 205-227, 207.

This three-in-one of womanhood is further explored in *The Winter's Tale,* in the triptych of Perdita, Hermione and Paulina, but Thaisa first shows how all three aspects can be embodied in the experience of one person. Also, while all three members of the central family experience rebirths, all the births take place on, or come out of the sea, an overwhelmingly feminine and maternal image in traditional symbolic systems. The sea may take away as often as it gives, but the fact that each action of giving is represented as a birth can just as easily be seen as a glorification of feminine power as its eradication. Like so much of Shakespeare, it all depends what you are looking for.

Also of interest to Adelman is the way Pericles' meeting with Antioch's daughter at the beginning of the play is then mirrored by the scene of his reunion with his own daughter near the end. She suggests that in the latter instance, the female body is rendered safe through being desexualised.[275] Certainly the reconciliation is a reflection of the earlier scene in many points, given away most specifically by Pericles referring to Marina as 'Thou that beget'st him that did thee beget' (V.1.184), that echoes the riddle's reference to Antioch as 'father, son' of his daughter (I.1.111). The question of Marina's sexuality, however, does not seem quite so straightforward as a process of desexualisation. Marina's choice to represent herself to Pericles as one who 'ne'er before invited eyes, / but have been gazed on like a comet' (V.1.75-76) shows an acceptance (even if apparently reluctant) of herself as an attractive being. Pericles' identification of her capacity to beget by definition marks her as fertile. Of course, the divorcing of the sexual from the maternal is part of Adelman's point. At this stage of the narrative, Marina's fertility lies in her ability to generate tales, not babies. The play repeatedly uses the term 'deliver' to mean to tell a story. But is not this in itself rather excitingly subversive in the early modern economy of virtue? Pericles can accept the fertility of his daughter because it takes the form of words. In a society where the words of a woman were so frequently cast as dangerous, immoral or even downright evil, here her words are set up as the safe haven in a world of storms: 'And it is above all Marina's persuasive language, a direct contrast and repair to Pericles' silence, which

[275] Adelman, 197.

allows this return to nourishing origin; her narrative prowess is itself a kind of midwife.'[276]

It may be the case that *Pericles* wastes little time with subtlety in its application of the theme of the deceptiveness of appearances, but examination of the contemporary discourse on the topic reveals a more clever, game-like use of the idea than is immediately apparent. The 1511 publication of *Praise of Folly*, in which Erasmus expands upon the concept of the Silenus figure he first mentions in his *Enchiridion* (and returns to in his *Sileni Alcibiadis*), provides a distillation of an important Renaissance philosophical idea that seems to be the key conceit of this play. The Silenus is a box that is ugly or bizarre on the outside, but contains within it something beautiful and wondrous. It also carries with it the contrary warning not to assume that a glorious casket will not hold something rotten (interesting comparisons are Portia's portrait in the lead casket in *The Merchant of Venice*, and the golden armour containing a putrefied corpse pursued by Hector in *Troilus and Cressida*). The skill lies in a person being able to recognise a Silenus or its mirror image when they see one. *Pericles* repeatedly shows someone being asked to recognise who someone else truly is, in their essence, but always needing a story to be told before they can do so. Pericles himself shows a mixed ability in this area.

Pericles' encounter with the unnatural relationship between Antioch and his daughter can seem like an oddly isolated incident, insufficiently related to the rest of the action, but what it does is set up a long string of inversions and reversals that continue throughout the play. Many of these inversions reference the ideas laid out by Erasmus, which challenge some of the most popular contemporary beliefs about morality and representation. The convention that beauty was likely to indicate virtue is challenged by the appearance of the Daughter of Antioch, that conceals vice under its entrancing outward shell. Pericles even refers to her as a 'glorious casket', making the reverse-Silenus reference more explicit. Even more subversively, she is almost entirely silent. She has only one speech, amounting to just sixteen words. She does not even speak her

[276] Simon Palfrey, *Late Shakespeare: A New World of Words* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 211.

own riddle; it is rather given to Pericles as a scroll for him to read. Such silence is the approved means whereby a young woman can be read as virtuous, but Antioch's daughter shows the folly of trusting such guides. Marina, on the other hand, will speak whether those around her want to hear what she has to say or not. This is behaviour traditionally guaranteed to get a woman designated either loose, shrewish or mad, but again the guidelines are confounded by the deeper evidence. When Lysimachus has only the evidence of her appearance he does not presume that her outside reflects her inner state: 'O, you have heard something of my power, and so stand aloof for more serious wooing.' (IV.5.94-95) Her use of speech is necessary to assure those she meets that she is made of the same stuff inside and out. As Erasmus's Folly, who is so frequently the voice of wisdom, says: 'speech is the least deceptive mirror of the mind'.[277]

Marina is not the first counterpoint in the play to the Daughter of Antioch. It is equally tempting to see Thaisa as the passive centre of tempests, without being alert to the indications that she is special because of what she does, and what she is able to do, not necessarily because of what is done to her. She is configured in such a way as to easily fool people, though not the wise like Erasmus's Folly, who is aware that 'all human affairs are like the figure of Silenus as described by Alcibiades and have two completely opposite faces, so that what is death at first sight, as they say, is life if you look within'. If only Pericles had heeded this advice, as well as the accompanying warning that 'the two main obstacles to learning by experience are a sense of propriety which clouds the judgement and fear which advises against an undertaking once danger is apparent.'[278] Thaisa's coffin is not the first Silenus to appear in the play, there is also Pericles himself in his rusty armour. But while Thaisa has the wit to claim the beauty in the ugly box, Pericles agrees to throw his Silenus overboard.

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[277] Erasmus, *Praise of Folly*, translated by Betty Radice (London: Penguin, 1993), 13.
[278] Erasmus, 43.

This multiplicity of inversions continues through to the end of the play, extending to Pericles attributing masculine courage to his daughter, perhaps seeing his weakness in collapsing under his grief while she used hers to do others good:

> Tell thy story.
> If thine consider'd prove the thousand part
> Of my endurance, thou art a man, and I
> Have suffered like a girl. (V.1.145-148)

Here lies one more counterpoint that is more revealing than initially appears, for Pericles has been looking for a father from the beginning of the play. He defines himself to King Antioch in the first scene as he 'That would be son to great Antiochus' (I.1.69), and while Thaisa muses on what Pericles could mean to her ('To me he seems like diamond to glass'), Pericles is busy musing on what Thaisa's father could be to him ('Yon king's to me like to my father's picture' (II.3.36-37)). It takes almost until the end of the story for him to realise that rather than finding a father for himself he must find a father in himself, and he does this only by finding the strength of a father in his daughter. 'Thou that beget'st him that did thee beget' underlines this curious twist on conventional patterns, in that Marina is as much Pericles' father here as his mother, confounding expected gender roles. Warren, in his examination of the use of the word 'beget', observes that the OED, while stating that the word 'beget' is 'usually said of the father, but sometimes of both parents', gives for its examples only instances of reference to the father.[279] By this point in the narrative it seems that every relationship appearing in the play has been scrupulously turned on its head.

This includes the relationship of potential rapist to victim becoming that of affianced husband to wife. Similarly to Isabella, by the end of the play Marina is betrothed to a figure of authority (but questionable morality) in a way that seems alarmingly abrupt to the modern eye, and allows no response from the woman herself. Here is the full exchange:

> LYSIMACHUS. With all my heart; and when you come ashore
> I have another suit.

[279] Warren, 57.

PERICLES. You shall prevail,
Were it to woo my daughter; for it seems
You have been noble towards her.
LYSIMACHUS. Sir, lend me your arm.
PERICLES. Come, my Marina (V.1.245-249)

There is clearly much room here for a production to make its own decision about whether to fill in the perceived gaps at points like this with gestural indicators of a growing relationship between Lysimachus and Marina, or a look from Pericles to ascertain how his daughter would like him to answer, or whether to let stand, or even highlight, the absence of her consent or participation. The very patchiness of *Pericles* makes strong demands on the director and actors to be more than usually aware of their own contribution to the telling of the story.

This aspect was certainly embraced by Yukio Ninagawa in the 2003 production he brought to London's National Theatre. The vast stage of the National's Olivier Theatre was an appropriate fit for the epic scope of the play itself, and Ninagawa's production style. The English surtitles accompanying the Japanese translation gave a pared-down version of the text, and the dialogue generally was kept minimal in comparison with the emphasis on movement, music and physical interaction.

Female bodies were placed centrally throughout this production, and seemed to be intimately connected with light. The entrance of a woman was almost always accompanied by a flood of light, most often from upstage centre. It is interesting, though, that the light seemed to be connected not with virtue, but with all femininity. The effect was used equally for the sinful Daughter of Antioch as of the virtuous Thaisa and Marina. The resurrection of Thaisa involved blinding light emerging from her casket, as if she generated it herself.

The nature of *Pericles* puts the commentator on the presentation of the female in an unusual position. My commentary has often tended to look at how a female performer is created as a sexualised object of fear and fantasy, but this play creates many

scenarios in which the sexual aspect of the female can be seen to be refused and purged in order to render her more safely pure. This in itself carries within it the old implication, seen in interpretations of *Henry VI*, that a sexual woman is bad and dangerous. The aesthetics of this production, for Western eyes, at least, side-stepped the question of what attitude to the sexual female body the text promotes. The heavy Japanese costumes avoided sexualising these bodies in any of the ways that are conventional to the experience of Western audiences. The many layers of a traditional kimono completely obscure the underlying body shape, and conceal almost all the skin.

Given her strongly symbolic role, Yuko Tanaka's Marina worked hard to individuate the character, and show her as an active agent of her fate, rather than a mirror for reflecting the images of the lost princess, the virtuous (potential) martyr, and the good daughter. Marina seduced Lysimachus into virtue less with her words than through dance. Dance is as much a skill and an art as rhetoric, but has more often been seen as an acceptable form of expression, within controlled circumstances, for women. This dance, however, avoided the obvious traps of romanticising Marina's situation, sexualising her movements, or over-emphasising her vulnerability at the expense of her strength and independence of spirit. Showing a fascinating use of style that one critic described as 'a mesmerising mix of releasing and catching a bird, and of martial spirit',[280] Tanaka used movements that might be considered masculine, and seemed to be dancing more for herself than for Lysimachus, with no aim to be pretty or seductive, for him or for the audience. This is an extremely rare thing to see in a solo dance by a woman on the Western stage, where dance so often equates attraction with seduction that it can be experienced as a fascinating revelation to watch a performance of hypnotic beauty that nevertheless offers no attempt to titillate.

In performance, the part of Marina is almost always doubled with at least one other role, and whom else the actor plays is worth noting for its thematic implications. In this instance, Thaisa was doubled with Marina (which was also done by Susan Fleetwood, under the direction of Terry Hands at the RSC in 1969). Given the themes of the play,

[280] Paul Taylor, *Independent*, 3 April 2003.

such a choice is problematic in several directions. At a symbolic level we see Pericles finding 'mother, wife and yet his child' in his own daughter in a rather more explicit fashion than would otherwise be the case, which seems to bring the parallel with the household of the King of Antioch to the point of being less a distorting carnival mirror than a blueprint. Several episodes in the play seem to direct Pericles away from viewing the female body as sexual, showing disastrous consequences when he does: his first amorous goal is revealed as a body corrupted by incest, the second results in death, and is seen as so unlucky that the sailors insist on throwing it overboard. By this doubling, Marina is a reflection and resurrection not only of that second body, but of the first, in such a way that we as an audience are watching a father look upon his daughter and see his wife.

More practically there is the issue of staging the play's final scene, in which both mother and daughter appear, and in such a scenario as to make both characters indispensable. The scene is similar to the final one of *The Winter's Tale*, in which both Hermione and Perdita appear, in both cases creating the need for a 'trick' substitution of the daughter in order for the reconciliation scene with the resurrected mother to take place (the doubling and 'trick' have both been tried here, also).[281] In this case the stand-in Marina veiled her face, which seems to send a reactionary message about the nature of her modesty, which has demonstrated itself through active means, speech and action, rather than through the passive means of silence, obscurity and withdrawal. It also involved the cutting of Marina's sole line in the last scene, removing the last moment to break up her retreat into utter silence after her reconciliation with her father (the only alternative being for the stand-in to say the line, which would draw attention to the fact that it is a different actress).

Ninagawa's visually expansive production presented a contrast with Dominic Cooke's more intimate staging in the Swan theatre, mounted as part of the RSC's Complete Works festival of 2006 – 2007, but also showed common elements. While the former's

[281] For example the Trevor Nunn (RSC, 1969) and Terry Hands (RSC, 1986) productions in which Judi Dench and Penny Downie, respectively, played both roles.

large proscenium arch stage and use of a foreign language contributed a distancing effect for the audience, the show was nonetheless positioned to overwhelm the spectator with its spectacular design, lighting and music, and the intensity of the actors' performances. The staging of the latter concentrated above all on integrating the audience with the action, so that the performance took place on all sides and many physical levels, and the story was told directly to audience members. In these different ways, both sought to draw the audience into a largely sensual, rather than cerebral experience, emphasising the journey the listener travels with the storyteller. Cooke's production was performed in repertory with *The Winter's Tale* in order that the thematic links between them might be better highlighted. An awareness of which roles the actors played in each play sometimes made this particularly pointed.

Pericles is notable for its many different settings, and this production for the most part suggested particular, real places, though not the ones specifically stated in the text. Most of the kingdoms depicted were African. Tyre and Tarsus could have been any of a range of African nations, but Antioch seemed to specifically reference Uganda, while Pentopolis was Greek, and Myteline some kind of colonial British outpost of non-specific locale. The twin productions of *Pericles* and *The Winter's Tale* used a cast that was almost evenly split between Caucasian and Afro-Caribbean actors.[282] It was *Pericles* that pushed the latter to the fore, and used African accents throughout, going some way towards combating Alan Dessen's criticism that multi-racial casting in the British theatre remains tokenistic and consistently marginalizes the black actors to the minor roles.[283] An African Gower set the scene. In modern Western society there are few cultural images to draw on that will indicate to an audience that they are observing the archetype of the storyteller, but an African storyteller could be instantly recognised and understood as part of a verbal narrative tradition, as was the importance of the fact that 'storyteller' also means he would act as shaman, healer and elder, a repository of both authority and wisdom. Tall, sage and powerfully voiced, it would have been unthinkable not to listen to what Joseph Mydell had to say.

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[282] The ensemble comprised 10 black and 13 white actors.

[283] Alan Dessen, *Rescripting Shakespeare: The Text, the Director and Modern Productions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

The stage and ground floor seating in the Swan theatre were removed so that, while the galleries remained, audience members who bought 'promenade' tickets stood throughout, sometimes looking up at a first-floor end stage, but more often mingling with the actors on the ground level. The actors performed sometimes on the first-floor end stage, sometimes right on the ground, sometimes on pontoons rolled into the centre of the ground level, and sometimes on a sweeping curved ramp that led from the ground to the first floor. This staging brought the audience as close as possible to the action, with Gower telling his tales to them directly, and frequently actually involving them in the action. Such a staging choice has an enormous impact on the way the audience relates to the characters, as it is possible for the sense of a much closer relationship to develop between actor and audience member. This worked as an ingenious counterbalance to the heavy symbolism of so many of the narrative's events. An audience member who is looking up at Marina at the distance of only a few feet as she tells her story to her father, or who is sitting next to Thaisa as she hears her husband's voice for the first time in fourteen years, is much more likely to respond to the character as an individual than as a representation of an abstract.

Cooke made one change to the text with powerful reverberations for the presentation of the female roles, and which also contributes additional material to the appearance of the various phases of the moon goddess in the play. He recast the part of Cerimon as a woman, thus removing the concern expressed by Adelman, that the play seeks to take birth out of the hands of women (this choice is not unknown to Stratford, as David Thacker did the same in 1989). Linda Bassett played Cerimon, and also played Paulina in *The Winter's Tale*, while Kate Fleetwood doubled as Thaisa and Hermione. Audiences of both plays saw Bassett bring Fleetwood back to life, to rejoin a husband who had abandoned her out of folly, and a daughter she had never known. This created a most potent image of the overlap between midwife and shaman, particularly in *Pericles*, where Cerimon became an obvious female counterpoint and counterpart to Gower, as the guides charged with leading those whose vision and understanding is as yet incomplete through this magical world.

Kate Fleetwood's Thaisa also doubled as Diana in this production, firmly linking Pericles' wife in the audience's mind with the goddess, and also with conventional medieval angel imagery, as she was lowered from above on wires, in a draped, white gown. In this production it was possible to read Artemis/Diana/Luna/Lucina/Hecate as blending with one or another of the female characters in almost every scene.

Marina was doubled with the Daughter of Antioch, which creates an interesting scenario as representing at some level a means of escape for the Daughter from the twisted, harmful relationship with her father into a healing relationship between father and daughter, when we finally see Marina reunited with Pericles. In her first scene, Ony Uhiara wore a white knee-length dress like a communion dress, and carried a small bunch of white flowers. She kept her eyes straight ahead, and looked very much the victim of her creepy Idi Amin-like father, smiling briefly and tightly when he greeted her with intimate kisses on both cheeks.

As Marina, Uhiara played the role more as trepidatious than defiant. When faced with physical threat, such as when the Bawd threatened to beat her with a stick on two occasions (though she never actually did) she cowered rather than standing her ground. When persuading Bolt not to ravish her, but rather to find her respectable employment, she did not berate him, again cowering and suggesting a barely comprehending panic rather than any kind of righteous anger. Her clumsiness with the money suggested grasping at a possibility, rather than a clear plan. As Bolt leered over her she stayed glued to the settee, shrinking into its cushions, but not even attempting to get away from him. All in all, this Marina was mainly innocent and fearful. Her innocence was emphasised by her extreme youth (she looked still in her teens), her white cotton dresses and her deferential body language. Pleading was her mode of address, never slipping into either reasoning or railing. When she claimed not to understand the conversation she seemed to be telling the truth, rather than being stubborn.

This production added lines from the Oxford reconstruction to extend the scene in the brothel between Marina and Lysimachus, giving him something more to respond to in his praise of her ability to speak wisely. This included the addition to Marina's lines of the substantial new speech:

> ...What reason's in
> Your justice, who hath power over all,
> To undo any? If you take from me
> Mine honour, you are like him that makes
> A gap into forbidden ground, whom after
> Too many enter, and you are guilty
> Of all their evils. My life is yet unspotted,
> My chastity unstained even in thought.
> Then if your violence deface this building,
> The workmanship of heaven, made up for good,
> And not for exercise of sin's intemperance,
> You kill your honour, abuse your justice,
> And impoverish me.

And also followed the Oxford in omitting Lysimachus's responding claim that he came to her with no ill intent. There was no attempt to present a developing relationship between Marina and Lysimachus, or to romanticise the obvious power imbalance between them. Marina looked surprised when Pericles abruptly gave her to the Governor, but did not protest, and by the final scene they were holding hands. With a Lysimachus who was white, upper-class, blazer-wearing and probably in his fifties, their joining maintained an awareness that power imbalances do not disappear just because someone is released from literal bondage. However, Cooke's treatment seemed to fall just short of making any actual statement about how this power economy affected Marina's previously significant personal autonomy.

The dumb shows were cut in this production, and so Thaisa was not seen pregnant, but only behind a translucent curtain in bed during labour, and Pericles was not seen at all between his leaving the baby Marina at Tarsus and being reconciled with her fourteen

years later. When Marina was brought in to attempt to rouse Pericles the initial sequence in which she tries music and song was also cut. The scene was played on one of the platforms that were rolled into the centre of the ground level for certain scenes, but this time Gower encouraged the audience to sit on the ground around it, as if to hear a story, creating a more still and focussed mood than when the audience remained standing, as it had for previous scenes. Marina was pushed away rather than actually struck by Pericles. She seemed to be afraid of the mumbling figure, curled up on a narrow iron bed, but on hearing who he was, seemed not to maintain any misgivings (in contrast to Yuko Tanaka's Marina, who did not immediately warm to the strange man whom she had not seen since he abandoned her as a baby). In this version, Pericles' demand that Marina name her mother was to convince a still-doubting Helicanus. When the music of the spheres began (which was real, and audible to the audience), both Lysimachus and Marina appeared to genuinely hear it, and the moment took on a sense of sincere uplifted joy, with little lingering sense of loss. Kieron Quirke mused on how 'we find ourselves lost in a gentle, almost pagan vision of a world where there is healing magic in women and nature, and, in Time, a never-fading chance of redemption'.[284]

This Marina displayed boundless heart, innocence and sincerity throughout her journey, but there was little in her of the fighting spirit observable in Tanaka's performance of the character, and so her survival and eventual prosperity seemed more the product of luck than her own agency. Her virtue leaned more towards stoicism, recognized by John Peter, who saw her as 'a serious girl with a steely inner strength; and she never sounds sanctimonious – which, given some of the lines she has to speak, is quite an achivement'.[285] This production was not unwilling to show bold or talkative women, but in the particular case of Marina made an absolute decision to represent her as a victim, and a creature without agency. Her eloquent speeches were all born of desperate groping to put something between herself and physical threat. Her verbal

[284] Kieron Quirke, *Evening Standard*, 16 November 2006.
[285] John Peter, *Sunday Times*, 26 November 2006

skill was ignited by fear, not protest, and thus this Marina could not accurately be described as a shrew.

The London Bubble theatre company presents the other side of modern Anglophone independent theatre, complimentary to, but distinct from companies such as Flagship. In existence now for thirty years, the London Bubble is what the community and political theatre that was generated by the 1970s has developed into in the twenty-first century. Such companies have not disappeared, as is sometimes thought; they have adapted their way of working to follow changes in available resources and community needs. This company is defined by two parallel aspects, one physical and the other philosophical. Firstly, their performances are all given in outdoor settings, rather than in theatres. Secondly, they have a stated aim of accessibility, inclusivity and community involvement with a mission statement that includes the intention 'To attract and involve a wide range of audiences and participants, particularly those experiencing theatre for the first time, to inventive and unpredictable events that reflect the diversity of our city and its people.'[286] *Pericles* was performed in the summer of 2002 in a series of outdoor locations, all in parks within the London region.

A cast of eight made extensive doubling a necessity, which should make the analyst hesitant to read too many thematic points into such doubles. All the same, it is notable that the option of doubling Marina with Thaisa, as in the Ninagawa version, was rejected here, in favour of doubling Marina with the Daughter of Antioch, as in the Cooke version. This doubling seems to be a more common choice, and has been used in numerous productions. In this instance, the Daughter of Antioch's appearance was obscured under a heavy bridal veil throughout her scene, which raised a laugh when Pericles praised her beauty, but also made manifest the way she was obliterated as an individual by the unhealthy dominance of her father. She physicalized signs of extreme distress upon hearing Pericles read her riddle aloud. When Pericles arrived at the court of King Simonides and Thaisa the contrast was unmistakable in the relaxed and open communication between father and daughter.

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[286] http://www.londonbubble.org.uk/mission (at 31 July 2007).

Polly Nayler's Marina was made of much feistier stuff than Uhiara's. Her model of virtue involved nothing deferential. Here was none of the submissive body language that was frequent in Yuko Tanaka's performance and almost constant in Ony Uhiara's, Nayler's Marina radiated confidence, whether facing down the Bawd or telling her story to the doubting Pericles. There was less emphasis on Marina's sorrow (which dominated, though beautifully, Tanaka's interpretation), replaced by a focus on the way her buoyant spirit could not be damaged by the repeated blows of circumstance. When Pericles spoke of having 'suffered like a girl' it generated a shared laugh between them. The production emphasised the humour of the piece throughout, but was nevertheless prepared to take Marina's predicament seriously, the *Guardian* noting that Nayler 'makes a real virtue out of virtue – not an easy task in the modern theatre, which values irony over virginity'.[287] She did not hesitate to show anger when defending herself. Her upbraiding of Bolt was uncompromising, as she loudly rained abuse on him while trying to maximise the physical distance between them. This is not to say that she was never fearful: her response to the physical threats posed by Leonine and Bolt, and to the raving of Pericles (the music of the spheres in this case was all in his head, and caused some consternation among his observers) was always the apparently sensible one of trying to put a physical gap between herself and others (as opposed to Uhiara's tendency to freeze like a rabbit in headlights). In V.1 when Pericles commanded Helicanus to kneel he, too, fell to his knees, but Marina did not (so that 'Rise, th'art my child' (V.1.235) was directed in a split way, the 'rise' to Helicanus). Then, in V.2, it was Marina who went to the aid of the collapsed Thaisa, and helped her up. The only time she knelt was briefly, on 'My heart leaps to be gone into my mother's bosom' (V.2.50). This created a very strong physical presence for Marina as one who conferred aid on others as a benevolence, rather than someone more given to seeking aid or blessing from those with greater status.

This production was the only one of the three to suggest the growth of some kind of affection between Marina and Lysimachus. When Nayler entered in V.1 she smiled

[287] Lyn Gardner, *Guardian*, 1 August 2002.

warmly and extended her had to him, and it seemed apparent that they had come to know each other quite well. He held her hand while speaking of how he would 'think me rarely wed' (V.1.71), and there was a shyly embarrassed moment between them. Given this, then, it was a surprise that this was also the only one of the three to excise the exchange between Pericles and Lysimachus where they arrange her marriage. The lines were simply cut, and Lysimachus did not appear in the final scene (though this would have had as much to do with the fact that the actor was needed to play Cerimon).

Petherbridge's production was most interested in giving a lively evening of storytelling, with an emphasis on pace, humour and creating captivating theatrical effects with minimal resources: model ships on oceans made of fabric, live musicians underscoring throughout, scenes set during storms at sea performed on a platform that tipped and tilted. It did not seek to offer a message, or even to designate for itself a clearly defined setting of time or place. What it lost in conceptual coherence or nuance, however, it gained in the freedom of the actors to express themselves directly to their audience, which gave its Marina the opportunity to play a recognisably modern young woman, for there was something markedly modern about this Marina's willingness to unselfconsciously claim space. She did not demurely apologise her way onto the stage, or concede space to characters holding apparently greater power, which made me notice how common it is to see this kind of deferential physicality in young heroines. This moved her into territory more commonly associated with Katherine or Beatrice: behaviour that was once regarded as brazen and shrewish in a young woman has become, by modern standards, normal and healthy.

It can seem a surprise to the spectator that, when Isabella has specifically stated her desire to become a nun, and Marina equally clearly has said that 'If fires be hot, knives sharp or waters deep, / Untied I still my virgin knot will keep' (III.2.138-139), at the end of the plays their declared preference for continued virginity is arbitrarily overridden by the patriarch, and they are consigned to matrimony. This suggests their function is less as a symbol of virginity than of the importance of keeping procreation

exclusively to the state-sanctioned variety. Even more surprisingly, it is precisely at this point that these previously highly verbal characters fall silent. The audience finds that 'Just when all her desires have been systematically frustrated, she has virtually nothing to say.'[288] Most likely because she 'cannot be allowed to say anything about any of it, because anything she could say would disrupt the play's closure.'[289] It seems that there is a radical disjunction between what we have learned about Isabella and Marina as individuated characters, and what the narrative structure requires of them. Given society's changed understanding of a woman's right to bodily autonomy, there are modern spectators who will feel keenly the absence of a verbal statement from the heroine of an opinion on what is going to happen to the body she has been fighting to keep from defilement, once it is traded into legitimate union. However, the fact that Isabella and Marina, when they are under threat of sexual assault, maintain their bodily integrity through their own agency is highly significant, and the fact that speech is their means of doing this is crucial. Both these plays take the convention that silence in a young woman betokens purity and turn it on its head. It is expressly through Isabella and Marina rejecting those virtues of manner most assiduously promoted to young women of the early modern period – mildness, deference and silence – that the narratives in which they figure are diverted from tragic conclusions.

[288] Alan Sinfield, *Faultlines: Cultural Materialism and the Politics of Dissident Reading* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 71. Sinfield is referring to Olivia in *Twelfth Night*, but with an eye to the way in which she is a representative example of many other female characters.
[289] Sinfield, 72.

Chapter Four
"Let Her Speak Too": *The Winter's Tale*

The question of when and whether a woman should speak or be silent was much discussed in the medieval and early modern periods, and the answers offered were rarely simple. The three primary virtues for a woman of this time were considered to be obedience, chastity and silence, but problems with enshrining these as values are immediately apparent.[290] They are much more fraught than other more 'manly' or gender-neutral virtues, such as courage, justice, temperance or piety, for example: the occasion would not generally arise when it would be inappropriate to display these attributes. For a woman, however, scenarios present themselves when obedience, and certainly silence come into conflict with the pursuit of right action. This is apparent in the examples of *Measure for Measure* and *Pericles* in the previous chapter, but becomes even more so in *The Winter's Tale.* Indeed, of all Shakespeare's works, *The Winter's Tale* engages most directly with the idea of female vocal power. Shakespeare in this play revisits the female voice as a positive force, a source of truth, justice and healing, and seems to reject the idea of silence as something desirable for women.

Emerging as it did from the heavily conventionalised medieval theatre of morality plays full of characters named for what they symbolized, it can reasonably be assumed that the audience for early modern theatre in London would have been well enough versed in theatrical conventions to recognise its chief types, or references to these types. Charles Lyons, in 'Silent Women and Shrews: Eroticism and Convention in *Epicoene* and *Measure for Measure*' points out that two of the stock female figures of Jacobean drama were the shrew and the woman made attractive or erotic through her silence,[291] which is a reflection of where theatrical convention meets the Renaissance understanding of female virtue. Lyons looks at the representation of female virtue on stage through the positively framed image of the silent female figure, and contrasts this character type with the vocal and therefore un-virtuous shrew. The innovation of *The*

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[290] Christina Luckyj, *'A Moving Rhetoricke': Gender and Silence in Early Modern England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), 63.
[291] Charles Lyons, 'Silent Women and Shrews: Eroticism and Convention in *Epicoene* and *Measure for Measure*', *Comparative Drama*, 23 (1990): 123-140.

Winter's Tale is the use of the contemporary audience's familiarity with these types to challenge this pattern, and instead display the idea of female virtuous speech. The good wife figure first uses silence as defiance instead of obedience, and then actively rejects silence; the ingénue is enjoined by all to speak, is only a daughter, but can take the place of a son; and the shrew figure is the person in whom power resides, the magician who can make everything right in the end.

In a book about potential ways to approach acting Shakespeare, Meredith Skura observes that 'nearly all psychoanalytic and feminist critics agree the plays reveal pervasive assumptions about women's encompassing and dangerous maternal powers.'[292] *The Winter's Tale*, so preoccupied with exposing the foolhardiness of seeking to curtail the female voice, shows that while maternal imagery in Shakespeare may remain powerful and even encompassing, it by no means carries with it an assumption of danger, but can rather hold the highest capacity for healing. This healing role is crucial to René Girard's theory that the play is the culmination of Shakespeare's many explorations of society's use of the scapegoat. The fact that woman is both scapegoat and the 'preferred vehicle of truth'[293] is what allows the story to move beyond the scapegoating incident to a phase of repentance and ultimately forgiveness and reconciliation. Simon Palfrey sees the feminine as materially affecting the (admittedly still patriarchal) social structure by the end of the play, and sees the female voice as instrumental in that 'A foolish or venal male hegemony is altered and humanized by the incorporation, as a persuasive instrument of power and decision-making, of a "feminine principle" based not only in the faithfulness of chastity but the eloquence of the female tongue.'[294] If Shakespeare's shrews began with Jeanne and Katherina, it seems right that they should end with Paulina, a magician of 'lawful' magic, midwife to renewal and hope. In this play the man who fails to listen to the shrew when she speaks is left to lament 'O that ever I / Had squared me to thy counsel!' (V.1.59-60).

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[292] Meredith Anne Skura, *Shakespeare the Actor and the Purposes of Playing* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 77.
[293] René Girard, *A Theatre of Envy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 324.
[294] Simon Palfrey, *Late Shakespeare: A New World of Words* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1997), 196.

There are three primary female roles in *The Winter's Tale*, corresponding to the three traditional phases of womanhood (virgin, mother, crone), or alternatively, the three facets of the harvest goddess figure (Persephone, Demeter, Hecate)[295] or the moon (Diana, Luna, Lucina)[296] – there are many versions of the same basic conceptualisation of the female as a tripartite figure (the relevance of which to Shakespeare's representations of women has already been examined in the chapters on *Much Ado About Nothing* and *Pericles*).[297] Despite this conventionalised structure, the three characters not only fail to be confined by the traditionally limited female types, they call into question the usefulness of such types and highlight their inadequacy to define the possibilities of womanhood. What is more, the play contains passages that employ traditional expressions of misogyny in order to mock and attack them. The King's fears of the persuasiveness of the female tongue, and in particular the linking of these fears in his mind with fears of female sexual licentiousness and witchcraft, lay bare the gamut of traditional anxieties surrounding female speech, but his obvious madness refuses to give these fears credibility.

So how have recent productions of this play handled this balance of enacting and subverting the conventional theatrical types of womanhood? The earliest of the three main productions examined here took place in 1997, when Declan Donnellan directed one of several of his collaborations between his own company, Cheek by Jowl, and the Maly Drama Theatre of St Petersburg. The production then toured to regional England in 1999. On a sparse set typical of Donnellan's long-time design partner, Nick Ormerod, the performance was given in Russian. No specific period was adhered to, the Sicilian scenes appearing to be somewhere around the early twentieth century, the Bohemian section possibly the 1970s, full of hippies. The production was extensively reviewed when it toured to Britain, and Donellan has spoken about it in interview with *Shakespeare Survey*, but video footage is not available. Despite a comparative lack of

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[295] Stevie Davies, *The Idea of Woman in Renaissance Literature* (Brighton: Harvester, 1986), 152-174.
[296] Caroline Bicks, 'Backsliding at Ephesus: Shakespeare's Diana and the Churching of Women' in *Pericles: Critical Essays*, ed. David Skeele (New York: Garland, 2000): 205-227.
[297] Carol Rutter, programme notes for Elliott's *Much Ado About Nothing*, RSC 2006.

available source material, it seemed important to include this production as a representative of the kind of high-profile, internationally collaborative work upon which the modern festival industry is based. Productions such as this one are accorded high levels of resources and critical attention, and need to be acknowledged to be as influential as they are.

The second production was for London's National Theatre in 2001, directed by Nicholas Hytner as his first piece after taking up the Artistic Directorship with that company, and staged in the Olivier theatre. It seems to be quite rare for productions of *The Winter's Tale* to be set in the present, perhaps because of its heavy fairytale or folkloric overtones. Hytner's production broke with this convention to set the play firmly in a *mise-en-scène* that would have been highly familiar to the majority of its audience. The cool good taste of the set could have belonged to the living room of an urban accountant and a marketing manager as easily as to a king and queen. The grand piano situated upstage was the only element that seemed more opulent than the possessions of any middle-class London couple in their forties. Costumes were mostly impeccably tailored linen suits, and there were reviewers who referred to Paulina as a 'Sloane'.[298] Again, Bohemia was read as a new-age kingdom, with hints of Glastonbury.[299]

The third production comes from Edward Hall's Propeller Theatre Company, at the Watermill Theatre, opening in 2004 and touring within Britain and internationally in 2005. Hall used an all male cast, as with all Propeller productions to date. His setting was indeterminate in period, with costumes ranging from the Edwardian period to the present, and kept naturalistic features in the set to a minimum, giving a storybook feel to the production. Semi-formed columns and leadlight windows refused to confine the production to a time, but suggested a vaguely regal, and perhaps deteriorating, classicism. The men of the Sicilian court were in impeccable evening dress: tails and military sashes, most of the women were in long dresses, though Paulina wore dressy

[298] Charles Spencer, *Daily Telegraph*, 25 May 2001; Georgina Brown, *Mail on Sunday*, 27 May 2001.
[299] Archival material used: video recorded 30 June 2001, promptbook, production photographs, programme (held by Archives of the National Theatre, London).

black trousers with a matching top, and a coloured scarf. This was a formal court, even if not an overtly regal one.[300]

In addition to these it would be remiss to neglect the valuable reflections on the play that have been published in relation to other productions. Performance analysts have made some quite detailed examinations of the way various productions have highlighted the play's focus on the presentation of 'woman', and what role women are asked to play in men's worlds. Critics such as Alan Dessen and Elizabeth Schafer have included examinations of staging issues from this play in their more general works, and there have also been contributions from two Hermiones and a Leontes to the *Players of Shakespeare* series. Before going on to the three major examples above, there is much to be gained from listening to what actors have had to say about how they approached these characters, and looking at how both textual and performance critics have wrestled with some of the play's unusual uses of narrative, symbol and character.

Rather like the problem plays, *The Winter's Tale* uses fantastic narrative twists to create opportunities to pose moral questions that it never wholly solves. The way that writers and practitioners have sought solutions, however, suggests much about their thoughts on women. Although it contains no actual magic, like *The Tempest*, or direct intervention from deities, like *Cymbeline*, *The Winter's Tale* shares with other late plays of Shakespeare a strong sense of folklore, even fairytale, in the narrative. This element arises in several episodes of the story that will give both the potential director and the more textually-focussed critic pause for thought. There is, of course, the devouring of a character by a bear, but other curiosities are more pertinent to the presentation of ideas about women.

Firstly there is the question of what precipitates Leontes's jealousy. A 'motive', as mentioned in the Introduction, is something that actors have only tended to look for since the nineteenth century, but the speed and intensity of his passion's onset has caused many analysts to wonder, and provides the impetus to consider how infidelity

[300] Performance observed live 30 September 2005, Abbey Theatre, Dublin.

and male violence are viewed by society. Historically, actors have struggled with a way to make his jealousy convincing. Gemma Jones, who played Hermione in Richard Eyre's 1981 RSC production, recalls that she experimented in rehearsal with creating a sense that there may have been something between Hermione and Polixenes, but was unable to make it work without textual support, which she could not discern.[301] One reviewer noticed 'overt' flirting between Hermione and Polixenes in the 2002 RSC production, creating 'a real question as to whether the Queen has taken liberties with her husband's friend'. This certainly creates a shift in character that has rarely reached the stage. Even so, describing Leontes's reaction under the circumstances as 'acceptable, if excessive'[302] is a revealing way for a critic to interpret such circumstances, showing how the manifestation of male anger, even when violent, is frequently excused as natural, even appropriate. Antony Sher, who played Leontes for Gregory Doran at the RSC in 1997, takes an unashamedly psychological approach to character development, and investigated the phenomenon of 'morbid jealousy' to flesh out the role. This is a pathological condition documented by modern psychoanalysts that makes Leontes's behaviour almost medical in origin.[303]

It may seem incongruous in a Jacobean play to hear the oracle of Apollo called upon to make judgement on Hermione, at the end of the third act, but is a reminder of the influences of Classical Greek mythology that appear in this play. It draws attention to a significant motif that has been there all along, and is intimately connected to representations of the idea of womanhood. Sicily was the island of Demeter, corn goddess, mother figure, queen of fruitfulness. When Demeter's daughter was stolen from her the land became barren. Davies, referring to Ovid's telling of the tale, notes that 'Sicily becomes the object of the corn-goddess's special hate, a blighted land where fertility is wasted and the rule of natural, seasonal law shattered.'[304] It is only when her lost daughter is found and restored to her that the frozen world can come to spring and fruitfulness again. Hermione's name is specifically related to Demeter, and

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[301] Gemma Jones, *Players of Shakespeare* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985): 156-166.
[302] Philip Fisher, 'RSC at the Roundhouse', *British Theatre Guide* (2002).
[303] Antony Sher, *Players of Shakespeare 5* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003): 91-112.
[304] Davies, *Idea*, 153.

Perdita is clearly Persephone, with Paulina fulfilling the necessary role of Hecate, the intermediary and midwife: 'a triad of goddesses, Demeter-Persephone-Hecate, who are really aspects of the one deity.'[305] For some critics this has provided a point of entry to set up the potency of female fertility as the natural ruling power. As expressed by Stevie Davies:

> The tide of power in these plays [*The Winter's Tale* and *Pericles*] will require an absolute submission of the law of the fathers to the law of the mother. We should not minimise the difficulty involved for the male maker of a play in performing that proxy abdication, tantamount to Prospero's surrender of his magic art. It took Shakespeare almost the whole of his writing life to make that surrender the central topic of a sequence of plays which would be his final statement.[306]

Hermione's re-entry into the play by means of the statue trick is another moment when the fantastic is called in order to make a profound symbolic statement by stretching naturalistic credibility. Her absence from the whole of Act IV and most of Act V can give the impression that she has been somehow absent from the world, as from the world of the text, in the intervening sixteen years, but in order to grow wrinkled Hermione must have existed somewhere in the interim, and the audience may well speculate on where and how that might have been. Focussing on her role as statue over and above her subsequent shift to the role of woman can allow a prioritising of Leontes's point of view over Hermione's. For example, the words of German director Georg Hensel (who staged a prominent production in translation in 1959) suggest a desire to activate the symbolic aspects of the scene, but his reading is unshakeably grounded in the male point of view: 'Hermione became marble because Leontes's heart had hardened towards her, and she can only be released by a Leontes redeemed from his petrified state.'[307] This comment views the scene entirely from the point of view of Leontes, suggesting Hermione exists only as an adjunct to her husband's whim, and

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[305] Davies, *Idea*, 166.
[306] Davies, *Idea*, 119.
[307] Georg Hensel, quoted in Wilhelm Hortmann, *Shakespeare on the German Stage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 200.

expressly denies her the independent existence her brave speeches have surely earned her. Notice also the power shift away from Hermione and towards Leontes in such a statement. He is responsible for releasing her, instead of she choosing to bestow herself on him at a time of her readiness. Giving a slightly different cast to the same sense that Hermione doesn't exist except as she exists for Leontes, Harold Bloom seems to assume that she has been living in her tomb for the past sixteen years,[308] a solution that would be farcical for woman of Paulina's resources and resourcefulness, and which explicitly omits acknowledgement of the lines from the Gentleman in V.2 that Paulina 'hath privately twice or thrice a day, ever since the death of Hermione, visited that removed house'. For Bloom, Hermione doesn't exist without Leontes, even if she is interacting daily with Paulina. He also trivialises her experience, and makes clear that he can only see the story from the perspective of Leontes as subject and Hermione as object, with a bland dismissal of Hermione's humanity that seems bizarre in a book boldly titled to suggest the author had some thoughts about 'the Invention of the Human'. 'Since Leontes is sanely contrite for that entire time it would seem rather harsh that he be kept ignorant of his wife's continued existence and proximity, except that the Delphic oracle must first be fulfilled.'[309] The grief of a mother whose two children have been ripped from her is clearly nothing to Bloom, who sees only that Leontes has said sorry.

Despite tackling the play some years later than Hensel, and writing specifically from the perspective of Hermione, Gemma Jones (who played the role for Richard Eyre at the RSC in 1981) was similarly beset with an inability to see her character as other than a figure who serves a function for Leontes. One of the reasons she gives for finding little to excite her about the role is her perception that her character is a largely static one, merely prompting action and development in others. She discusses Hermione as a 'catalyst', employing the dictionary definition of 'a substance that without undergoing change itself aids a chemical change in other bodies', and notes that 'the graph of her journey through the play is relatively level'. And yet, during the first part of the play,

[308] Harold Bloom, *Shakespeare: the Invention of the Human* (New York: Riverhead, 1999).
[309] Bloom, 646-647.

Jones makes a note to herself to 'think pregnant', suggesting that she sees Hermione's fecund state as something the audience should believe in as a real condition, rather than a symbolic one. 'She is a woman and I am a woman, and so I have to endow her with me and my complexities, the sum of my experience'.[310] Herein lies a contradiction that goes unnoticed by Jones, as it would obviously be impossible for an actual woman to be unchanged by Hermione's singularly traumatic experiences.

Catherine Belsey flirts with the idea that Hermione really dies, and is actually resurrected by a miracle. This is not supportable as a hypothesis, given Paulina's visits to the secluded house and Hermione's line about preserving herself, but the thematic conclusions she draws still have merit:

> The moment would be spectacular indeed if Hermione's monumental body rose from her tomb to be reunited with her husband and child. And what a comment the image would make on family values then or now: they survive after all, but only by a miracle, a resurrection, an impossibility, the effect of a supernatural intervention in the institution our own culture fervently longs to render inevitable and stable by attributing the family to natural causes.[311]

The statue trick itself provides a unique opportunity for a director to make a thematic point with a striking visual image. Is this scene eulogizing the idea of the perfect woman and perfect wife, on her pedestal, chaste as cold stone? Or mocking it? When Gale Edwards directed the play for the South Australian Theatre Company in 1987, Paulina's 'gallery' was dotted with numerous iconic female images: the Venus de Milo, the Mona Lisa, Warhol's Marilyn Monroe and such like, of which Hermione was the central figure, reminding the audience of the perpetual pressure on women to be a silent object of worship.[312] The 1998 RSC production made much of the religious overtones in the final scene, with Alexandra Gilbreath set up to look like a traditional

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[310] Jones, 159.
[311] Catherine Belsey, *Shakespeare and the Loss of Eden* (London: Macmillan, 1999), 120.
[312] Elizabeth Schafer, *Ms-Directing Shakespeare: Women Direct Shakespeare* (London: Women's Press, 1998), 107.

shrine to the Madonna. While this a reasonably obvious parallel to draw, it is a shame that it emphasised the Christian oversimplification of the spiritual role of women (with passive purity suitable for worship as its highest aspiration), rather than the rejection of a passive icon in preference for a mobile and vocal human. Was the director suggesting that Hermione has gone through a similar process of idealization? In contrast to the perspectives of Jones, Bloom and Hensel, for Gilbreath the active participation of Hermione in the moment of her transformation, and on her own terms, was very important: 'if I stand perfectly still, I can see for myself and it's my choice. I might not want to move, I might remain just where I am.'[313]

The Hermione of Dominic Cooke's 2006 RSC production in the Swan theatre was dressed in an elaborate ball gown of the same blue-grey colour as her gown for the first scene, giving the sense that she was always and continued to be expected to be glacially perfect. The performance of this play in repertory with *Pericles*, as mentioned in the previous chapter, gave the themes of loss and rebirth particular potency. The productions shared a set, and both utilised promenade staging that allowed the audience to crowd in close around a central raised platform for both Thaisa's recalling to life by Cerimon and Hermione's by Paulina, played by the same actors respectively. There was no lingering melancholy at the conclusion of this production – once Hermione had embraced Perdita she and her husband and daughter looked only joyous, and an initially distressed Paulina was soon wooed by an enthusiastic Camillo.

The Winter's Tale keeps the idea of female speech in constant balance with its converse face, female silence, and the statue scene is just the last in a series of episodes that play with this tension. Female eloquence is marked out as an issue from the start of the play, when there is extended discussion of Hermione's ability to 'speak well' in order to see her husband's wishes fulfilled (I.2), but her reticence in speaking to persuade Polixenes until specifically called upon to do so by her husband links her to the virtues of obedience and silence. The results of her silence and subsequent speech, however, are

[313] Alexandra Gilbreath, *Players of Shakespeare 5* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003): 74-90, 88.

not as simple as one would expect from a textbook example of wifely obedience: Hermione reveals herself to be *too* good a wife for Leontes, she can speak better than him, and achieve what he could not. Already a silent wife is shown to be inadequate to the needs of matrimony, although at this point marriage is still presented as the appropriate controlling influence on the female voice. This changes when Leontes moves outside the boundaries of being a good husband and monarch.

Alan Dessen considers an interesting aspect of silence in the staging Hermione's trial, when he looks at the stage directions offered in the First Folio. He notes firstly that all the characters who participate in the scene are listed as entering at the beginning of the scene, but that numerous editions have emended the text so as to have Hermione enter at 'It is his Highness' pleasure that the Queen / Appear in person here in court.' (III.2.9-10). These editions go on to assign the next line: 'silence', which is a stage direction in the Folio, as a spoken line to the same attendant. Dessen speculates that the theatrical effect may in some ways be more powerful if Hermione is on stage throughout, and the Attendant's line is a call for her to acknowledge her presence to the court, with 'silence' indicating that she does not do so.[314] This is the case in Queen Katherine's trial scene in *Henry VIII*, where the Queen, despite being present from the beginning of the scene, is called to 'come into the court' with the subsequent stage direction 'The Queen makes no answer'. The implication that Hermione refuses to acknowledge the authority of her husband's court makes a powerful statement about the eloquence of silence. In practice almost all productions seem to follow the emendation.

Later on, we see Perdita expressly coaxed out of a natural predilection for reticence by her presumed father. Not only does he instruct her to be vocal in greeting their guests, but he gives a lengthy speech in praise of his dead wife in which the conflict is clearly pointed out between being a good hostess (an important part of being a good wife) and silence. His wife 'welcom'd all' and would 'sing her song' and be 'At upper end o' th' table, now i' th' middle; / On his shoulder, and his' (IV.4.65-68). The counterpoint to

[314] Alan Dessen, *Rescripting Shakespeare* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 227-230.

Leontes and his suspicion and alarm at seeing Hermione play the good hostess is apparent.

As mentioned above, the position of the three main female characters as archetypes of the phases of female life almost demands that a critic or director take a position on the significance of those archetypes. Are they to be treated only as individuals, or will there be visual or other clues that they derive from or represent an idea about women that goes back at least as far as classical mythology? It is Perdita who embodies the first of phase of womanhood, so some examination of how she is presented is necessary to get a full picture of the range of attitudes the play's female figures. She is specifically identified with 'Flora', the Roman goddess of spring and version of Persephone, in her fancy dress for the sheep-shearing festival, which is a clever kind of playwright's joke: she functions in a certain symbolic category within the narrative, so he has her literally represent what she was already figuratively representing. But Persephone is really another facet of Demeter. The seasons work in cycles, and *The Winter's Tale* employs constant echoes of the seasons, so are the young couple a counterbalance to the older, or a precursor? Belsey emphasises the similarities in the love experienced by Florizel and Perdita with that of Leontes and Hermione, where others have been more inclined to point out their differences. The most apparent thematic perspective on the young couple is that they are a symbol of hope, of innocence, of renewal and love that is unsullied by mistrust or hurt. Belsey, however, notes the hints of the potential for harm that lies within any passionate relationship, that all love contains the seeds of its own doom. Specifically, she considers the implications of desire, longing and loss suggested by the flowers mentioned by Perdita, and her lack of the ones she sees as appropriate, and by Florizel's desire that Perdita remain a wave, frozen in stasis.

> As I read Perdita's speech, it calls into question any simple polarity between the court and nature, true love and blindness, pathology and health…There is, of course, a radical difference between the court scenes and the pastoral episode, between the two locations, generations and love stories in the play, but there are resemblances too. In both

> cases the play's account of desire seems a good deal more equivocal in every sense than critics have been willing to suppose… A culture that chooses to ground the family on romantic love risks revealing the unpredictability at the heart of its plan to regulate the future.[315]

In this world where all romantic love is precarious, it is hard to see the justification for assertions that maternal power is presented as dangerous, when it seems that Hermione's love for Perdita is the most constant and pure in the play. Whatever love she has for her husband is not enough to bring her out of seclusion, only the restoration of her daughter to her is adequate to convince Hermione to re-enter the world (*pace* Bloom). When Hermione is first introduced to the audience her role as mother figure is emphasised by the presence of her young son, Mamillius, and perhaps even more by her advanced state of pregnancy, but in fact her role as a mother is a crucial part of all her four scenes in the play. Her advanced pregnancy and the presence of her young son in the first act very obviously link her in the audience's mind with this phase of womanhood. Then in the trial scene it is the death of her son that pushes her to breaking point, rather than anything that happens between herself and Leontes. In the words of Alexandra Gilbreath, 'without her children she has no reason to live, for what is there left to defend?'. The final scene emphasises that the discovery of Perdita has precipitated Hermione's re-entry into the public world, 'so for me the statue scene was not about the reconciliation of Hermione and Leontes, but the meeting of a mother and daughter.'[316]

The conventional theatrical type that propels the story of *The Winter's Tale* is actually a traditional male character: the tyrant. In persecuting his innocent wife, Leontes puts her in an awkward position regarding the limits of female virtue. Hermione encounters the inherent double bind of a virtuous woman – the rules do not permit mounting a defence to attacks on her virtue. Hermione is a 'good wife', but a good wife doesn't speak against her husband. A good wife is silent an obedient. There have been

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[315] Belsey, 126-127.
[316] Gilbreath, 88.

characters like patient Griselda, and Hans Christian Anderson's swan princess, drawn to show the limit to which this virtuous silence can be taken. Hermione, however, chooses the other path, and not only speaks but protests, and does so in such a way as to make nonsense of the idea of silence as a desirable state for a woman (reflecting and expanding upon the instance of this is in *Pericles*, where Marina, had she remained silent, would have been made a whore, but by speaking remains a virgin). She confronts the inadequacy of the prescribed female virtues to contain the full presence of a good woman, her conviction and confidence showing in the even pentameters of her speeches:

> Tell me what blessings I have here alive
> That I should fear to die. Therefore proceed.
> But yet hear this- mistake me not: no life,
> I prize it not a straw, but for mine honour
> Which I would free- if I shall be condemn'd
> Upon surmises, all proofs sleeping else
> But what your jealousies awake, I tell you
> 'Tis rigour, and not law. (III.2.109-116)

In remarkably similar language to Webster's Vittoria in *The White Devil*, a play written very close to the same time, Hermione attacks the *process* of law to which she is being subjected for its reliance on suspicion and disinterest in proof. Vittoria critiques the legal method of the court thus:

> What! Is my just defense
> By him that is my judge called impudence?
> Let me appeal, then, from this Christian court
> To the uncivil Tartar. (III.1.126-128)

> ... if you be my accuser,
> Pray, cease to be my judge. (III.1.223-224)[317]

[317] John Webster, *The White Devil* (London: A&C Black, 1996).

And Hermione does the same. Documentation of the trials of women for the crime of witchcraft from this period show a similar fusing of the powers of accuser and judge, and a tabling of speculation as evidence, that might suggest that these plays were making some shrewd commentary on current events.

Hermione also removes herself from the level of the accusations:

> ...Now for conspiracy:
> I know not how it tastes, though it be dished
> For me to try how. (III.2.71-73)

And, like Marina, rejects even the idea of understanding what is being suggested to her, also indicating for the listener that the location of the flaw lies within the accuser:

> You speak a language that I understand not.
> My life stands in the level of your dreams,
> Which I'll lay down. (III.2.80-82)

Hermione's rhetorical virtuosity strengthens her position with the audience, but damages her in the eyes of her husband. An eloquent woman is marked as dangerous by Leontes, but this judgement is tempered for the audience by his obvious failure as a reasonable arbiter. It is not hard to extrapolate this scenario into a point about the madness of demonising female eloquence.

Paulina's frantic imperative to Leontes that he 'Look down / And see what death is doing' (III.2.154-155) is usually taken to mean that Hermione has fainted into unconsciousness, but Kate Fleetwood in the Cooke production began screaming on the news of the death of Mamillius, and continued scream as she was carried out. Both possibilities say something about the relationship between women and speech or silence. An already apparently dead Hermione is a stark 'be careful what you wish for' lesson to Leontes, but perhaps also to any elements of the audience who think that a silent female body is the best kind. A screaming Hermione also provides a strong comment, as an image of a woman who continues to refuse to be that silent body: one who will make an ugly noise if that is what the circumstances call for.

Hermione's virtue does not in itself deny her a full emotional journey, but her long absences from the action mean the audience does not see the same kind of development they might read into other characters in this play. Her primary interest perhaps lies in her symbolic function within the narrative structure, but one of this play's key features is the way it creates a constant, intricate interplay between the individual and the archetypal, so that the one cannot exist without the other: in *The Winter's Tale* the thematic symbols form the play's heart. For an actor, however, it is possible that the part presents fewer obvious hooks than some of Shakespeare's other heroines. There have been two examinations of Hermione written by RSC actors for the *Players of Shakespeare* series. Gemma Jones gives the impression that, for the 1981 production, she was unable to find material in the part that was satisfying for a performer used to seeking an emotional connection with a fully developed character. Her approach to her contribution is mainly concerned with recording her personal process in handling a role, including the copious and rather stream-of-consciousness notes she took along the way. Her system of working involves re-reading the play many times, but she doesn't describe what tactics she takes to this reading, or what she takes away from it. She pays more attention to the description of Hermione as 'good' than to any other piece of information about her character, and so remains relatively unimpressed by her. Even by the end of the rehearsal process, and well into the run, she concludes that 'it is not a part that I find very satisfying to play'.[318] She suggests that 'good' is not very interesting to play, but therefore concludes that Hermione is not interesting, rather than that she might be better defined some other way. She would rather play 'devious, clever, complicated and interesting',[319] which assumes the first three qualities are needed for the last. No record of her director's response or suggestions is included in Jones's account, which makes it hard to assess what the production's overall attitude was to character and to Hermione. It is also hard to separate Jones's rhetorical strategy from her rehearsal strategy, as she describes her personal experience of the process, speaking very directly to an imagined readership.

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[318] Jones, 165.
[319] Jones, 157.

The second account for this series was by Alexandra Gilbreath on the RSC's 1998 production, directed by Gregory Doran. Gilbreath seemed more excited by the prospect of the role, and by the implications of Hermione's power. This production had Hermione enter to her trial at the summons of the Attendant, rather than be onstage from the beginning. Gilbreath says she wanted her entrance to the scene to be 'as alarming as possible' due to the contrast between the 'glamorous queen with beautiful clothes and exquisitely luxurious hair' that the audience saw in the first act, and the woman who Leontes seems to have taken pleasure in humiliating.[320] It was important to Gilbreath that the costume in which she appeared in this scene show how horrific was the experience of giving birth in a jail cell, with 'a huge blood-stain on the back of my dress.' She was led to a dock placed at stage left, made of metal bars, which was kept in the same position and converted to a shrine-like frame for Hermione's 'statue' at the end, reminding the King and the audience of what he had put her through. During her longest speech, Gilbreath chose to speak the final part directly to the audience, at 'the foot of the stage, with my toes almost curling over the edge'.[321] In a play that gives this character no private soliloquies, this staging choice showed an interest in the power balance. Anthony Sher, who played Leontes in this production and wrote an account of it for the same book, describes how he chose to address the audience directly, an unusual experience for him. In doing the same, Gilbreath seized territory for Hermione that put her on an equal footing.

Leontes has clearly not forgotten his son and daughter in the final act, but seems primarily focussed on the loss of his wife. The climactic final scene of the play is heavily symbolic in nature, and even directors immersed in naturalism-derived performance practice seem less inclined to play down this aspect than to add to it with further layers of signification (such as Doran's Catholic shrine, Edwards's iconic women, or Donnellan's return of Mamillius, of which more later). The audience does not have the advantage of dramatic irony during the statue scene; the secret that Hermione is not really dead is revealed to us at the same time as to her husband (and in

[320] Gilbreath, 83.
[321] Gilbreath, 87.

the source for the play the Queen really dies). The progression of the scene aligns the audience initially with Leontes, Perdita and the other observers, but then creates an opportunity to consider Hermione's experience of events: 'For thou shalt hear that I… have preserved myself' (V.3.151-154). As Hermione transforms from statue to human, Camillo makes explicit the rejection of the preference for silence in a woman: 'If she pertain to life, let her speak too.' (V.3.137) The men in this scene are presented as not wanting her to be a statue – silent, chaste and appropriate for worship, they actively desire her voice, which is part of her full humanity. When Paulina, who is as much the stage manager of this dénouement as Prospero in *The Tempest*, posits a reversal of traditional roles: 'When she was young you wooed her. Now in age, / Is she become the suitor?', Leontes replies enthusiastically approving such a shift: 'If this be magic, let it be an art / Lawful as eating.' (V.3.130-134)

This statement from the mouth of Leontes is the mark of a very particular shift in his attitude to women and power. In Act II, when Paulina goes to the King to protest at his treatment of his wife and newborn daughter (declaring: 'If I prove honey mouthed, let my tongue blister' II.2.39), he bombards her with the full range of those specifically misogynist insults that say more about the anxieties of the user of the words than the person at whom they are directed:

A mankind witch! (II.3.81)
A most intelligencing bawd! (II.3.82)
…thy crone. (II.3.92)
A callat/Of boundless tongue (II.3.111-112)
A gross hag! (II.3.130)

And threatens her specifically with the fate of witches: 'I'll ha' thee burnt.' (II.3.139). Again, however, what we know about the circumstances make the King the object of ridicule and censure, not the shrew. Witch hunts went on at the time this play was written, and women really were burned. How did it sound to an audience of the time of James I to hear these accusations in the rantings of a tyrant madman? In designating Paulina specifically as a witch while the action of the play makes her a positive, even heroic figure, are such accusations against women themselves brought into question?

When Leontes, too late, has regained his wits, Paulina is rewarded with his exclusive trust. Paulina is wise woman, is magus, and the play could not reach as happy a conclusion as it does without her, which makes a mockery of criticisms of her perceived shrewishness. By using Leontes as the personification of misogyny and male anxiety about the female, conventional ideas about containing the female voice are actually challenged by their expression, rather than reinforced.

Among the central female characters representing the three phases of womanhood, Paulina is assigned the task of symbolizing the 'crone' or 'midwife' figure, which also ties her to conventions surrounding the witch and the shrew. There is nothing in the text to indicate that she is any older than Hermione, it is purely her function in the narrative that channels her into this role, but she is frequently cast as older.[322] Hermione's relationship with Paulina, while clearly loyal and close, is not primarily demonstrated through the interaction between the two, but through Paulina's interaction with the state in the form of her husband and the King. The structure of the play, and Paulina's function within it, subvert the label of shrew, as the comic scold is proved to be the voice of both reason and justice, making foolish the popular idea that challenge to authority from a woman was necessarily reprehensible. The King's courtiers will not stand up to him to defend the Queen, but Paulina will. We cannot assume from this information alone that Paulina is being framed positively here; it is possible for her to be going about the right action in what would be considered an inappropriate manner. The development of the narrative, however, gives support to her choices, as her refusal to compromise is eventually rewarded. Her authorial and authoritative role as controller of the final scene also supports rather than diminishes the validity of her behaviour.

Alan Dessen, in his exploration of the theatrical effect of variations in entrances and exits, observes that a solo entrance for Paulina with the baby Perdita at II.3.28, rather than one accompanied by Antigonus and the other lords, enhances the power of her

[322] For example: Peggy Ashcroft's Paulina to Elizabeth Sellars's Hermione (RSC 1960); Estelle Kohler and Alexandra Gilbreath (RSC, 1998); Deborah Findlay and Clare Skinner (National Theatre 2001); Linda Bassett and Kate Fleetwood (RSC, 2006).

presence. A frequent choice in performance is for Leontes to give his first speech alone on stage, and then for Paulina to enter, with the courtiers trying to prevent her. This was the format employed by Hytner in the National Theatre production. It is also possible, however, that Leontes gives his speech with the courtiers onstage, listening but hesitant to interfere. Dessen hears Paulina's line about the lords 'That creep like shadows by him and do sigh / At each his needless heavings' (II.3.39-40), and suggests that if the audience had seen them do just this, 'More context would therefore be provided for Paulina's critique of the lords and a greater contrast between her forceful behaviour and that of the courtiers.'[323] This was the staging choice made by Cooke, emphasised by the set which showed the King's room in cross-section with both sides of the entrance visible, and the courtiers hanging around in a furtive group outside the door.

The husband of a shrew is traditionally a comic figure, but here again Shakespeare plays with this convention, making Antigonus amusing as a witty, rather than a merely pathetic character. There is an unmistakable hint of pride in his observation of her confrontation with the King:

> La you now, you hear!
> When she will take the rein, I let her run;
> But she'll not stumble. (II.3.60-62)

And a normalizing of this state of marital affairs:

> LEONTES. And, lozel, thou art worthy to be hang'd,
> That wilt not stay her tongue.
> ANTIGONUS. Hang all the husbands
> That cannot do that feat, you'll leave yourself
> Hardly one subject. (II.3.131-135)

Michael Friedman sees the play as finally curtailing Paulina's voice in an attempt to convert her from shrew into silent woman (rather as Lyons, and Friedman himself, see happening to Isabella in *Measure for Measure*), but surely there is too much support

[323] Dessen, 227.

for her voice in the final moments of the play for this to be the case. The concluding speech in a play of this period is almost always given to the person of highest rank, usually the King or Duke. Leontes's speech takes little more than a minute to say, and his prominence in the crucial last moments of the play is nothing approaching that of, say, Prospero in *The Tempest*, or even Cymbeline. It is true that Leontes conforms to the pattern of earlier plays (*Measure for Measure*, *All's Well That Ends Well*, *Much Ado About Nothing*) in that he 'impels the shrew towards marriage and its implied limitations on female speech... Leontes negates Paulina's plans for a lonely but verbally independent retirement from the institution of matrimony by imposing on her a husband to manage her tongue.'[324] However, one thing that this play has repeatedly displayed is the abject failure of marriage to perform its prescribed task of curtailing the female tongue. Friedman remains convinced that the comedies of forgiveness centre on channelling unconstrained energy into socially controlled legitimate procreation. This means that male sexual licentiousness or mistrust of the female and female garrulousness must both be truncated by matrimony at the end of the play. His survey of Shakespeare's plays that fall within this genre grouping also reveals a pattern of belief yet to be fully examined: the belief that shrews make the best wives.

Those who stage this play, then, have a dense but specific selection of material relating to speech and silence in women that can be drawn upon to a greater or lesser degree. Taking as case studies recent productions directed by Hytner, Hall and Donnellan, was this aspect of the play treated as central and important, or have there been productions that disengage with the female voice and the power it represents?

Declan Donnellan's St Petersburg *Winter's Tale* made the most of its Russian setting for Hermione's trial scene, in which more than one reviewer saw 'unmistakable allusions to the Stalinist show trials of the 1930s'.[325] (Incidentally, this reviewer described the opposition to Leontes from Antigonus as 'courageous' but that of Paulina

[324] Michael D. Friedman, *The World Must Be Peopled: Shakespeare's Comedies of Forgiveness* (London: Associated University Press, 2002), 226.
[325] Harvey Thompson, 'A Russian Winter's Tale', World Socialist Website, http://www.wsws.org/articles/1999/jun1999/tale-j04.shtml, 4 June 1999.

as 'brazen'.) Donnellan created an additional symbolic female presence on stage by casting a female 'Time', and having her appear at the beginning and end of both halves of the performance, not just at the start of Act IV. Paulina, however, does not seem to have been a prominent presence in this version, and Vera Bykova's performance is not mentioned by any of the reviewers of the production's British tour. Donnellan was enthusiastic about the fact that the Maly Theatre uses a permanent ensemble of actors, who are mostly in their forties, feeling that this is the right age group for this play: 'there's just something different about the weight; I suppose it's a question of sensibility.'[326] The experience of the actors and 'the sensitivity of an ensemble whose members have worked together for years' impressed the majority of reviewers, who expressed themselves deeply moved by the final scene. 'When the "statue" of Leontes's wife Hermione, believed dead for many years, is revealed to be the queen herself, Natalia Akimova moves and speaks with the jerky, bewildered distraction of one kept in hiding for all that time, and the joy of reunion for both parties is tempered by an agonising what-now awkwardness.'[327]

In a final scene that most reviewers found exceptionally moving (phrases such as 'devastatingly delicate',[328] 'the most beautiful staging of the statue scene that I can recall'[329] and 'miraculously staged'[330] abound, with only John Peter accusing the director of 'sentimentality'[331]), Donnellan took the bold step of cutting all the lines after those Hermione addresses to Perdita, including both Paulina and Leontes's concluding speeches. The seeming handing to Hermione of greater authority, as the speaker of the final lines was, however, countered by a staging choice that undermined her centrality. Donnellan concluded the play with the spectre of Mamillius giving his father silent blessing. Charles Spencer found this addition to be very profound: 'the last scene in *The Winter's Tale* is perhaps the most moving in Shakespeare. This brilliant additional twist is almost unbearable in its poignancy, suggesting both forgiveness and

[326] Declan Donnellan, 'Directing Shakespeare's Comedies: in conversation with Peter Holland', *Shakespeare Survey 57* (2004): 161-166, 161.
[327] Ian Shuttleworth, *Financial Times*, 6 May 1999.
[328] Nick Curtis, *Evening Standard*, 25 May 1999.
[329] Paul Taylor, *Independent*, 6 May 1999.
[330] Georgina Brown, *Mail on Sunday*, 16 May 1999.
[331] John Peter, *Sunday Times*, 16 May 1999.

a sense of irrecoverable loss.'[332] But the forgiveness that Leontes most needs at this point, surely, is not that of his son. Although Mamillius died as a result of the King's madness, it was not his intention that this happen, and none of the King's actions were directed against his son. He said he saw 'too much blood in him' of Hermione's (II.1.69), but never denied that he was the boy's father, unlike his outright disowning of Perdita. Mamillius was not imprisoned like Hermione, or rejected and abandoned to likely death like Perdita. The visual pivot point of the action during this scene would normally be Hermione, as we watch the statue come to life, but she was not included in this little exchange between a boy and his father. In fact, it might be seen as the production's choice to return her almost immediately to a state of passive, non-intrusive stone, as she concluded the play upstage, frozen in tableau. Was this a surreptitious re-weighting on Donnellan's part back towards privileging male experience? With the female figures of Hermione, Paulina and Perdita likely to dominate the image of this family grouping, Donnellan has constructed a way to make the story about the men after all.

Donnellan told *Shakespeare Survey* directly: 'The most important character for me in *The Winter's Tale* is Mamillius',[333] but he seems to have used this belief repeatedly to disempower Hermione, not only in the final moments but earlier in II.1 where 'in the idyllic scene with her ladies, little Prince Mamillius attacks [Hermione] violently, as if, subconsciously, he sensed what his father was accusing her of'.[334] Going even further in the *Survey* interview, he seems to want to bring Hermione down to Leontes's level, and then dismiss her. He said: 'I mean, they kill the little boy! Hermione and Leontes working out their destinies are far less important. They kill the little boy between them, and that to me is the most important event.'[335] In a disturbing echo of common attitudes to domestic violence, Donnellan is casting Hermione as responsible for abusive behaviour towards her, from both her husband and child. And Perdita does not even rate a mention – what is a daughter when you have lost a son?

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[332] Charles Spencer, *Daily Telegraph*, 10 May 1999.
[333] Donnellan, 165.
[334] Peter.
[335] Donnellan, 165.

It seems to be a frequently reoccurring characteristic of recent productions to extend the presence of Mamillius on stage. Nicholas Hytner also found ways to give Leontes and Hermione's first child extra prominence, by having him begin the production by reciting Shakespeare's Sonnet XII ('When I do count the clock that tells the time'), standing on a coffee table, a precocious, treasured son (played in this production by an actual child, of around ten) giving a performance for mum and dad's friends, who will be obliged to look enthusiastic. He later played the upstage grand piano for them. The construction of the set with two sliding translucent screens coming in to make a box shape, with an edge of performing space remaining in front, was also used in Act II scene 3, with the scripted scene taking place downstage, while behind the screen Mamillius lay sick in bed, attended by a lady-in-waiting. Earlier he had been seen in the same way playing ping-pong with the ladies. It seems that Mamillius presents a particular fascination for many modern directors, perhaps because of the preference today for emphasising the darker side of stories. It has become important to many interpreters not to minimize the element of loss in the tale.

This production was interested in enhancing Hermione's power during her trial. There were no gory afterbirth-stained shifts in this beige linen world – Hermione wore a simple knee-length, loose-fitting dress and a cardigan. She no longer had the groomed and polished appearance of the first act, but neither had there been an attempt to humiliate her physically. Choices made in the staging of her trial scene will affect how the audience sees Hermione: how removed she seems from control over her fate, and whether strength or helplessness is the dominant impression left. Clare Skinner's Hermione was 'required to sit in a solitary chair behind an enormous desk, from which, scorning the official microphone set on a low stand before her, she rose to deliver her defence'.[336] In this way, the character refused to be contained by the conditions imposed on her. Her voice would not be mediated by the instrument of her tormenter. The promptbook notes: 'H. rise, turns microphone away from her.' (For comparison, during the trial scene of the 2002 RSC production Anastasia Hille was manacled with heavy chains, effectively presenting her as a pitiful figure, but making it harder for her

[336] Michael Dobson, 'Shakespeare Performances in England', *Shakespeare Survey 55* (2002): 285-321, 319.

defensive speeches to seem a significant opposing force to Leontes.) After the seemingly dead Hermione was carried off, Leontes collapsed into her chair to wait for news, his first sign of voluntary penance, as he took the place of the defendant himself.

This production, the only one of the three set in the present day, made Bohemia into a Glastonbury-style festival. Present day is perhaps not entirely accurate here, as there was some criticism from reviewers that the feel of the place was more stereotypical 1970s than genuinely twenty-first century. This made Perdita something of a hippy, which one reviewer found 'ignoble'.[337] Thematically, the sheep-shearing festival ties Perdita specifically to her symbolic role as harvest goddess, and it might be argued that the preoccupations of the hippy movement are the most appropriate way to embody that tie in a modern context. In actual fact, this production steered clear of equating Perdita with the scruffy types around her. Perhaps taking as its cue the lines suggesting that she stands out from her companions as made of finer stuff, perhaps out of simple conservatism, her hair was clean, brushed and tied off her face, her clothing a pristine white blouse and long skirt, while the other youths and maidens sported an array of dreadlocks and mismatched jeans and tops. Her accent was that of her adoptive father, (traditional, stage) South-West rural English.

In the final act of the Hytner production enormous photographic portraits of Hermione and Mamillius projected on the back wall showed explicitly the extent to which their memory dominated the king's life. Hermione's 'statue' was situated dead centre stage, on a square plinth, initially concealed by a cylinder of floor-length curtain. When Paulina pulled back the curtain, Hermione was revealed seated, much like Copenhagen's little mermaid, perhaps for reasons of kindness to the actor, but also continuing the refusal of the production to make anyone look regal. The subtle use of lighting assisted in staging the 'miracle' for the audience, as white light on the statue gradually became the pink of living flesh. Paulina continued to play a strong controlling role in managing the sequence of events, leading Hermione downstage from her plinth, and placing her hand in Leontes's. As Hermione and Perdita embraced

[337] Alistair Macaulay, *Financial Times*, 25 May 2001.

downstage, standing upstage behind them, Leontes and Paulina did too, in what was in some ways a particularly powerful mark of forgiveness. Paulina has been the one who has been daily reminding the King of his faults for the past sixteen years, and this express benediction from her is perhaps the gesture he most needed. There was no trace in the reviews of the kind of reprobation that has often been levelled at Paulina in her critical history, the critics got tremendous enjoyment from her authority and verve, and her 'sweeping in to sort out Leontes just as a matron at a prep school might sort out a scrap'.[338] Both the character and Deborah Findlay's execution of it called forth adjectives such as fearless, loyal, spirited, robust and valiant,[339] and if terms like nag[340] and virago[341] also appeared, they were always contextualised by clearly expressed admiration. This was more a family story than a tale of monarchs and state, an attitude which was carried on to the conclusion of the play, when the sense of informality allowed Leontes to shepherd out the other cast members, and exit himself, without requiring a ceremonial procession of couples. The general exit allowed Hermione and Perdita to remain behind, and provide a final image that was a direct reversal of that offered by Donnellan and Hall, as the mother and daughter held centre stage, in a closing pool of light, embracing in a mix of joy and grief, reclamation and loss.

Edward Hall, like Donnellan, saw Mamillius as the key figure in the story, and used him to provide the framing device for his 2004 production, which used a mixed period and an indeterminate setting. The set used columns and walls painted to look like stone to give an effect of both the imperial, the timeless and the decaying. The most noticeable thing about the women in this production of *The Winter's Tale* was their absence. Hall used an all-male cast, as he has with all Propeller productions to date. There is nothing inherently negative in the way the female roles will appear under these circumstances, but it will require the negotiation of a different set of questions about how to present character from a performance that uses women. Nor were those actors

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[338] Georgina Brown, *Mail on Sunday*, 27 May 2001.
[339] John Nathan, *Jewish Chronicle*, 1 June 2001; John Gross, *Sunday Telegraph*, 27 May 2001; Nicholas de Jongh, *Evening Standard*, 24 May 2001; Benedict Nightingale, *Times*, 25 May 2001; Alastair Macaulay, *Financial Times*, 25 May 2001 (respectively).
[340] Michael Billington, Guardian, 24 May 2001.
[341] Macaulay.

playing women costumed to disguise that they were men. Paulina wore a black, minimally tailored, trousered suit in a soft fabric, the drape and shoestring straps of which emphasised the masculinity of the chest and arms underneath. Hermione was always in long dresses but, again, the masculine body underneath was almost emphasised. During the first two acts, Hermione's pregnancy was represented by a false belly, in what might be considered the traditional way, but on a body with no breasts it became a symbol of a pregnancy, rather than an imitation of one. One becomes aware that a pregnant body does not begin and end with a bump about the middle, but is actually a whole shape, that includes breasts, hips and gait.

This production also had Hermione enter the court scene in III.2, rather than be present from the outset. The entrance was taken through the audience and up steps placed at the front of the stage. Much was made of a photographer with a large flash bulb taking intrusive pictures, until quelled by a look from Hermione. Unfortunately, the necessity of Hermione turning upstage to enter this way, and then the use of blocking that turned her upstage again, to kneel before Leontes, meant that the actor's very masculine bald patch was placed prominently centre stage, and was very difficult to forget about. The number of reviews that described the actor as 'balding', showed that this was a problem for audience reception.[342] Perhaps the director was using this, and the sleeveless dress exposing triathlete's arms, as a distancing effect, but then why stain Hermione's shift with a naturalistic attempt at the blood and fluid of childbirth? Was the blood supposed to be merely symbolic of Hermione's trauma, or was it asking us to believe in this character's suffering? In the end this was a production that could not decide whether it wanted to involve its audience in an illusion or not.

Peggy Phelan (albeit in a markedly different context) notes how 'in any drama, including that of pregnancy, mainstream theatre will do all it can to insure that the main character remains an embryonic man'.[343] Is this what Hall was doing with his symbolic belly that emphasised the absence of a woman to carry it? Hall denied even

[342] Dominic Cavendish, *Daily Telegraph*, 22 January 2005; Emer O'Kelly, *Sunday Independent*, 9 September 2005; Fintan O'Toole, *Irish Times*, 10 September 2005.
[343] Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked* (London: Routledge, 1993), 132.

the need to imagine women into this so apparently matriarchal story. He has been working with an all-male company on Shakespeare's plays since 1996, resting on some kind of historic authority for this choice: 'That's how Shakespeare's plays were written, to have the female roles played by an all-male company.' But Shakespeare's company did not use grown men to play women, but rather boys (or at least apprentices not yet graduated to full company member status), who were, like women, categorized as not-men.[344] This is offering the audience something quite different from the cast of Hall's company, in which only Tad Williams (who played Mamillius and Perdita) might scrape in under the radar as an Elizabethan boy player. Hall wrote in the programme notes that 'Having a man playing Paulina in *The Winter's Tale* and saying lines like "I have shown too much the rashness of a woman" to the king creates a unique dynamic for the audience', but he doesn't specify what he feels this contributes. Today, with the resources and experience we have, is this the most effective way to enact female roles? He also points out that 'the actors don't try to ape the physicality or vocal tone of a woman'. Well, why not? Does Hall believe that there *are* no women in *The Winter's Tale*? Is he showing solidarity with the assertion of some feminist theatre critics, that women do not really exist in the work of male writers? Somehow this agenda seems unlikely. Perhaps he wished to avoid the trap of a modern audience finding men in dresses inherently funny. An awareness that this was a risk is instructive in itself, as it shows that the gap between the experience of a Jacobean audience member watching a boy play Hermione and the experience of a modern audience member cannot be closed by having a man play the role; the cultural context the modern audience member brings to the performance is simply too different. For example, the Lord in *The Taming of the Shrew* finds his joke on Christopher Sly humorous not because the drunkard will be taking a boy in a dress for a girl, but because a peasant will be taking himself for a lord:

> I know the boy will well usurp the grace,
> Voice, gait, and action of a gentlewoman.
> I long to hear him call the drunkard husband,

[344] See David Kathman 'How Old Were Shakespeare's Boy Actors?' *Shakespeare Survey 58* (2005): 220-246 for some excellent, recent commentary on this issue.

> And how my men will stay themselves from laughter
> When they do homage to this simple peasant. (Induction 1.126-130)

The automatically assumed comedy of pantomime dames and drag shows came later, but now cannot be removed from the equation. Hall did seem to be suggesting, perhaps unintentionally, that women have no place at all in this play, that the women watching should not even be permitted to see themselves credibly represented. The details of his rationale can only be guessed at, as Hall has scrupulously avoided fully articulating the politics of the decision to use only men when casting.

Hall found many opportunities to use Mamillius as a framing device. Played by a young but adult actor, he was onstage as the audience entered, used his teddy bear to indicate the part of the bear who kills Antigonus, spoke the part of Time at the beginning of Act IV, and was watching the unfolding of events throughout. This production doubled the roles of Mamillius and Perdita, which historically happens quite frequently (Gregory Doran's 1998 RSC production, for example), but in this case it was not a mere doubling of convenience, or simple creation of a thematic connection between the two children, but to give Mamillius a continued presence as part of the 'frame'. Hall's use of Mamillius in this way meant that the audience saw him, in effect, assume the mantle of Perdita during his recital of the speech as Time that begins the fourth act. Putting on the flowered headband that Perdita would wear throughout the sheep-shearing festival, while still in his little-boy pyjamas, the role became Mamillius-playing-Perdita, rather than simply the actor Tad Williams playing Perdita. As with the other costumes in this production, there was no attempt to disguise the fact that the part was being played by a man: no false breasts, and Perdita's simple peasant lack of shoes revealed large and clearly masculine feet. But perhaps the Mamillius conceit is the more significant aspect of this presentation. It meant that the idea of Perdita was removed from the idea of femaleness by not just one step (that of having the part played by a man), but two. It also meant that Perdita's presence was erased from the final moments of the play, as Williams removed his gown and returned to his pyjamas.

Hall did away with plinths and pedestals in favour of a simple visual trick to give the audience something of a sense of the surprise of the characters seeing the statue. Hermione and Perdita were dressed identically in a pale blue, Madonna-like gown and veil. Paulina led the group of onlookers in a circle around the stage, the actor playing Hermione joined the group at the back, closely following Perdita, so that the eye was not drawn to her figure until the group stepped away, leaving her standing downstage left, back to the audience. Hard work for the actor, who had to stand upright and without supports, with one arm extended, for some minutes, but this blocking, after the initial surprise, focussed the attention more on the spectators, as it was their faces and reactions that could be seen by the audience, and Hermione was not elevated above them or spatially separated from them.

Leontes stood centre stage for his concluding speech, and then remained there, turning to each of the other characters, who moved away from him and exited. Perdita became Mamillius again, and was the last to remain behind. As his father reached towards him, he blew out a candle to end the play. A deliberately melancholic ending, focusing on loss, perhaps even hinting that the reconciliation had been in Leontes's wishful imagination. Removing Perdita, the symbol of renewal, and replacing her with Mamillius, the symbol of loss, was an effective and absolute way to do this, but it was also the final step in what seemed to be this production's complete obliteration of women from the story.

In looking at these examples of recent stagings of *The Winter's Tale* I have tended to focus particularly on the play's ending because the mythological elements, the 'heightened circumstances' of the story, give those who stage the final scene the opportunity to distil into a dramatic moment the deepest, most complex issues raised in the play. In this scene, the men are offered the perfect woman, the silent, pedestal-enthroned object of worship, and they actively reject this as an option, making clear their preference for a real woman who moves and is warm – and who speaks. For Hermione, her final appearance seems to have less to do with the desires of her husband than with the other women, Paulina who controls the action of the final act

and Perdita who motivates it. The famous reconciliation in the final scene is equivocal – Hermione's only lines are addressed not to her husband, but to her newly recovered child. 'Knowing by Paulina that the oracle / Gave hope thou [Perdita] was in being, have preserved / Myself to see the issue.' (V.3.152-154) So the true catalyst for Hermione's resurrection was Perdita, another woman, and the first thing she does is encourage the representative of the next generation of women to speak: 'Tell me, mine own, / Where hast thou been preserved? Where lived? How found / Thy father's court?' (V.3.149-151). The power here remains very strongly located in the female voice. Perdita is most praised where she is most vocal, Hermione regains the freedom to speak openly, and immediately makes it very clear that she will be using her voice to satisfy her own needs, not her husband's, and Paulina teaches the moral: when wise women speak, it is peril to ignore them.

It would be an understatement to say that some of Shakespeare's plays have a greater emphasis on the female than others. It is not only that some have more female roles, or larger speaking parts for female characters, but also that some include more prominent uses of imagery and mythology traditionally associated with the female, and some dwell more lingeringly on the experiences of the female characters and the concerns that female audience members might see as pertaining most closely to their own experiences. It would seem that *The Winter's Tale*, with its representations of loyalty between women, pregnancy, childbirth, witchcraft, the threat posed by the absolute legal power of a husband over his wife, the possibility of a wife having less officially sanctioned kinds over power over her husband, healing through ancient wisdom, and the passing down of a connection from mother to daughter, may well be the most female-centred of all Shakespeare's plays. And yet, of the three productions described here, Hytner's is the only one that demonstrated an interest in representing female experience. Women performers and spectators can still find themselves excluded or marginalized, even in the telling of stories about women, but at least in this play Shakespeare put on stage the idea of women telling their own stories: a radical beginning.

Conclusion

History is full of attempts to silence women, but just as full of representations of women as talkers. Shakespeare wrote many female talkers, and many examples of attempts to silence them. This thesis has examined those of Shakespeare's plays that include this intersection of the female voice and its critics to consider how today's stage engages with this voice. Applying a feminist standpoint to both the playtexts and examples of the plays in modern performance frequently revealed where interpretations were governed by conservative positions on gender, as well as a few cases where such a position was challenged. A shrew is a woman who makes the wrong kind of noise, who says things that people do not want to hear. However, this is also true of the prophetess and of other kinds of subversive truthspeakers such as Shakespeare's fools. Shrew is a pejorative term, but describes a behaviour that can frequently be viewed as brave, clever, noble or just. The powerful presence of the concept of the shrew in early modern English society has echoes still felt in present-day society, in characterisations of it as inappropriate, unattractive or unwise for a woman to choose to talk. There are still many cultural norms and pressures in operation today that suggest to women that it is preferable for them to be silent, and performance can promote or reject this position. Shakespeare returns repeatedly to the idea of the various powers of the female voice, using recurring patterns to draw female characters, but changing and developing these patterns throughout his writing career, often taking early motifs and making them more subtle and, generally speaking, increasing the expression of approval of female power.

This thesis demonstrated the benefit to performance analysis of incorporating standpoint theory as a means of establishing and acknowledging the socio-political context present in any performance, as well as any commentary on that performance. It also established what a reciprocal benefit to standpoint sociology the analysis of performance can provide, exposing the sociological side to the observations that arise when treating a performance analytically. Standpoint sociologists are likely to find no more fruitful material to draw on to reveal a society's power structures and preoccupations than the performances it creates.

Jonathan Dollimore asks: 'do these plays endorse the conservative and, to us, oppressive views of gender which prevailed in their society, or do they challenge them?'[345] For the purposes of this thesis, however, the question is more effectively rendered: if we assume that it is at least possible to stage these plays in such a way as to challenge conservative or oppressive views of gender, what elements of the plays lend themselves to this approach, and when and how have today's productions of them availed themselves of the opportunity? To investigate the possibilities, this thesis included an analysis of some recent presentations of female characters in Shakespeare who can be seen as making a case for the quality or the virtue of transgressive female speech. It looked at how that speech was treated, how the female characters in these productions were embodied and framed, and asked what relative balance of power and focus was created by the staging, between the different characters and threads of the narrative. What the director, designer and actors discover in the plays about sexual politics or the power balances at work in gender relations becomes legible to an audience through the staging choices. An active interest in these areas is just as apparent to the spectator as an avoidance of them or an unconsidered bolstering of the status quo, but as audience members we need both to ask whether a production has thought through fully the statement it makes about gender and to think through that statement ourselves. Feminist standpoint theory facilitated the development of a way of observing that can be applied to a performance by someone interested in discerning an attitude to women in a production, and critiquing it. Applying standpoint theory assisted the formulation of questions that can be usefully asked by spectators of a production to determine whether its representation of the female on stage tends toward the expansive, individuated and challenging, or the reductive and dismissive. It prompted the consideration of who had the power to decide how these 'shrews' fit into the larger interpretive thrust of the productions. Crucially, it also called for a rigorous questioning of textual interpretations that may have unwittingly assumed a support for the status quo inherent in the text, when this is far from being the case.

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[345] Jonathan Dollimore, 'Critical Development: Cultural Materialism, Feminism and Gender Critique, and New Historicism' in *Shakespeare: A Bibliographical Guide*, ed. Stanley Wells (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 416.

The small number of examples given here were selected less to create a record of the productions themselves (though they all work to illustrate what can be done when an early modern text meets modern theatre practice) than to assist in developing this standpoint-feminist observational attitude. These examples have included publicly funded productions with large audiences, some, such as those mounted by the RSC and the National Theatre, from within an extensive cultural tradition of staging such material, others, such as that of Yukio Ninagawa, coming from cultural backgrounds that offer a slighter history of staging Shakespeare. Some, like those from the New York Shakespeare Festival or Declan Donnellan's association with the Maly Theatre of St Petersburg, show how places that do not share the nationalistic investment in Shakespeare of the British companies often still invest heavily in Shakespeare is as a cultural product. The emphasis is often on creating productions that will appeal to a tourist audience, or will travel well. I also considered it important to include productions that were less elaborately produced and played to smaller audiences (such as the Flagship and London Bubble productions) as, collectively, all the hundreds of independent, community and co-operative theatre productions of Shakespeare taking place in the world each year have a significant influence not only on audiences, but on the development of actors and directors, and the possibilities they see 'Shakespeare' as encompassing.

The productions examined here exemplify a broad cross-section of the different styles of Shakespeare production common today, and suggest some of the differences competing agendas make. Productions from smaller, independent theatre companies, for example, tend to emphasise liveliness and pace, frequently with extensive cutting and doubling, and most often using a mixed period setting. Productions from the Royal Shakespeare Company, or Britain's National Theatre will usually involve high production values, large casts and the costs associated with these, but will be just as affected by the fact that the company will have already produced any play several times, and that critics will be measuring each one against a tradition. Critics watching productions from Australian companies, by contrast, are unlikely to have other versions

with which to compare what they see, and audiences do not have the kind of assumed familiarity with the traditions of interpretation surrounding any of the plays that can be discerned in writing about British productions. This has tended to result in production styles that emphasise clarity, sometimes to the point of oversimplification. Australian productions of Shakespeare are almost never done in period costume, and adjustments to the text, such as replacing archaic words for the sake of clarity, are common. Productions that tour internationally, in languages other than English, tend towards the epic in scale and the symbolic in presentation. This is not to say that they eschew subtlety, but there is often an emphasis on the visual, and on distilling the larger themes, rather than searching for nuances. Standpoint theory showed how much the priorities and intentions of these productions arose out of what the companies relied upon as the source of their material resources (the tourist trade, the festival circuit, the education market, fringe theatregoers, and so on), and how this in turn influenced the attention given to the female roles.

Those of Shakespeare's plays that turn on the question of whether speech or silence is better for a woman allow for diverse conclusions to be drawn on the subject. In performance, staging decisions will give an indication readable by a modern audience of the conclusion the director and actors have reached. Doran's Katherina, for instance, was obviously a better, happier person for having her voice controlled by a man, whereas Lloyd and Parker made it clear that their Katherinas had no intention of making less noise at all. Boyd's *Henry VI* chose to demonize the play's troublesome women, while Ninagawa tended to fill his *Pericles* with feminine angels. Bell's *Henry VI* seemed to put its women into the 'too hard' basket, while Hall erased them from *The Winter's Tale*, implying that the best kind of woman is a symbolic representation of one. McBurney was prepared to create a context that allowed his Isabella to be both troubled and troubling, while McGlinchey only wanted hers to be pretty. The same director can produce surprisingly different results. Boyd's fondness for a concept to unify his productions allowed him, some years ago, to direct a *Troilus and Cressida* that showed sensitivity to circumstance in the presentation of the female characters, and a scrupulous avoidance of judging them, but then later to encourage the most

simplistic of judgments of the women in his *Henry VI*. Donnellan's interest in the relationships between men produced a *Much Ado About Nothing* that critiqued masculinity's role in the circulation of power, but a *Winter's Tale* that suppressed and ignored the moments in the text that open a space for such a critique.

Turning to the productions in greater detail, the representations of Jeanne and Margaret in *Henry VI* seemed to be most strongly influenced by a shared directorial worry that this sequence of plays is likely to be difficult for a modern audience to follow, or to be perceived as dense, complicated or boring. In Rutter's Northern Broadsides production this resulted in heavy cutting of Jeanne and Margaret's speeches that are the most dazzling pieces of rhetoric, and the most extraordinary opportunities for female performers. In Boyd's RSC production the concern mainly manifested itself in the over-simplification of the female characters into out and out villains, preoccupied with their sexuality, and in Bell's production it was both.

The productions of *The Taming of the Shrew* show that modern squabbles over the morals and sexual politics of the play have not resulted in a sense of obligation in directors to take a radical position on the material. Doran's RSC and Lloyd's Globe productions both supplied basically conservative readings, with some implication that the contextualising circumstances would provide additional commentary: Fletcher's companion piece in the case of Doran, the all-female casting for Lloyd. Parker, rather differently, found other things to interest her, mining the play for commentary on the commercial nature of marriage arrangements, and the different ways men and women have found to negotiate the best bargain for themselves.

Of the plays included here, it's possible that *Much Ado About Nothing* speaks most easily to modern notions of gender relationships and the female voice. Directors seem to have found ways to marry concern for the norms of gendered power relations with the desire to offer an audience a romantic comedy. Donnellan showed an interest in the way groups of men use women to form and seal bonds between them, and the way women then have to negotiate a way to be included, and even to be regarded as

persons. Esbjornson's production was interested both in the idea of seemingly tough people opening themselves up to emotion and vulnerability, and to some degree in the larger story of an old style of conducting relationships giving way to newer versions. Elliott's RSC production was the most overtly concerned with the roles women are asked to play as icons of chastity. Tamsin Greig's Beatrice was fighting those expectations at every step, and the circumstances of what happened to Hero eventually worked to persuade everyone else of the foolhardiness of such attitudes.

All three Isabellas represented here were shining lights in caves of dark corruption all the way through the performance, which makes it tempting to believe that the idea of Isabella as 'humanised' or 'rescued' by the Duke has passed out of fashion. The potential power of female eloquence was most forcefully made central by Arundell, in Phillips's production. Though Frederick showed grit, McBurney was more interested in corruption and surveillance than debate on the power of mercy, so her function at the conclusion of the play was to represent one of the comments on these themes, rather than as a character who has made a contribution of her own to some of the play's more metaphysical questions. That McGlinchey was only interested in titillation showed her production to be a part of that portion of popular culture that tells us that what a woman says cannot possibly compete in interest with the shapeliness of her legs, which makes Shakespeare's depiction of Angelo as unmoved by 'strumpets' but attracted by a theological argument with Isabella look startlingly progressive.

The productions of *Pericles* gave three very different Marinas, proving that an apparently slight role can be imbued with fine distinctions of personality. Tanaka's Marina was riveting and powerful where Uhiara's was much more self-effacing, but in the end both the Ninagawa and Cooke productions returned their main focus to Pericles during the last two scenes in such a way that Marina disappeared as an individual with opinions and agency. Neither showed Marina as a party (albeit necessarily a silent one, if using an unmodified text) to the negotiation of her marriage, and in Ninagawa's, Marina as a distinguishable person was pragmatically erased, as she wore a heavy veil for the conclusion to allow for Tanaka's doubling as Thaisa. Nayler, in Petheridge's

production, came closest to showing Marina as exhibiting the virtue of shrewishness, though not out of any overt political intention.

Not only Hermione, but Paulina too are firmly situated in modern performance as positive figures, even with their unruly tongues. Many reviewers made clear how much they take delight in watching Paulina blaze her way through the sickly Sicilian court. When it came to prioritising the experience of the different characters, however, two of the three productions showed the suffering of men to remain of the greatest importance. Hall and Donnellan both went to a great deal of trouble to displace the women from centre stage in the final moments of the play, and replace them with a moment of silent communication between father and son. Hytner's was the only one of the three that allowed female experience to remain the focal point, or gave Hermione's suffering as much weight as that of Leontes or Mamillius.

These are just a few examples of the way Shakespeare's female characters are being staged today. What they can do is suggest the beginnings of a set of questions that the interested audience member can continue to ask of the productions we see and the people who stage them. They suggest that we should never passively accept what we are shown about a character, but can and should keep asking who is telling us, and what their own motives are. Consulting textual and literary critics in conjunction with reviewers, and also examining the writing of actors and directors, shows something of the range of ways that people respond to a performance depending on the nature of that person's investment in it. It also becomes apparent how much variation in those responses is created by whether or not someone is actively concerned with gender, and sometimes, how a position that presents as unconcerned with gender can quickly default to a misogynist one. A production inevitably invites an audience to judge characters and events critically or sympathetically and to identify with some characters over others. The same character can be made to appear malicious or foolish or unappealing, or attractive and admirable, and while audience members will never all respond the same way, the director, designer and actors will give pointers indicating what response they expect. This is never more the case than in the presentation of

transgressive female speech, which has such a history of being weighed and judged. As a spectator who has an interest in how gender relations are represented, applying a feminist standpoint makes it possible to come to a performance with the tools to draw out the production's attitudes to character, to sexual politics, and to women. These can be applied both in situations where we are analysing a performance for written or academic purposes, and when we are watching a performance with no other end in mind than the enjoyment of the show.

A sound first step would be the vigilant cessation of presenting things the characters say as if they are what Shakespeare says. If Lord Talbot calls Jeanne la Pucelle a strumpet it is highly misleading to declare 'Shakespeare characterises Jeanne as a strumpet', or any equivalent statement. Once we stop assuming that anything that is said about a character should without question describe how we see a character, a wider space opens up for performance choices for the actor.

Awareness of what is being cut from the text is instructive. Cuts are almost inevitable in modern performance but it is far from typical to see them distributed proportionately, and so it can be revealing to consider what the women are not saying that they could be. If Isabella's lines about corruption in her Act II soliloquy are cut, for example, her speech becomes weighted towards the expectations she has of her brother and away from her critique of Angelo as failing in his role as a representative of the state. This may create a sense of the character as more concerned with her personal problems than with larger ethical questions.

It is important to consider what clues the designer offers on how the audience is to take the character. The female body on stage has often been overtly sexualised by her costume. This has frequently been accompanied by an implication that this is where her power resides. The spectator must then weigh up whether this affects the likelihood of her being taken seriously, by the other characters in the play or by the audience. The physical appearance of the character may give strong hints as to whether the audience is being asked to identify with her, or to judge her.

The degree of agency shown in the actions of the female characters will greatly influence the way their voice is perceived by the audience. When they speak, the production will show whether what they say has an influence on their auditors, or else portray it as peripheral or ineffectual. The difference between public and private speech is significant, so it is worth noting which of these the female characters engage in, and whether it could be otherwise. For instance, observe Boyd's removal of the additional character from the scene of Jeanne's first meeting with the Dauphin. A scene that is written as a public display of power was used instead to set up an implication of an intimate, private relationship. This will have an effect on perceptions of the kind of power the character is exerting.

In watching a production, we might question what range of emotions the women express, and what response it generates. Do they ever show anger, rebellion or disdain, or any characteristics not usually associated with docile, socially approved women? If they do, the next step is to assess whether they are punished for it, and if they are, whether the punishment is represented as being good for them, or amusing and satisfying for the audience. Bear in mind that representations of good and bad outcomes might not be as simple as they appear. A radiant Katherina who saves a troubled Petruccio may invite us to infer a happy ending to *The Taming of the Shrew*, but only if we accept the reforming of a man as a woman's highest purpose, whatever she herself goes through.

Actors, of course, do not work in isolation, but interact with and respond to the others in the scene, so we should analyse the response the actor demonstrates to the way her character is treated by other characters. When she has lines, her body language may suggest an assumed right to speech, or may appear more deferential or apologetic. Equally, when she has no lines, there is the opportunity for discernable reactions to events that affect her character, and this may take the form of acquiescence or protest. In the case of Marina, for example, we as an audience might be asked to believe that she is pleased by the marriage negotiations made on her behalf, or we could be offered

something less docile in her response. It would be no less telling, when discerning the attitude conveyed in a production, to find that the director has forgotten about her.

The most important question of all is whether the experiences of the female characters are being given equal weight to those of the male. A production can encourage the possibility of identifying with the female characters, or it can render them mere facilitators of a story about the men. If the circumstances of the narrative put the female characters in a position where they are likely to suffer, or to be angry, or to rebel, or to be conflicted by a decision, a feminist standpoint demands that we ask whether the actors representing them are being given the opportunity to express all these things, and then, crucially, whether that expression is treated with respect.

In a world that repeatedly signalled that the best kind of woman is a silent one, Shakespeare drew all kinds of situations where this is demonstrably not the case. Most crudely he showed Katherina needing to speak in order to demonstrate her willingness to support the status quo. More ingeniously he showed Marina as able to maintain her virtue only through her insistence on speaking. Finally he showed Paulina's voice as stage-managing a longed-for happy ending. In the end the shrew figures in these plays suggest that, for a woman, virtuous silence is not enough. There are times when speech is demanded, or disaster will fall. Theatre is the way we interpret the world for ourselves. Observing and analysing the choices made by theatre practitioners, and listening to the responses of spectators shows us what people are looking for in stories about themselves. Observing what people ask of Shakespeare's shrews can continue to show us how prepared we are to accept the prospect of hearing what we may not want to hear from the tongue of a woman.

Appendix: Primary Productions Referenced

Henry VI

Director: Michael Boyd
Company: Royal Shakespeare Company (Britain)
Venue: Swan Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon
Opened: 11 December 2000
Jeanne & Margaret: Fiona Bell
Venue: Courtyard Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon
Opened: 7 July 2006
Jeanne & Margaret: Katy Stephens
Archival material used: video taken press night, 13 December 2000, production photographs, promptbook (held by Shakespeare Centre Library)

Director: John Bell
Company: Bell Shakespeare Company (Australia)
Venue: Opera House Playhouse, Sydney; and touring
Opened: 9 March 2005
Jeanne: Georgia Adamson Margaret: Blazey Best
Archival material used: edited script, production photographs, programme, education kit, review file (supplied by Bell Shakespeare Company)

Director: Barrie Rutter
Company: Northern Broadsides (Britain)
Venue: West Yorkshire Playhouse
Opened: 24 March 2006
Jeanne: Maeve Larkin Margaret: Helen Sheals
Archival material used: edited script, production photographs, programme, review file (supplied by Northern Broadsides)

The Taming of the Shrew

Director: Gregory Doran
Company: Royal Shakespeare Company (Britain)
Venue: Shakespeare Memorial Theatre
Opened: 9 April 2003
Katherina: Alexandra Gilbreath
Archival material used: video recorded press night 11 April 2003, production photographs (held by Shakespeare Centre Library)

Director: Phyllida Lloyd
Company: Shakespeare's Globe (Britain)
Venue: Globe Theatre, London
Opened: 20 August 2003
Katherina: Kathryn Hunter
Archival material used: video recorded press night 22 August 2003, programme, Globe newsletter (held by Shakespeare's Globe Archives)

Director: Lynne Parker
Company: Rough Magic (Ireland)
Venue: Project Arts Centre, Dublin
Opened: 6 March 2006
Katherina: Pauline McLynn
Performance observed live 7 March 2006

Much Ado About Nothing

Director: Declan Donnellan
Company: Cheek by Jowl (Britain)
Venue: Everyman Theatre, Cheltenham; Playhouse Theatre, London; and toured extensively in Britain and Europe
Opened: 12 February 1998
Beatrice: Saskia Reeves
Archival material used: video recorded at Playhouse Theatre, London, June 1998 (held by Victoria & Albert Museum)

Director: David Esbjornson
Company: New York Shakespeare Festival/New York Public Theater (U.S.A.)
Venue: Delacorte Theater, New York
Opened: 22 June 2004
Beatrice: Kristen Johnston
Archival material used: reviews, articles and interviews listed in bibliography

Director: Marianne Elliott
Company: Royal Shakespeare Company (Britain)
Venue: Swan Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon; Novello Theatre, London
Opened: 11 May 2006
Beatrice: Tamsin Greig
Performance observed live 22 June 2006 (Swan), 26 December 2006 (Novello)

Measure for Measure

Director: Simon Phillips
Company: Melbourne Theatre Company (Australia)
Venue: Playhouse Theatre, Melbourne
Opened: 11 March 2000
Isabella: Paula Arundell
Performance observed live 30 March 2000

Director: Simon McBurney
Company: Complicite/National Theatre (Britain)
Venue: Olivier Theatre
Opened: 19 May 2004
Venue: Lyttleton Theatre
Opened: 10 February 2006
Isabella: Naomi Frederick
Performance observed live 16 March 2006 (Lyttleton)

Director: Fiona McGlinchey
Company: Flagship (Britain)
Venue: SaLon Gallery, London; Pod Nightclub, Dublin
Opened: 10 November 2006
Isabella: Sarah-Jayne Quigley
Performance observed live 17 November 2006 (Pod)

Pericles

Director: Jonathan Petherbridge
Company: London Bubble (Britain)
Venue: Toured outdoor venues in London and Essex: Valentines Park, Ilford, Essex; Old Royal Naval College Grounds; Chiswick House Grounds; Oxleas Woods; Three Mills Island; Dulwich Park
Opened: 25 July 2002
Marina: Polly Nayler
Archival material used: video recorded July 2002, programme, press kit (supplied by London Bubble)

Director: Yukio Ninagawa
Company: Hori Pro (Japan)
Venue: Olivier Theatre
Opened: 28 March 2003
Marina: Yuko Tanaka
Archival material used: video recorded 30 March 2003, production photographs, programme (held by Archives of the National Theatre)

Director: Dominic Cooke
Company: Royal Shakespeare Company (Britain)
Venue: Swan Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon
Opened: 15 November 2006
Marina: Ony Uhiara
Performance observed live 21 December 2006

The Winter's Tale

Director: Declan Donnellan
Company: Maly Drama Theatre (Russia)
Venue: Maly Theatre, St Petersburg
Opened: 1997
Venue: Touring regional Britain
Opened: 5 May 1999
Hermione: Natalia Akimova Paulina: Vera Bykova
Archival material used: reviews, articles and interviews listed in bibliography

Director: Nicholas Hytner
Company: National Theatre (Britain)
Venue: Olivier Theatre, London
Opened: 23 May 2001
Hermione: Claire Skinner Paulina: Deborah Findlay
Archival material used: video recorded 30 June 2001, promptbook, production photographs, programme (held by Archives of the National Theatre)

Director: Edward Hall
Company: Propeller (Britain)
Venue: Watermill Theatre, Newbury; Abbey Theatre, Dublin
Opened: 20 January 2005
Hermione: Simon Scardifield Paulina: Adam Levy
Performance observed live 30 September 2005 (Abbey)

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