

Casting and the construction of femininity in contemporary stagings of Shakespeare's plays.

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Declaration of Authorship

I, Sara Reimers, hereby declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is entirely my own. Where I have consulted the work of others, this is always clearly stated.

Signed: _____ Date: 23rd September 2016

Abstract

This thesis argues that close scrutiny of the outcome of casting decisions, and the material conditions in which those decisions are made, is essential to any interrogation of gender in performance. I contend that casting is central to the construction of theatrical meaning and that it has ramifications far beyond the individual theatrical event. Taking contemporary stagings of Shakespeare's plays as its focus, this study investigates the way in which gender difference is constructed through the embodied characteristics of performers and how this contributes to the depiction of femininity in contemporary Shakespearean performance.

My study is divided into three parts. The first section locates casting within a theoretical and practical context: I begin by identifying a number of theoretical perspectives through which the act of casting might be viewed and then offer a materialist examination of the process of casting plays in contemporary performance. I conclude this first section with a statistical analysis of the gender ratios of casts at the Royal Shakespeare Company and Shakespeare's Globe Theatre. The second section offers three case studies of "traditional" casting practices in recent stagings of Shakespeare's early comedies. These case studies foreground the way in which actors' embodied characteristics are used to construct gender in performance. Finally, the third section explores non-traditional casting approaches. Beginning with an examination of the ways in which single-sex casting might be seen both to destabilise and rearticulate normative notions of gender, I then envisage how a conscious engaging with certain embodied characteristics might facilitate a radical revisioning of femininity and masculinity in performance. In doing so, I aim to challenge the sexism enshrined in contemporary performance practice and offer a new approach, that destabilises the conventional construction of femininity in stagings of Shakespeare's plays.

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Introduction: Casting and the construction of femininity in contemporary stagings of Shakespeare's plays

“the image of a woman on stage participates directly in the dominant ideology of gender.” (Case, *Feminism and Theatre* 117)

Despite its very visible results, casting is a strangely invisible practice. As a process it takes place behind firmly closed doors and is often obfuscated, presented by those in the profession as something that is indefinable and instinctive. At the same time, it is a practice that is central to the realisation of dramatic texts in performance and myths of casting's significance dominate contemporary directing manuals, which state that in casting a play correctly between 75% (Murray 7) and 80% (Ball 10) of your work as a director is done. Yet, quite how one casts “correctly” is hard to define. Despite the assertion by many practitioners that casting is an artistic and aesthetic practice, it is also a political process: who is chosen to play whom is inherently linked to the dominant ideology in any given culture. In recent years casting practices have been increasingly scrutinised for their construction of racial and gendered identity, yet studies have tended to focus on examples of colourblind and cross-gender casting and all too often leave dominant, mainstream casting practices uninterrogated.

Building on the work of scholars who have explored non-traditional casting in relation to race, such as Ayanna Thompson and Angela Pao, and gender, such as Elizabeth Klett and James C. Bulman, this thesis takes as its focus the casting practices adopted at major professional producers of Shakespeare in England. In doing so I aim to address the fact that, at present, dominant casting practices receive relatively little critical scrutiny. I also will endeavour to demonstrate that the current privileging of white, male experience in contemporary theatre contributes to the construction of all gendered and racial identities onstage. Exploring the ideology inscribed in conventional casting practices, I aim to demonstrate that women are both underrepresented and misrepresented in contemporary

Shakespearean performance. Furthermore, I contend that casting traditions in the contemporary theatre reinforce the myth of gender as a biological certainty; theatre casting naturalises the gender binary, gendering embodied characteristics along masculine and feminine lines.

My study takes as its focus the staging of Shakespeare's plays at professional theatres in England over the last fifteen years. This geographical and temporal specificity is designed to offer a snapshot of Shakespearean performance in the theatrical and cultural landscape of England. My specific focus on England, rather than the UK, reflects the nature of arts funding in the British Isles, which is awarded differently to each constituent country, while my decision to focus on the first fifteen years of the millennium reflects the changing nature of casting ideology in this time. Experiments with cross-gender and colourblind casting were taking place at the end of the twentieth century, but over the last fifteen years there has been a blossoming of non-traditional casting practices in productions of Shakespeare, even in performances by large and traditionally conservative companies such as the Royal Shakespeare Company and the National Theatre.

In July 2014 the Arts Council England (ACE) stipulated that recipients of public subsidy must conduct audits of the actors they employ, though they are not legally obliged to monitor the number of actors whom they have auditioned (Rogers & Thorpe, "Interview" 487). While ACE later reneged on this stipulation, their intention to change their policy reflects the fact that the politics of casting is coming under increasing scrutiny and suggests a growing interest in the symbiotic relationship between theatre and society. It also hints at the relationship between artistic representation and the construction of national identity.

My study's focus on Shakespeare reflects his unique position in the western canon. A global brand, Shakespeare is a name that is synonymous with artistic excellence and, as a result, his work attains a degree of cultural prestige and attracts a wealth of funding unparalleled by any other writer or genre of live performance. Furthermore, Shakespeare occupies a unique position in the education system, as "the only writer whose work is a

compulsory part of the curriculum in British schools” (Rokison, *Shakespeare for Young People* 1). Shakespeare can be seen as representing a nostalgic and conservative force in British culture. Susan Bennett highlights this when she quotes from an advertisement for “Multicultural Shakespeare”:

Shakespeare stands as the ultimate dead white male: the pinnacle of an oppressive, canonical hierarchy and an ally of conservative elitism, patriarchal sovereignty, and colonial imperialism. (qtd. in *Performing Nostalgia* 21)

Yet, despite the potentially conservative force of the canon, Shakespeare’s work has also inspired innovation and a key aspect of this innovation is the challenge his work presents to the dominance of realism in contemporary performance.

Realism was an aesthetic movement that dominated art in the mid- to late 1800s, which “aimed to give an objective account of human psychological and social reality” (Pavis 302). Realist performance “presents iconic signs of the reality that inspires it” and, like other movements such as Naturalism, aims “to represent and imitate reality on stage” (Pavis 302). Linked with recorded media such as film and television drama, realism remains a dominant approach to staging in the twenty-first century. Applied to productions of Shakespeare, realism tends to present “acting [that] makes the text appear natural, downplaying literary and rhetorical effects, by stressing its spontaneous and psychological aspects” (Pavis 302). Psychological realism has dominated the interpretation of Shakespeare’s characters for many decades, but feminist scholars have criticised the ways in which realism “reifies the dominant culture’s inscription of traditional power relations between genders and classes” (J.Dolan, *The Feminist Spectator* 84). The rhetorical and metatheatrical elements of the Shakespearean text have the potential to subvert the conventions of realism. Furthermore, the fact that it has been Shakespeare’s works in which non-traditional casting practices such as single-sex, cross-gender, and colourblind casting have flourished over the

last few decades demonstrates the opportunities that his work provides for exploring expectations of casting.

By focusing specifically on stagings of Shakespeare's plays, the ideological implications of casting decisions become clearer than if I were to explore the casting of roles written by a realist playwright: early modern drama is not so prescriptive as realist drama in its requirements of the actor, as the age, race, and appearance of the character is rarely stated. Furthermore, the fact that Shakespeare wrote so few female roles means that they often take on a synecdochic function in the drama, reflecting the misogynist archetypes of virgin, mother, and whore. Understanding casting as an activity that constructs gender can help to render visible the way in which early modern and twenty-first century gender ideology interact on the contemporary stage.

Thesis Structure

My study begins by exploring the existing literature concerning casting, looking at how scholars have theorised five major casting practices: type-casting, doubling, colourblind casting, cross-gender casting, and celebrity casting. I then draw on a number of critical approaches through which it might be possible to theorise casting, providing a theoretical framework for my subsequent analyses. In this first chapter I draw on the work of theatre theorists, semioticians, and social scientists to demonstrate how a semiotic approach to reading performance, combined with an understanding of queer theory and aesthetic labour, can be a valuable tool to help to render visible the ideology in play on the contemporary stage.

In order to situate my discussion of casting within its cultural and material context, my second chapter looks specifically at the practice of theatrical casting today. Providing an overview of the practicalities of casting in professional English theatres, I outline the process of casting a play from the perspective of both those doing the casting (agents, casting directors, and directors) and those being cast (actors and performers), in order to explore each stage of the casting process. As well as the practicalities of casting, I also explore its relationship with the legal system,

looking at its engagement with anti-discrimination legislation and exploring its relationship with protected qualities, such as race, gender and age, but also other characteristics such as appearance and height.

The second half of Chapter Two features an analysis of the casting practices at Shakespeare's Globe Theatre and the Royal Shakespeare Company. Offering a statistical analysis of every major production mounted by the companies in the fifteen years since the millennium, I demonstrate the relationship between identity politics and an actor's employability, and build up a picture of the complexity of discrimination faced by actors according to their gender, race and age. Susan Bennett has recognised that these theatres are the site of Shakespearean authority in the UK and has suggested that they stage "performances that might be thought to carry particular and significant cultural/historical weight" ("The Presence of Shakespeare" 210). As scholarship rarely focuses on casting at these institutions and when it does, tends only to explore non-traditional casting practices, the ideology enshrined in their general practices of representation is hidden in plain sight. Exploring how the repertoire of these companies contributes to their approach to casting, I also consider recent examples of non-traditional casting and casting controversies at the Globe and RSC, exploring the ideology enshrined within their casting practice.

As companies their repertoire is very similar: they are both dedicated to the staging of Shakespeare's work, but they also programme seasons which include new writing and plays by other early modern dramatists. Their names reflect their claims to Shakespearean authority, with the "Royal" of the RSC demonstrating its cultural prestige and the use of Shakespeare's name in the Globe's title demonstrating its claims at authenticity through being a reconstruction of "Shakespeare's" theatre. As bastions of culture their work is world renowned and both companies frequently tour across the world and have also capitalised on the recent developments in recording live performance, screening their productions in cinemas worldwide. Yet, despite these similarities, the two venues are funded very differently, with the RSC attracting more than £15 million of

public subsidy every year and Shakespeare's Globe receiving no public funding whatsoever, thus facilitating a comparison between subsidised and commercial theatre practices.

The subsequent chapters explore casting's impact on performance, offering a performance analysis of three of Shakespeare's early comedies. In this section, I narrow the temporal scope of my study to consider only productions staged during the period of my research, analysing stagings that I viewed between 2012 and 2014. In doing so, I am able to respond specifically to performances from the perspective of this research project, as well as being better positioned to contextualise the production within its cultural milieu. I have seen all the productions live and, in all but two cases, I have also consulted archive recordings of the productions.¹ I consider productions mounted by the National Theatre, Shakespeare at the Tobacco Factory and Propeller Theatre Company, as well as by the RSC and Shakespeare's Globe. This broadening of my focus reflects the fact that, as theatre critic Susannah Clapp observed, the RSC is:

no longer unassailable as the prime interpreters [sic] of Shakespeare. The Globe grabs audiences by the scruff of the neck. The National, Donmar and Almeida have produced innovative productions; Bristol's Tobacco Factory regularly creates the most true. Then there is Edward Hall's small, rough-housing Propeller. ("*She Stoops*")

Broadening my scope slightly facilitates a comparison between approaches at major institutions and slightly smaller touring companies, as well as enabling me to focus only on performances staged during the period of my research. It also enables a consideration of the stagings' intertheatricality, a term coined by Jacky Bratton to describe "the elements and interactions that make up the whole web of mutual understanding between potential audiences and their players" (37). Exploring how the different productions speak to each other and the issues with which they engage can build up a picture of the current cultural fixations with which contemporary Shakespearean performance is engaging.

¹ The exceptions are Hilton's production of *Two Gentlemen* and Hall's *Shrew*, both of which I saw twice in the theatre.

My readings of performance are inevitably subjective, but by engaging with feminist and queer scholarship, I try to position my analysis of gender construction in dialogue with theoretical discourses, demonstrating how the casting of Shakespeare's plays engages with wider social beliefs about gender and identity. To help contextualise my readings of performance I also draw on newspaper and online reviews, blogs, and academic performance analyses. As Roberta Barker has demonstrated "Theatre reviews open a window on the range of interpretations to which a particular production was subject and the ways in which those interpretations reflected the investments of particular viewers" (23). For this reason, I utilise reviews to provide a context for my own interpretations, offering an alternative perspective on the performance.

I utilise a semiotic approach to the actor's body on stage, exploring how the particular stagings might be read as constructing gender through the embodied characteristics of the performers. Beginning with *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, I consider the way in which beauty is constructed on stage, exploring how characteristics such as age, race, and appearance contribute to the construction of desirable femininity in performance and also how Julia's cross-gender disguise relates to the idolisation of female beauty in performance. I take Andrew Hilton's 2013 staging for Shakespeare at the Tobacco Factory and Simon Godwin's 2014 production for the Royal Shakespeare Company as case study examples of recent approaches to casting this play.

The subsequent chapter considers the depiction of Luce in *The Comedy of Errors*, exploring how the casting of the minor role of the fat kitchen maid contributes to the construction of the femininity in the play more generally and how the depiction of fat femininity ties into discourses about race, class, and "inferior bodies" in contemporary society. In this chapter I use Dominic Cooke's 2011 staging at the National Theatre and Amir Nizar Zuabi's 2012 production for the RSC as contrasting examples of the depiction of fat in contemporary classical performance. Chapter Five turns to *The Taming of the Shrew* and looks at how productions at the Royal

Shakespeare Company (Bailey, 2012) and Shakespeare's Globe (Frow, 2012) used height to foreground the notion of gender difference, infantilising their Katherinas and pursuing a comic agenda through the naturalisation of gender roles through oppositional casting.

The focus of the first chapter in the third section stays with *Shrew*, exploring the queer potential of single-sex casting and the extent to which non-traditional casting might destabilise the gender binary. Looking at Propeller's all-male staging (Hall 2013) and the Globe's all-female staging (Murphy 2013) I demonstrate that occasional disruption of the gender binary was absorbed into a conservative gender ideology in which recruitment was founded on the idea of a stable, biologically-defined gender. Developing the ideas of the previous chapter, Chapter Seven explores the possibility of creating a casting methodology that actively engages with the problem of Shakespeare's depiction of gender. Drawing on Brechtian and queer theory, I argue that the use of selective cross-casting and the rejection of a hegemonic aesthetic in terms of body-type can playfully subvert the misogyny in Shakespeare's work, foregrounding the importance of casting as a creative and ideological process.

Chapter One: Casting in Theory

“Discussions about non-traditional casting are not about art and tradition. They are about economics, politics, religion, and race.” (Breuer 22)

Introduction

As with everything located within the theatrical frame, the actor is a signifier: a sign that stands for the represented character. The body of the actor comes to stand for the body of the character, their voice the character’s voice. An actor in performance signifies on a uniquely complex range of levels – far more complex than inanimate stage signifiers such as props or set – as the social meaning of the body and the cultural connotations of its appearance, voice, and agency, combine with theatrical traditions of signification. Casting is a process through which the real becomes fictional and the fictional becomes real, as the real person of the actor is selected to become the fictional character and the fictional character is embodied and rendered “real” through the agency of the actor.

Casting is central to the artistic process, an activity that is seen by practitioners as key to staging a drama successfully, and as a result is an inherently creative act; it is also a social process, in which the meanings associated with identity in the wider culture can be reasserted or challenged through the means of representation. In this sense, casting is fundamentally a political act: on the one hand it deals in questions of representation and on the other it is an employment issue. Ashley Thorpe articulates the complexity of the process when he observes that:

Casting establishes both a theatrical and a social narrative *through* a body, a narrative that interweaves the aesthetic, cultural, socio-political, and economic constructs into a specific moment in history. (440 – emphasis original)

Developing this idea, Thorpe suggests that “Casting *produces* bodies” (emphasis added), and that this production is always in “relation to dominant discursive modes and to particular socio-political and economic modes in history” (441). It is this process of producing bodies, and the

frameworks through which they might be viewed, with which this chapter is concerned.

In the first half of this chapter I provide an overview of existing scholarship in the field of casting, paying particular attention to the terminology that has been developed to describe a range of casting practices. With no existing model for approaching the relationship between casting and performance, I then go on to consider how a variety of different theoretical methods might be used to approach casting in performance. In this second section, I draw on the field of semiotics, cultural materialism, and feminist and queer theory, to create a framework through which the construction of the body in casting might be understood. In this way, this chapter will ground my research in casting's theoretical context, before I go on to consider the practicalities of casting in the chapters that follow.

Section One: Critical Approaches to Casting

Type-casting and Doubling

Most of the existing scholarship on casting has developed from an exploration of casting practices that in some way are considered non-standard. Yet there exists some terminology surrounding practices common in mainstream contemporary theatres, which is worthy of exploration. For example, type-casting is commonly practised in contemporary theatres. Defined by the *Oxford English Dictionary* as:

The casting of an actor in a role or roles for which he [sic] appears to be physically or temperamentally suited or of a kind in which he has been successful; the fact of being so cast. Also *transf.* and in extended use, representation as a stereotype or stereotypes. ("Type-casting")

The link between type-casting and stereotyping is significant, as it foregrounds the role that social expectations play in the casting process and emphasises its political nature. As Ewen and Ewen state on the website accompanying their monograph *Typecasting*:

Stereotypes are culturally conditioned reflexes that we carry around in our heads. To a large extent they shape how we will define other people even before we see them. In the media, and in the theatre of politics and power, stereotypes are routinely employed to stir up public emotions while systematically side-stepping thought. (“Stereotype and Society”)

Type-casting draws on cultural expectations and is often used as a shorthand on stage and screen, telling the audience something about a character before they speak.² Indeed, type-casting can prove central to defining the genre of a performance, as Richard Dyer observes: “The star’s presence in a film is a promise of a certain kind of thing that you would see if you went to see the film” (*Heavenly Bodies* 5). Dyer is one of the few scholars who has explored the ideology enshrined in social stereotypes and the way in which casting articulates them through the bodies of actors (*The Matter of Images*).

When theatre trades in stereotypes, it has an impact far beyond the auditorium, as research has found that:

Gender stereotypes are seen as centrally implicated in the existence and persistence of unequal outcomes in terms of employment and pay and the elimination of these stereotypes in education, training and culture is seen as a key factor in achieving other aims such as equal economic independence for women and men. (Dean, “Age” 7)

Type-casting might be considered a constituent component of stereotyping, perpetuating reductive views about gender difference and in doing so contributing to the marginalisation of women in wider society. Yet, as a practice type-casting tends to be overlooked – rendered imperceptible by its association with the conventions of realism – and its ideology is rarely interrogated.

Perhaps one of the reasons why type-casting is rarely scrutinised is because it has become such a commonly used convention that it is almost invisible, to such an extent that it is even applied retrospectively, and anachronistically, to the work of Shakespeare.³ Paul Menzer has observed “scholarly work [...] seeks predictable casting patterns predicated upon

² I use “they” as a gender-neutral singular pronoun in place of he/she.

³ The *Oxford English Dictionary* notes the first use of the term type-casting as applied to theatre or film practice was in 1927.

“type” (142), a term that he notes is derived from print metaphors. He argues that:

we have been urged to believe that actors pursued dramatically consistent “lines” – another print metaphor – that depended above all on a consistency of histrionic approach. (142)

Yet, Menzer argues, the conditions of early modern theatre were at odds with such an approach, because “repertory playing requires if not relies upon versatility” (143) and cites the success of Richard Burbage not only in weighty tragic roles such as Hamlet, Lear and Macbeth, but also comic roles such as Malvolio.⁴ While there is evidence that actors in the Shakespearean company may have specialised in particular role-types – Will Kempe and Robert Armin are known to have played Shakespeare’s clowns for example – casting defined by role-type and physical characteristics did not develop until at least two and a half centuries later.

The Oxford English Dictionary dates the term “type-casting” to the 1920s, though it was a practice in operation in the Victorian and Edwardian music hall repertory systems. In their history of repertory theatre, Rowell and Jackson observe the types of character tracks available to actors in the repertory company:

The characters proclaimed their cut, being labelled ‘Comedy Lead’; ‘Character Comedy’; ‘1st Old Man’ (usually fat); ‘2nd Old Man’ (usually thin); ‘1st Old Woman’ (proportions unspecified); ‘Singing Chambermaid’ (brilliance more important than bed-making); down to the humble ‘Utility’ and ‘Walking Gentleman’ (so called because he seldom talked). (8)

That these types specify particular embodied characteristics, “usually fat” and “usually thin”, as well as gender and age, in addition to the performance skills required of the role, be it comic timing or ability to sing, reflects the way in which the practice trades in stereotypes. Furthermore, it foregrounds the fact that type-casting not only requires the actor to have

⁴ There is a degree of critical debate about Burbage’s role in *Twelfth Night*, with which Menzer does not engage. Lois Potter suggests that Burbage may have played Orsino or Sir Toby, but concludes that it is most likely that he played Malvolio (35).

a particular set of skills, but also to look a certain way, a point to which I will return in the next chapter.

Doubling

An interest in the theatrical past has also influenced the study of another casting practice, namely doubling. The work of scholars such as A.C. Sprague and T.J. King has shown that doubling of some roles was commonplace on the early modern stage, with “an average of ten men in principal male roles [...] and four boys in principal female roles” (King 1). Doubling is also routinely used in contemporary performances of Shakespeare’s plays. Its ubiquity on stage has led to some rudimentary theorisation of doubling, but much of the work on doubling from the early to mid twentieth century is enshrined in the nineteenth century idea that “Doubling was a sign of deficiency in the company practicing it” (Sprague 12) and was not used by any of the great actor-managers such as William Macready, Charles Kean, or Henry Irving (Sprague 8). Sprague coins the term “deficiency doubling” to describe a casting practice that, constrained by space, time, or money, is unable to employ a “full” company and utilised doubling for practical reasons. Sprague’s second category, “emergency doubling”, has similar connotations of necessity. However, in the case of emergency doubling, this would normally be in the event of illness or other misfortune befalling a cast member. These two practical categories of doubling, are contrasted with the artistic practice of “virtuoso doubling” which celebrated an actor’s skill, foregrounding their ability to transform themselves into different characters.

Writing a quarter of a century later, Ralph Berry borrowed from Sprague to coin the terms “full casting” and “austere casting” to define productions that have one actor for every role and those that utilise doubling respectively. Berry adds the practice of “conceptual doubling” to Sprague’s definitions, which he sees as practised by the Royal Shakespeare Company. In conceptual doubling:

the director looks beyond numbers, and beyond the physical characteristics of the acting corps, to couplings which have an underground linkage. (*Shakespeare in Performance* 8)

Conceptual doubling forms a link between the two roles through the person of the actor. Thus in order to be effective, the audience must be aware of the actor's presence in both roles, they cannot completely be subsumed into their role.

In 2010 Coen Heijes developed the work of Sprague and Berry into a taxonomy of doubling, which divides conceptual doubling into a number of more specific categories. Like Sprague and Berry he classifies his taxonomy along practical and artistically significant lines, including emergency and necessity doubling in the former category, and narrative, functional, thematic, relational, interactional, and resonant in the latter category (54).⁵ While the scrutiny of casting practices for their theatrical meaning is clearly an important endeavour, I would argue that this attempt to categorise doubling practices overlooks the material conditions in which theatre is being produced and treats performance as literary criticism. The distinction between "practical" and "significant" doubling seems arbitrarily determined by the spectator, who cannot know how a casting decision was reached, and while Sprague acknowledges that "The line between deficiency and virtuoso doubling remains hard to draw" (16), he nonetheless attempts to ascribe a definitive motivation to doubling choices. Even a director might be unable to position their practice within this binary, as practical doubling might take on an unanticipated significance in performance, just as significant doubling might also serve a practical purpose. Thus, the negative connotations of "deficiency", "emergency", and "necessity" anachronistically posit doubling as an undesirable practice.

⁵ I would expand Heijes's taxonomy to include a category of "identity doubling", defined as the casting of an actor in one or more roles in a single production for which their gender, race, or age is significant for all parts.

While attempts to categorise doubling may have only proved a limited success, the work lays the foundation for theorisation, grounded in theatre studies and the material conditions of production, and these may open up new avenues of interrogation. Particularly interesting is the critical consensus that there can be an artistic benefit to having one actor play several characters. Doubling fell out of favour when realism was at its height, presumably because it disrupts the straightforward relationship between actor and role, but it has since become an accepted theatrical convention, even in realist drama. It is now an accepted staging practice and its pejorative associations have all-but vanished in contemporary performance. This may make doubling a practice worth considering alongside more controversial approaches to casting, such as cross-gendered or colourblind casting, as it may help to explore the ideology enshrined in the acceptance or rejection of particular casting conventions.

Non-traditional casting

The most sustained critical engagement with casting practice can be placed under the umbrella term of “non-traditional casting”. The Non-Traditional Casting Project defined the term as:

the casting of ethnic, female, or disabled actors in roles where race, ethnicity, gender or physical capability are not necessary to the characters’ or plays’ development. (“Beyond Tradition” qtd. in Pao, *No Safe Spaces* 1)

Thus, practices such as colourblind or cross-gender casting might be included under this general heading. It has, however, proved a controversial term. Lee Breuer dismisses the idea of non-traditional casting, because it implies that there can be such a thing as *traditional* casting, which he argues “is an unrealizable fantasy” (22). The term also suggests a misleading degree of consistency in casting practices. For example, single-sex casting in contemporary theatre productions might be classed as non-traditional. However, as a practice it has its roots in the all-male stages of ancient Greece and early modern England. Conversely, as Angela Pao has argued, the term also highlights that casting is founded on

“historical convention” rather than representing “a truthful correspondence to reality” (*No Safe Spaces* 5). Furthermore, in its engagement with “both the people affected and the approaches developed”, Pao considers it an inclusive term (5).

Other terms that could be used might be alternative casting and non-standard casting, but again, these terms are problematic as they risk implying that white, androcentric theatre is somehow neutral. Integrated and inclusive casting are terms favoured by the actors’ trade union, Equity, who champion a casting practice that is representative of the diversity of contemporary society (Equity Report). However, such terms cannot be used to describe segregated casting choices such as single-sex or cross-cultural casting and so, despite its limitations, I use the term non-traditional casting as an umbrella term for casting practices that disrupt the iconicity of realist casting. A brief overview of the theorisation of these practices is provided below.

Colourblind Casting

In colourblind casting, race is seen to have “no semiotic value on stage” (A.Thompson, *Passing* 77). In this way colourblind casting “asserts a radical split between the theatrical and the actual, claiming a certain autonomy for the representational space of the stage” (Pao, “Recasting” 14). Colourblind casting allows actors of any race to perform alongside each other in any role, familial or otherwise, without any theatrical meaning being ascribed to their racial difference. In this way, it developed as a meritocratic model of casting in which talent was considered more important to performance than the semiotic of racial identity. It is a practice that can be traced back to American director Joseph Papp, who in the inaugural New York Shakespeare Festival “envisioned a theatre in which race would have no reliable signification in performance” (A.Thompson, “Practicing” 4). Papp was committed to casting the best actor for the role, making talent “the sole casting criterion” while race became “a completely irrelevant issue” (qtd. in J.Rogers, “The Shakespearean Glass Ceiling” 407).

The theory surrounding colourblind casting is complex, as Ayanna Thompson notes when she observes that its “theoretical underpinnings are so unstable that they make the practice itself not only one practice but a set of practices that not only are in competition with one another but are also deconstructing one another” (6). While Papp envisaged colourblind casting as an employment practice that sought the best actor for the job, regardless of race, there is a strong case that in some performance contexts race should be perceived. For example, it would be inappropriate for a white actor to play Othello, when there are already significantly fewer casting opportunities available to black actors. There is also the argument that casting a BAME (black, Asian or minority ethnic) actor in a role usually conceived of as white can bring a new resonance to the politics of performance, but this is only possible if the audience “see” the actor’s race, in which case colourblind might become colour-conscious. As a result of this wide variety of practices, a range of terminology has been developed to determine the theoretical differences between approaches to casting and racial identity in performance.

Angela Pao identifies four types of colourblind practice and makes the important point that, while often used interchangeably, “Each type assumes a different relationship between representation and reality” and therefore terminology should be used accurately (“Recasting” 14). The most widely used term is “colourblind casting” in which an actor’s race is not considered to have semiotic significance. As Pao suggests: “The audience is asked to accept situations and relationships that rarely if ever correspond to actual experience and that invariably contradict or disregard both history and biology” (“Recasting” 14). In this context family members may be of different ethnicities, with no theatrical significance attributed to this decision.⁶

⁶ Daniel Banks problematises the biological certainty that colourblind casting appears to challenge, stating that as a practice it can risk perpetuating “sociological and biological fictions, which create a form of “law” in the cultural imaginary” (3).

“Societal casting” employs actors in roles that they might play in society. In doing so it “preserves the traditional mimetic relationship between the world of social realities and the realm of dramatic representation” (“Recasting” 14). This practice may open up additional roles to BAME actors, however, the quality of the roles provided can be lacking, as societal casting has a tendency to rely on racial stereotypes.⁷ Societal casting is closely associated with the politics of realism and is a practice that aims for verisimilitude.

“Conceptual casting” uses the racial identity of an actor to make a social comment. Ralph Berry cites an example of the character of De Flores being played by black actor George Harris in Richard Eyre’s 1988 production of *The Changeling* at the National Theatre; this casting decision might be considered conceptual because it was used to explore how racism functioned as a form of social oppression (“Shakespeare and Integrated Casting” 36). In a similar vein “cross-cultural casting” relocates the world of a play to a specific cultural context, with a “wholesale transposition of the action of a play into another cultural milieu” (Pao, “Recasting” 15). Yellow Earth’s 2006 production of *King Lear* directed by David Tse Ka-Shing which relocated the action of the play to Shanghai is an example of how cross-cultural casting can contribute to new readings of Shakespeare’s plays, whilst simultaneously affording greater visibility to actors from ethnic minorities.

Pao points out that in the case of both conceptual and cross-cultural casting: “The desired impact can only be achieved if spectators not only notice the color of the actors but simultaneously activate their consciousness of the social, historical, political, and cultural implications of racial difference” (“Recasting” 15). In doing so, the casting can “move a

⁷ Actor Daniel York has highlighted the negative impact that stereotyping has on the employment prospects of British East Asian actors, stating: “The whole industry is reluctant to cast east Asians in non-race specific roles. We are generally only thought of as the Chinese takeaway man or the Japanese businessman” (qtd. in Trueman “East Asian actors”).

production from the field of artistic representation to that of cultural criticism” (15). As with societal casting, conceptual and cross-cultural casting are realist in approach, adopting a mimetic approach to the society which they represent. Colourblind casting is arguably more radical, as it envisages the possibility that race is not an inevitable aspect of social categorisation and, as Ayanna Thompson has noted, can foreground the materiality of race (“Theorising” 15). However, as Thompson continues, colourblind casting can also risk “whitewashing” experience, rendering race invisible and in doing so, obscuring the fact that racism remains endemic in Anglo-American culture.⁸ As well as the ideological limitations of the practice, in the theatre, the apparent meritocratic model of colourblind casting can obfuscate the unique challenges facing actors of colour and the racism inherent in mainstream casting practices. In “*The Welcome Table: Casting for an Integrated Society*” Daniel Banks argues that, while colourblind casting made an important contribution to the theatre industry, “the terms themselves have now ossified a collective imaginary within the theatre, which works against their original progressive intentions and inhibits practices from changing” (1). The next chapter will explore some of the evidence supporting Banks’ claim and consider how gender and race relate to casting opportunities at the RSC and Shakespeare’s Globe.

In addition to the four terms defined by Pao, other terminology which relates to race and casting includes “colour-conscious” casting, which might be an umbrella term for societal, conceptual and cross-cultural casting, in which the race of the cast is used for its semiotic value, and “authentic” casting, which Rogers and Thorpe define as meaning that the actors “*look like* they are from, or have heritage pertaining to, the geographical location of the performance” (“Controversial Company” 428 – emphasis original). The question of authenticity of any sort, however, is

⁸ August Wilson famously attested that colourblind casting functions as a form of cultural imperialism, ensuring that the work of white, European playwrights, directors, and predominantly white casts, is the default (see Wilson *The Ground on Which I Stand*).

fraught. Kathleen LeBesco quotes E. Patrick Johnson's warning that authenticity is a concept "manipulated for cultural capital" (Johnson qtd. LeBesco 237), adding:

"blackness" does not belong to any one individual or group. Rather, individuals or groups *appropriate* this complex and nuanced racial signifier in order to circumscribe its boundaries or to exclude other individuals or groups. When blackness is appropriated to the exclusion of others, identity becomes political... (qtd. in LeBesco 237)

Yet, for all its limitations, Johnson does acknowledge that "authenticating discourse enables marginalised people to counter oppressive representations of themselves" (qtd. LeBesco 237) and it is this aspect of the casting practice that Thorpe and Rogers explore. The terms explored here enable a nuanced engagement with the way in which practitioners use the signification of race in their casting. As with any attempt to theorise a practice, they are inevitably unstable and potentially subjective. However, they offer a useful starting point for exploring how an actor's appearance contributes to meaning on stage.

Cross-gender Casting

It is perhaps misleading to include cross-gender casting under the banner of non-traditional casting, as it has a long tradition in Western theatre. Indeed, Marjorie Garber suggests, "it might be contended that transvestite theater is the *norm*, not the aberration - that what we today regard as "natural" in theatrical representations (men playing men's parts, women playing women) is itself a peculiar troping off, and from, the transvestite norm" (39). While all-male companies were the mainstay of ancient Greek theatre and the playhouses of Shakespeare's London, high-profile female performers regularly played Shakespeare's heroes from the Restoration through to the beginning of the twentieth century (Garber 37). Yet in the twenty-first century - perhaps as a result of the influence of film - realism has come to dominate theatrical styles and cross-gender casting has been relegated to specific theatrical genres, such as the pantomime. In the majority of performance contexts actors are expected to play

characters with which their gender aligns. The last fifteen years have seen a growing interest in cross-gender casting, but it remains on the margins of contemporary theatre practice.

Like colourblind casting, cross-gender casting might be considered an umbrella term for what is actually a variety of approaches to representing gender on stage. Elizabeth Klett has observed the abundance of terms used by critics and even scholars to refer to cross-gender casting in performance, which include “androgynous,” “butch,” “cross-cast,” “cross-dressed,” “cross-gendered,” “effeminate,” “gender-bending,” “in drag,” “sexless,” “transgendered,” “transsexual,” “transvestite,” and “unisex” (3). As Klett points out, many of these terms are subjective (androgynous, butch, effeminate), medicalised (transgendered, transsexual, transvestite), or ambiguous (cross-cast, sexless, unisex) and for this reason I will not be employing them in this study. Instead, I will apply the umbrella term of cross-gender casting to instances where the actor’s gender identity does not match that of the character as written and then analyse the way in which the cross-gender casting was framed theatrically.

There are two main approaches to the depiction of the cross-cast actor that might represent two ends of a spectrum of transvestite possibilities, namely passing and drag. At the passing end of the spectrum the actor and character’s gender appear to align. As Jennifer Drouin observes it is an act “in which the performance of gender itself is disguised” (23-24). In a performance context in which actors are required to market themselves as gendered subjects, complete passing is unlikely to be achieved, as production materials are likely to include cast lists, biographies, and credits for performers, all of which are likely to gender the actor. However, passing is nonetheless a useful term, as it describes a performance context in which the spectator is encouraged to invest in the gender performed by the actor. For example, writing about Tim Carrol’s all-male production of *Twelfth Night* at Shakespeare’s Globe in 2002, Abigail Rokison asserted that when watching Eddie Redmayne play Viola at

Middle Temple Hall “one quickly forgot that one was watching a boy” (“Authenticity” 74). Rokison’s assertion suggests that in his performance as Viola, Redmayne “passed” as female, even though Rokison knew that she was watching a male performer in a female role.

At the other end of the spectrum is drag, a form of crossing that playfully draws attention to the gap between the gendered body of the actor and the gendered signification of costume. Drag performance uses the gap between signifier and signified for comic effect. Judith Butler argues that drag is a form of gender parody and that “In imitating gender, drag implicitly reveals the imitative structure of gender itself – as well as its contingency” (*Gender Trouble* 137). With its playful engagement with gender performativity and bold sexuality, drag is often figured as a more radical approach than passing to cross-gender performance. It is possible that passing appears more prosaic because of its links with what Marjorie Garber has described as a “progress narrative” in which a crossing occurs because of “socio-economic necessity” (69) rather than for reasons of gender subversion or sexual pleasure.⁹ The progress narrative approach might view the contemporary male actor playing a Shakespearean heroine through the lens of historical theatre practice, containing any potential threat to heteronormativity within the conventions of early modern staging practice.

The nature of passing or drag, whether radical or otherwise, cannot be determined out of context. Passing, for example, can provoke an extreme reaction when it is revealed because it challenges the naturalness of both a stable gender and heterosexual desire.¹⁰ In contrast, drag might be seen to serve a conservative function because it can reinscribe male privilege. Peggy Phelan argues that: “Within the economy of patriarchal desire which frames – though does not completely define – gay male cross-dressing, the figure of the woman is appropriated as a sign to validate male authority”

⁹ Garber observes the tendency to view Shakespeare’s cross-dressed heroines through the lens of the progress narrative (69).

¹⁰ The narrative of films such as *The Crying Game* (dir. Neil Jordan 1992) depict a violent reaction against the passing person.

(qtd. in Ferris 10). The extent to which transvestite performance is radical or reactionary also depends on the nature of the crossing; Alisa Solomon observes that “because “man” is the presumed universal, and “woman” the gussied-up other, drag changes meaning depending on who’s wearing it, depending on which way the vestments are crossed” (“Never Too Late” 145).

Within a single performance, crossings of several different types can occur. James C. Bulman observes that in Carroll’s production of *Twelfth Night*, referred to above, Viola’s performance might be understood as a form of passing, whereas Paul Chahidi’s Maria drew on the conventions of drag to give a comic crossing (“Unsex me here”). It is worth noting, however, that how cross-gender casting is read can be highly subjective. Alisa Solomon highlights this subjectivity in her analysis of reviewers’ responses to the 1976 off-Broadway production of *The Club* directed by Eve Merriam. Reviewers felt that the women playing men were unconvincing, with one observing that one crossing in particular “didn’t fool me for a minute” (Watt qtd. in Solomon, “Never Too Late” 146-7). Solomon observes that cross-dressed performers were not intending to pass, but rather they were using the gap between their identity as female performers and their male character to “ridicule men by showing how absurd they are when they ridicule women” (147). This political intention was lost on a number of reviewers.

One instance of cross-gender casting that cannot be located on the spectrum from passing to drag is the regendering of roles. When a role is regendered the character’s gendered identity is changed to match that of the actor. In this way the casting practice may represent a crossing, but this does not figure in the drama. Richard Garner’s 2003 staging of *The Tempest* at the Georgia Shakespeare Festival, regendered the role of Prospero, changing it to Prospera: “the change in names indicating that these roles were to be played by women and as women, not by women impersonating men” (A. Hartley, “Prospera’s Brave New World” 131-132).

Some productions, such as Deborah Warner's *Richard II* starring Fiona Shaw, opt for an androgynous approach in which the gendered identity of the character appears to be fluid. This approach gives the spectator more power in interpreting the gendered signifiers in performance, though the male pronouns of the original text perhaps shut down some of the possible gender-fluid interpretations.

As well as providing terminology that can help to elucidate casting, scholarship on cross-gender performance can also help to foreground the methods by which gender is constructed on the stage. Laurence Senelick describes the gendered nature of clothing as an "arbitrary semiotic system" adding that "If the essence of gender can be simulated through wigs, props, gesture, costumes, cross-dressing implies it is not an essence at all, but an unstable construct" (2;3). The bodies with which costume interacts can either reassert or challenge a stable notion of gender: casting, whether cross-gender or otherwise, works alongside costume to construct gender in performance.

The potential for cross-gender casting to render visible the gender politics of casting make it a useful model for exploring gender construction in casting more generally. Aoife Monks engages with this issue in *The Actor in Costume*. Describing the moment in John Madden's popular 1999 film *Shakespeare in Love* in which the Master of the Revels discovers he has just watched a woman play Juliet and exclaims in horror "That woman is a woman", Monks observes:

Is this not the line that spectators utter metaphorically when they watch a female actor play a woman on stage? Through their acceptance "that woman is a woman", spectators might produce and agree on the gender of the actor in performance. Inversely, when watching cross-dressed performance, the audience might say, "that man is a woman", or, "that woman is a man". And, as they sit in the auditorium for the length of the production, they agree to believe this statement, while also seeing doubly the "man as a man" or the "woman as a woman". (79)

The way in which spectators are encouraged to produce and agree on the gender of an actor in performance is a central concern of this study and cross-gender casting can provide a useful way into thinking about how gender is constructed on stage, both through the semiotic significance of costume and through the embodied characteristics of the actors cast to play the opposite gender.

Celebrity Casting

The celebrity performer has played an important role on British stages since the end of the seventeenth century (Luckhurst & Moody) and just as cross-gender casting can help to reveal the gender politics enshrined in casting practices, so celebrity casting can help to foreground the ideology that lies behind contemporary modes of representation. One of the most influential scholars on the subject of celebrity is Richard Dyer whose work has examined the way in which stars function in society and the way in which the figure of the celebrity may be seen to embody and reflect the values of a particular culture. Theatre historians Mary Luckhurst and Jane Moody suggest that Dyer's approach has only a limited use in theatre studies because "Live performers are seen and experienced by audiences without the forms of mediation characteristic of film" (3). However, Dyer's work does not simply look at the celebrity on screen it explores the ways in which celebrity figures "can be read for the ways in which they *embody* culture" (*Stars* 182). His argument that "bodies act as key signifiers of cultural beliefs" (*Stars* 181) can usefully be extended to an analysis of bodies, whether celebrity or otherwise, in any mode of representation.

Dyer develops his analysis of the celebrity's embodiment of cultural beliefs in *Heavenly Bodies*, in which he analyses the celebrity personas of Marilyn Monroe, Paul Robeson, and Judy Garland, and their significance as cultural icons in relation to gender, race, and sexuality respectively. He also explores the "market function of the star", foregrounding the process by which stars make themselves into commodities, a point to which I will

return later in this chapter. In *The Matter of Images*, Dyer explores the ideology of representation, analysing stereotypes, type-casting, and the way in which star images signify.

On the subject of the semiotics of the celebrity on stage, Michael Quinn's "Celebrity and the Semiotics of Acting" has been extremely influential. Just as cross-gender casting can disrupt theatrical mimesis, so the celebrity's public persona might contribute to the alienation of the actor/character in performance. Quinn begins by outlining the Prague School's three functions of on-stage signification, defining them as:

the performer's personal characteristics; an immaterial dramatic character, residing in the consciousness of the audience; and a third, intermediate term, the stage figure, an image of the character that is created by the actor, costume designer, director, etc., as a kind of technical object or signifier (154-155)

To these three functions, Quinn adds a fourth element, unique to celebrity performances, namely the "celebrity figure". Generated through interviews, social media, previous performances, and even the programme biography, the celebrity's public persona is distinct from the actor's personal characteristics, as a constructed identity and in many ways is as artificial as the character that they play.

This additional dynamic within the actor-character-audience relationship can potentially contribute to a Brechtian-style alienation effect, in which the fiction of the theatrical event is ever-present, since the audience remains aware of the actor in the role. Quinn suggests that one of the reasons Brecht chose to work with star actors such as Laughton, Weigel, Lenya and Schall, was that their celebrity persona made the split between the actor and character more apparent (156). An issue with the qualities identified by Quinn in performance is that celebrity-casting-as-alienation requires a uniform level of understanding from the audience. The experience of watching a celebrity in a performance of Shakespeare will be significantly influenced by the individual spectator's experience of the given performer. For example, those audience members attending Tom Hiddleston's performance of *Coriolanus* at the Donmar Warehouse in

2013-14, directed by Josie Rourke, will have a very different experience of the play depending on their experience of his work as an actor. For the dedicated fans who camped out overnight to get tickets to see his performance, the fact that they were watching Tom Hiddleston, the celebrity from the *Thor* films franchise, play Coriolanus will have dominated their experience of watching the drama. On the other hand, the Donmar's regular audience may only have been familiar with Hiddleston from his 2007-8 performance of Roderigo at the same venue.

Reading the "recycled body and persona of the actor" (Carlson, *The Haunted Stage* 53) is the focus of Marvin Carlson's chapter "The Haunted Body" in *The Haunted Stage*. Carlson argues that the celebrity actor is "entrapped by the memories of the public so that each new appearance requires a renegotiation with these memories" (59). In Carlson's analysis, celebrity personas are just one example of the ghosting of performers, as he argues that "even a young actor never before seen by the audience will appear onstage already ghosted by the expectations of the role type in which he appears" (59). Carlson undertakes a particularly insightful consideration of key Shakespearean roles. Examining Hamlet, a role that has been uniquely ghosted, Carlson suggests that every performance of *Hamlet* is:

doubly haunted, on the one hand, by the memories of the famous Hamlets of the past [...] and, on the other hand, by memories of the new interpreter, who comes with his [sic] own particular style and technique, in most cases also familiar to audiences. (79)

In the case of *Hamlet* the haunted text and the recycled body of the actor combine to create a theatrical event in which the production's artifice could be a constant presence in performance, potentially creating something akin to an alienation effect throughout. However, Hamlet remains one of the roles most subject to psychoanalytic scrutiny and tends to attract a decidedly realist approach in its staging. Furthermore, the casting of celebrities in Shakespearean roles is becoming so commonplace that, whilst there might be slippages between the performer, the dramatic

character, the stage figure, and the celebrity persona, ultimately a possible alienation effect is contained by theatrical convention.

For the purposes of this study, celebrity performance has another important impact on casting and the construction of character in performance: the celebrity's resistance to type-casting. In the majority of cases, celebrities are likely to be cast to type in performances of Shakespeare, but on occasion the pulling-power of a celebrity in a production can see producers and directors experiment with casting against type. For example, Jamie Lloyd's 2014 production of *Richard III* cast Martin Freeman, an affable everyman, against type in the murderous title role. Likewise, the cross-gender casting of Dawn French in the role of Bottom in Matthew Francis's 2001 staging of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is likely to have been prompted by French's celebrity status. In 2013 Mark Rylance's staging of *Much Ado About Nothing* for the Old Vic starred Vanessa Redgrave and James Earl Jones, who at the time were 76 and 84 respectively, in the roles of warring lovers Beatrice and Benedick. It is unlikely that such mature actors would have been selected to play the roles were it not for their celebrity status. As Elizabeth Schafer and I have argued elsewhere, further examination of casting trends reveals that celebrity actors in the role of Beatrice are generally more senior than jobbing actors who play the role (Schafer & Reimers). In this way, celebrity casting can be seen to contribute to a reimagining of one of Shakespeare's greatest comic female roles.

Section Two: Theorising Casting

The studies I have considered thus far have looked specifically at casting in performance, exploring questions of theatrical representation and identity, as well as providing an overview of the terminology that I will be using in this thesis. The next section draws together a number of critical approaches which might help to theorise the relationship between casting and performance and the way in which spectators are encouraged to read bodies on stage. I begin by foregrounding the close link between casting and semiotics and how the outcomes of the process might be read onstage.

I then locate this reading within feminist and queer scholarship, exploring how casting might be seen to have a reciprocal relationship with the social construction of gender. Lastly, I consider how the body of the actor and its gendered attributes are commodified in contemporary theatre practice, drawing on the notion of aesthetic labour to investigate the process by which casting shapes bodies.

Semiotics

As Michael Quinn's analysis of the celebrity stage figure illustrates, a semiotic approach to the study of casting can illuminate the impact that the practice has on performance. During the casting process, the way in which the actor's body will "read" on stage is considered in detail by theatre practitioners, as "the actor's body is scrutinised as a site of semiotic meaning; the theatrical significance of the race, gender, age, physiognomy, and physical build of an actor is analysed" (Thorpe 437). Thorpe's analysis highlights the importance of an actor's appearance in the casting process, foregrounding the way in which social meaning is ascribed to embodied characteristics.

Umberto Eco provides a useful account of the process whereby human beings become signs in his analysis of semiotician C. S. Peirce's consideration of a temperance campaign run by the Salvation Army. Eco examines the physical embodiment of a drunken man, highlighting that by being "put on the platform and shown to the audience, the drunken man [...] has become a semiotic device; he is now a sign" (110). In Eco's analysis, the drunken man takes on a range of possible significations: an individual man, a character in a story and a metonym for all drunken men in the world. While Eco distinguishes the rudimentary platform on which the Salvation Army's drunken man was displayed from the complexity of the conventions of signification governing stage performance, he frames the selection of the drunk man in terms that might usefully be applied to casting. Eco argues that:

It is not necessary that he have a specific face, a specific eye color, a moustache or a beard, a jacket or a sweater. It is however, necessary (or at least I think so) that his nose be red or violet; his eyes dimmed by a liquid obtuseness; his hair, his moustache or his beard ruffled and dirty his clothes splashed with mud, sagging and worn-out. (111)

The embodied characteristics of the drunk, as well as the fashioning of his hair and clothing, are central to conveying meaning. As Eco continues:

The list of these characteristics is established by a social code, a sort of iconographic convention. The very moment our sargeant of the Salvation Army has chosen the *right* drunk, he has made recourse to a socialized knowledge. His choice has been semiotically oriented. He has been looking for the right man just as one looks for the right word. (111)

What Eco has described is a rudimentary version of the casting process. Casting for the stage, especially in the case of staging dramatic texts, is arguably more complex, as an actor's ability to perform in the required performance style will be a consideration alongside their appearance. Nonetheless, Eco's analysis foregrounds the way in which theatre practitioners use an actor's embodied characteristics to generate meaning, looking "for the right man just as one looks for the right word" (111).

As Eco's analysis indicates, the performer's embodied characteristics are a key element in recruiting an actor for a role. Yet, many semioticians neglect this aspect of signification when analysing onstage meaning. Elaine Aston and George Savona point out that despite Tadeusz Kowzan's focus on the actor as "a principal site of visual signification" (106), his taxonomy of theatrical signification fails to consider embodied characteristics and how actors might have been selected for their signifying potential in performance. Aston and Savona ask, "Where do we classify those signs which are in some sense "natural" but which operate as directed meanings in the performance context?" continuing, "The physical attributes of a performer are natural or given, but acquire significance on the stage" (107). Yet, in the constructed world of theatre, to what extent can any attribute be considered natural? There is a danger that, in naturalising

embodied characteristics, the ideology inscribed in selecting which bodies appear on stage becomes obscured.

Martin Esslin is one of the few semioticians to acknowledge the impact of casting overtly, rather than simply focusing on the physical manifestations of its outcomes. Yet, despite recognising casting as “one of the most basic semiotic systems that generates its [dramatic performance’s] meaning”, Esslin nonetheless treats the actor’s body as a given, grouping the sign systems into “those derived from the expressive techniques based on the use of his or her body” and “those the actor *carries* on his body: make-up and costume” (61); the body – its height, build, muscularity, skin colour, or gender – is not scrutinised.¹¹

This critical myopia is perhaps symptomatic of the fact that for a long time semiotics has often failed to engage in the politics of theatrical production. Ric Knowles suggests that in the 1970s and 1980s theatre semiotics had a tendency to:

treat the theatrical event as contained within the discourses of the producers and architectures of the stage and [... failed] to consider three crucial factors: the larger social and theatrical contexts within which performances occur, the semiology of audience response, and the iconic [...] relationship between theatre and the life (or material world) it represents. (16-17)

Drawing on Marvin Carlson’s argument that “The physical appearance of the auditorium, the displays in the lobby, the information in the program, and countless other parts of the event as a whole are part of its semiotic” (qtd. in Knowles 17), Knowles makes the case for a materialist semiotics which explores “the specific ways in which the material conditions of production and reception have shaped” the reading of theatrical production (21).

¹¹ Esslin briefly considers age (62), but his focus is on age’s unintended signifiers, rather than considering what those signifiers are and how they contribute to meaning.

Politicised semiotics can also help to reveal the ideology behind the process of signification. Writing of the expectation of mimesis in casting, Keir Elam notes that:

the similitude between the sign and what it stands for begins to break down as soon as one considered, for example, Elizabethan boy actors representing women, the portrayal of gods by Greek actors, or the numerous cases of ageing theatrical stars who continue to adopt the roles of romantic heroes or heroines (not to mention Sarah Bernhardt's impersonation, in old age and complete with wooden leg, of Hamlet). Here the wholly conventional basis of iconism on stage emerges clearly. (23)

Elam makes an important point: whilst these non-realist casting practices foreground the actor's role as sign, as Elin Diamond observes "In its conventional iconicity, theatre laminates body to character" (52). As a result the politics of the actor's iconicity can be rendered invisible through convention. Joseph Roach emphasises that:

Acting styles regulate the intelligibility of performances by authorizing certain substitutions as appropriate and proscribing others as meaningless or false [...] When critics agree that an actor has been miscast in a role, they implicitly refer to an error of substitution within a generally intelligible stylistic code. (100)

Whether an interpretive community reads a casting as appropriate is inherently ideological and relates to systems of power that operate in society.

This study aims to draw attention to the ideological implications of the iconicity of casting, demonstrating its relationship with hierarchical notions of gendered and racial identity. Considering casting as an act of communication, it will explore how the body of the actor is inscribed with social meaning and how this meaning in turn is applied to the character. Building on the work of performance semioticians and drawing on Knowles's notion of materialist semiotics, it will foreground the way in which casting contributes to the construction of gender in Shakespeare's plays. Its particular focus examines how women signify in the theatrical space and how an actor's embodied characteristics – their age, race, height,

and size – create meaning in performance. Elin Diamond has observed that:

The body, particularly the female body, by virtue of entering the stage space, enters representation – it is not just ‘there’, a live, unmediated presence, but rather (1) a signifying element in a dramatic fiction; (2) a part of a theatrical sign system whose conventions of gesturing, voicing, and impersonating are referents for both performer and audience; and (3) a sign in the system governed by a particular apparatus, usually owned and operated by men for the pleasure of a viewing public whose major wage earners are male. (52 – emphasis original)

This study is concerned with a feminist semiotics and looks at the symbiotic relationship between the construction of gendered identity through the body of the actor and through the location of that body within the theatrical sign-system. The very notion of the actor’s “natural” characteristics cited by Aston and Savona is thrown into question by a consideration of the way that the body has been theorised in recent years.

Gender and the Embodiment of Difference

Gender is, in part, a semiotic code. As Teresa de Lauretis has shown: “The sex-gender system [...] is both a sociocultural construct and a semiotic apparatus, a system of representation which assigns meaning [...] to individuals within the society” (2-3). Gender-as-semiotic-code is most evident in the case of cross-gender casting, but all casting contributes to the way in which gender is constructed in performance. Just as casting is the first step in moving from the dramatic to the theatrical (Aston & Savona 104), so it is also the embodiment of the social: constructing characters’ identity through their physical embodiment. We might say that gender and casting represent the embodiment of ideology, both of which are realised through performance.

There are three major schools of thought pertaining to gender and embodiment, which theorist R.W. Connell identifies as:

the idea of natural difference, which treats the body as machine; the idea of two separate realms of sex and gender; and the idea of gender

as a discursive or symbolic system, which treats bodies as a canvas on which society paints. (30)

Natural difference sees gender as a biological reality in which “reproductive difference is assumed to be directly reflected in a whole range of other differences” (30), differences that might include physical strength, manifestations of sexual desire, and personality (30). Importantly, this approach figures gendered difference as being innate and “that biological causation is independent from society” (32). The distinction between sex and gender was a theoretical development of the 1970s; defining sex as the natural biological difference between males and females, and gender as the socially constructed conventions that determine men and women’s roles in society, it demonstrated that “biology could not be used to justify women’s subordination” (Connell 33-4).

More recently, the body as canvas model identified gender as a social phenomenon, inscribed onto the body through systems of representation and socially sanctioned behaviour. It is this latter approach that influenced the theory underpinning my research. Michael Foucault’s *Discipline and Punish* analyses the ways in which manifestations of power produce social subjects. Feminist theorists have developed Foucault’s theory of “docile bodies” – in which identity is inscribed onto the body through a socially instigated pattern of coercive and normalising behaviour – to explore the relationship between gender, the body, and systems of power.

Judith Butler’s theory of gender performativity combines Foucault’s theory of power and the body with the feminist theory that “One is *not born, but* rather becomes, a *woman*” (de Beauvoir 301 – emphasis original). Butler persuasively argues that gender “is in no way a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts produce”, suggesting instead that:

it is an identity tenuously constituted in time - an identity instituted through a *stylized repetition of acts*. Further, gender is instituted through the stylization of the body and, hence, must be understood as the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements, and enactments of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self. (“Performative Acts” 519 – emphasis original)

Butler went on to clarify her definition of gender's performativity, arguing that:

performance as bounded "act" is distinguished from performativity insofar as the latter consists in a reiteration of norms which precede, constrain, and exceed the performer and in that sense cannot be taken as the fabrication of the performer's "will" or "choice" ... (*Bodies That Matter* 234)

Thus, gendered performance is inherently linked with semiotics, as the codes that govern "bodily gestures, movements, and enactments of various kinds" are read as constituting "an abiding gendered self".

Ashley Thorpe applies Butler's theory of gender performativity to the casting process, describing the actor's appearance as "a kind of visual utterance". Linking this to Austin's theory of "speech-act"¹² Thorpe argues that within the signifying system of the theatrical frame "this utterance takes on an emphatic discursive agency" (441). Thus casting contributes to the social construction of identity, as tropes that govern the perception of identity are reiterated through the process of embodiment. Yet, casting does not simply reiterate existing social codes. It shapes and defines them and not just by holding up versions of desirable masculinity and femininity to which spectators are encouraged to aspire. Casting has a literal power in shaping bodies into gendered subjects.

Casting utilises social codes to construct gender within the signifying structure of the theatre – it connects "two performing entities into one performative context" (Thorpe 440) – but it also contributes to material conditions in which certain bodily identities are generated and honed. Social theorist Chris Shilling has demonstrated that "there is a tendency for the body to be seen as an entity in the process of becoming; a *project* to be worked at and accomplished as part of an individual's self-identity" (6). Within this logic the body's "appearance, size, shape and contents are potentially open to reconstruction in line with its owner's designs" (6-7).

¹² "Speech-acts" are utterances that have a performative action; they are utterances that *do* something (see Thorpe 440).

In an employment context in which certain embodied characteristics have an economic value, sociologist Deborah Dean observes that discrimination becomes increasingly acute “the further away from the white heterosexual male template a performer worker is” (“Recruiting a Self” 770). Thus, actors seeking to gain employment within a performance context may construct their physical identity so that it best fits the ideology of the discourses dominating representation.

Feminism, Cultural Materialism and Casting as Aesthetic Labour

Richard Dyer’s work on celebrity has helped to foreground the relationship between acting and the labour market. He asserts that “Stars are involved in making themselves into commodities; they are both labour and the thing that labour produces” (*Heavenly* 5). Dyer links this with Marx’s notion of “congealed labour” as “something that is used with further labour (scripting, acting, directing, managing, filming, editing) to produce another commodity, a film” (*Heavenly* 5). This is not unique to film stars or celebrities; all actors have to commodify themselves. Dyer acknowledges that for many film performers, a great deal of their working time involves unwaged labour, as detailed by Peters and Cantor: “studying acting, seeking agents, going to casting interviews [...] keeping the body in shape, socializing with other actors, and making [influential] contacts” (qtd. in Dyer, *Stars* 196).

The self-fashioning of actors’ appearances is an area closely related to casting. Writing of the importance of appearance to performers, Roanna Mitchell notes that:

Type-casting, beauty ideals, fashions of the body, and the perception of what kind of body is appropriate to perform a specific role – all of these contribute to the importance of the actor’s appearance in gaining work, particularly in the commercial performance industry. Here a physical capital marketplace has developed, in which the dynamics of supply and demand are shaped by the numbers of actors with a certain physicality seeking work at one time, and by assumptions of what type of body is deemed appropriate to perform a certain role or character. (61)

In this respect type-casting, and the performance industry more generally, can be seen to police gender construction, as actors who conform to accepted gender norms are more likely to gain employment. Casting constitutes a self-conscious construction of identity which has a symbiotic relationship with society. Meaning is generated through recourse to familiar signifiers, while simultaneously shaping and influencing what comes to represent a particular aesthetic ideal. While some productions may challenge or expand normative beauty ideals, the fact that actors work in a marketplace in which the normative dominates means that their experience as performers, and their relationship with their bodies, will inevitably be shaped by this ideology.

The self-fashioning required of actors has led to the theorisation of performance work as a form of aesthetic labour. Deborah Dean applied Warhurst et al.'s theory of aesthetic labour to actors, foregrounding how recruitment is based on a set of "embodied capacities and attributes" which a worker possesses upon commencement of employment (Warhurst et al. qtd. in Dean, "Recruiting" 762). These "embodied capacities and attributes" enable "the employer to convey meanings and conjure particular associations through the use of the worker's body" (762). Dean observes that "Performers will draw on the cultural currency of shared typifications and visual stereotypes to increase their chance of access to work" ("Recruiting" 768). The qualities that performers draw on will be honed through a variety of practices, aimed at shaping the body into an easily classifiable commodity. As a result of its embodied nature, "aesthetic labour doesn't just happen *at work* [...] but endures beyond the working day" (Entwistle 777 – emphasis original). In terms of the lived experience of actors, their bodily self-fashioning is an on-going project, meaning that to a degree they are always working, even when unemployed, in order to maintain an appearance which is castable.

Theorising acting as a form of aesthetic labour foregrounds the performativity of identity more generally, as actors are encouraged by the labour market to shape their physicality to conform to stereotypes about identity-constituting factors. This is reflected in the methods at an actor's disposal to market themselves to potential employers. The main casting directory used in the UK is *The Spotlight Directory*, entry into which requires actors to categorise themselves according to their embodied characteristics, including their gender, race (classified as "appearance"), playing age (divided into five age categories from 18 to 65+), and height, along with eye colour, hair colour and hair length. Described as a "'Yellow Pages' of performer photographs and contact details' (Spotlight "Spotlight Books"), a simplified published book of the online directory is released annually, divided into two categories with "actors" being published in the spring and "actresses" published in the autumn.

That gender is so central to the recruitment process of actors, followed closely by age, reflects the highly gendered nature of performance work, as the gender binary underpins the process of representation and defines the depiction of character on stage. This conservatism is reflected in the fact that traditionally in theatre men and women performers are largely not considered to be in competition with each other for work. As Dean notes, "most roles specify or are assumed as specifying either a woman or a man" meaning that women and men are seen as "non-competing industrial groups" ("Recruiting" 764). Indeed, the signification of sexual difference is deemed so important to performance that actors often seek to alter their appearance in order to render it hyper-feminine or hyper-masculine, something observed by Roanna Mitchell in her research. Mitchell notes that in the run-up to drama school showcases: "For the most part it is the female students who are reported to diminish in size through diets, while male students are more likely to embark on intensive fitness regimes with the aim of building muscle" (65). The thin female body and the muscular male body could be seen to reflect semiotically a social ideology in which femininity is associated with passivity and masculinity

with action. If so, this demonstrates theatre industry's role in reflecting and reinforcing existing gender ideology.

While actors' bodies are "more than empty vessels waiting to contain the dramatist's fine illocutionary wine" (Elam, *Semiotics* 46), their aesthetic value and its power of signification is increasingly important in the labour market and, as a result, it will invariably influence the ways in which drama is staged. A cultural materialist approach to reading theatrical production can help to foreground its ideology. Judith Butler notes that:

gender is not always constituted coherently or consistently in different historical context, and because gender intersects with racial, class, ethnic, sexual, and regional modalities of discursivity constituted identities. As a result, it becomes impossible to separate out "gender" from the political and cultural intersections in which it is invariably produced and maintained. (*Gender Trouble* 3)

Thus any study of representation must also consider the material conditions in which that representation takes place. Cultural materialist critics Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield argue that "culture does not (cannot) transcend the material forces and relations of production" and that "What the plays signify, how they signify, depends on the cultural field in which they are situated" (viii). Cultural materialist critics seek to:

provide a model for locating cultural production – including the production of theatre – within its historical, cultural, and material contexts, and for the politically engaged analysis of *how meaning is produced...* (Knowles 11 – emphasis original)

Theatre scholars have demonstrated the benefits of close analysis of theatre semiotics, from the performance of space in Marvin Carlson's *Places of Performance*, to the signifying power of the costume on stage in Aoife Monks's *The Actor in Costume*. Likewise, considerations of theatrical processes – such as Ric Knowles's scrutiny of the hierarchy of theatrical production in *Reading the Material Theatre* or W.B. Worthen's exploration of actor training and its impact on contemporary approaches to staging Shakespeare in *Shakespeare and the Authority of Performance* – have helped to render visible the politics behind theatrical representation and

the ideology enshrined in reception, moving from the universal to the particular.

Conclusion

The notion of aesthetic labour was first applied to employees in the service industries, particularly flight attendants and staff at theme parks, and this focus on the practicalities of a specific profession and the ideology which underpins it will influence my next chapter. Having presented an overview of the theories with which my study will engage, I now move on to look at the specific practicalities of casting a Shakespearean play in England today, contextualising contemporary theatre practice within this theoretical grounding.

Chapter Two: Casting in Practice

“Once you have cast the play, you have more or less predicted the outcome of the event, for you have bestowed life upon the characters.”
(Fichandler 21)

Introduction

There is a popular misconception that it was illegal for women to perform on the early modern stage; the absence of women from Shakespeare’s original performance context is popularly figured to be the subject of legal directive, but in fact it was convention rather than legislation that prohibited women from performing on the professional stage. Surveying the theatre landscape at the start of the twenty-first century it is possible to anticipate that similar misconceptions might arise in four hundred years’ time; with gender ratios stubbornly fixed at two male roles for every female role (see Higgins), it could be assumed that female representation is the subject of legislation, with a protectionist attitude towards the employment of male performers. Of course, there are many exceptions to the 2:1 ratio, but just as it is only in the last twenty or so years that the instances of women performing on the early modern stage have been subject to critical attention, so female-dominated twenty-first century performances might be considered exceptions that prove the rule.¹³ As unlikely as this possibility may sound, an analysis of the companies performing in contemporary professional English theatre demonstrates a remarkably consistent gender imbalance, particularly so in the case of Shakespearean production.

The discrimination facing contemporary female performers has its roots in early modern staging conventions. In *Casting Shakespeare’s Plays* T.J. King demonstrates that the number of female roles in plays by early modern dramatists remains remarkably consistent over the period from 1590-1642 (1) and argues that the gender disparity in the number and size of roles written by Shakespeare has its roots in the material conditions of

¹³ See Clare McManus’ *Women on the Renaissance Stage* for a consideration of the variety of female performances in early modern England.

the early modern playhouse. Furthermore, the popular, but contested, idea of boys playing women contributes to the image of Shakespeare's characters as young, physically slight feminine foils to the older, more masculine adult members of the company. For example, Stephen Orgel argues that there is evidence to suggest that in the early modern period boys, like women, were "constructed as objects of erotic attraction for adult men" (103). In a similar vein, Laurence Senelick argues that "The two basic qualifications for a successful boy player were a youthful voice and good looks" (133). Senelick's statement invests in an ideology that values embodied characteristics over acting skill in the depiction of Shakespeare's women and I would argue that this approach has consequences for performances today.

There seems to be a great potential in exploring the evidence that some adult men may have played female roles; Carol Chillington Rutter cites an entry in the accounts of the Admiral's Men in 1597 that details the payment for a woman's gown for an adult member of the company. This, she argues, "may open up the possibility that female roles were not monopolised by boy players" (*Documents* 124). Furthermore, William J. Ringler cites evidence in the text of *Love's Labour's Lost* that suggests that an adult player may have taken the role of the Princess of France (130). If this is the case then it might have ramifications for contemporary casting practices, facilitating a shift away from the tendency to objectify Shakespeare's female roles and allowing a wider spectrum of femininities to be represented on stage, both in terms of their characterisation and the physicality of the actors playing the roles.¹⁴

The notion of Shakespearean authority, however, is more grounded in twenty-first century ideology than in early modern historical fact, and it often serves a conservative agenda. William B. Worthen has demonstrated how:

¹⁴ I use the term femininities rather than femininity to reflect a spectrum of identities rather than a definitive single category.

recourse to “Shakespeare” is [...] a way of turning away from the question of how representation is implicated in the dynamics of contemporary culture, a way of passing the responsibility for theatrical and critical activity on to a higher authority. (*Shakespeare and the Authority of Performance* 148)

This chapter seeks to demonstrate how sexism underpins the material conditions in which productions of Shakespeare are staged in the twenty-first century, offering an overview of casting practices before exploring in subsequent chapters how contemporary gender ideology and early modern misogyny combine in the construction of femininity in specific performances of Shakespeare’s plays.

In order to interrogate casting’s political outcomes it is necessary to locate the process within its material context and the first half of this chapter will explore the processes by which actors are selected to perform in plays, examining who is in the position to make casting decisions and the processes by which these decisions are made. I draw on printed interviews with, and written testimonies by, industry professionals, as well as existing research and reports into employment issues within the theatre industry, in order to demonstrate how the precarious and hierarchical nature of performance work creates a context in which discrimination can thrive. The second half of this chapter explores the material outcomes of the casting process at the two most prestigious producers of Shakespeare in the United Kingdom: The Royal Shakespeare Company and Shakespeare’s Globe Theatre. Focussing on the issue of identity politics and representation in performance, I analyse the trends in casting at these companies since the millennium, from 2000-2014. Exploring how gender intersects with race and age, I offer a picture of the complexity of discrimination operating in current casting practices in Shakespeare’s plays in performance, which will provide a context for the case studies that follow in chapters three to six.

Casting today: the practicalities

Acting in the UK is a precarious and unstructured profession (Dean “Age” and “Recruiting”); research undertaken in 2013 by the Actors’ Trade Union, Equity, found that half of the 3,500 respondents earned less than £5,000 per year from acting work, with one in five union members earning no money from performing whatsoever (Trueman “Half of Equity”). Access to work in the profession is controlled by a series of “gatekeepers” defined by Dean as “those who stand in the position of managers to performers in that they have power of recruitment, direction and control of aspects of the performer’s labour process, without necessarily being the direct employer” (“Age” 11). The most common entry into the theatre profession is via drama school (Dean, “Recruiting” 766) and even at entry-level, competition is very high. In 2007 *The Stage* newspaper reported that for the courses offered by the Conference of Drama Schools, which joined with the National Council for Drama Training to become Drama UK in 2012, there were “a total of 11,184 applicants for 1,550 places, meaning that on average only one in every seven applicants gained entry” (A. Smith).¹⁵ By 2015 this had risen to twenty applications for every available place (Drama UK, “Guide” 7).¹⁶

As a result of the high numbers of applicants, the majority of accredited drama trainers charge an application fee to cover the cost of processing applications and coordinating auditions. This non-refundable fee is usually somewhere between £35 and £60 (Drama UK, “Apply”). However depending on when the application is submitted the fee can be as much as £85 for a UK audition. Some institutions are part of a fee waiver scheme for applicants from low-income households, yet these restrict the number of applications a candidate can make to just one institution rather

¹⁵ *The Stage* highlighted that this represents higher competition than entry into Oxbridge, which at the time had four applicants for every place. A direct comparison between drama schools and Oxbridge is perhaps misleading, however, given the very different entry criteria for the institutions.

¹⁶ While the methodology for the collection of this data is not available, it offers a useful indication of competition in the field.

than the five permitted by UCAS.¹⁷ These initial challenges for would-be actors from low-income families only intensify upon the completion of training as actors enter an employment market that generally requires them to have an alternative source of income. In these conditions, there is growing concern that people from working class backgrounds are being excluded from working in the performing arts (Andreou). It is not within the remit of this study to consider the social background of performers. However, it is likely that an employment context dominated by practitioners of a similar social class will reflect that cultural hegemony, both in the programming of work and the recruitment of employees.¹⁸

The drama school audition panel will generally be the first “gatekeepers” that the aspiring actor will encounter, and if accepted onto a training course, the common trajectory will see the student next face professional scrutiny at an industry showcase towards the end of their studies. At this event, students perform a short scene and sometimes a song in front of an invited audience of industry professionals, including casting directors, directors, and agents. These are the next level of gatekeepers: the former attend with a view to casting productions, and the latter will be on the lookout for possible clients to represent.

Agents are required to promote their clients to industry professionals, as “Directors and casting directors rely on the agents they know and trust to help with the filtering process of whom to interview” (Dunmore 42). At a basic level, this means agents must establish good contacts across the industry in order to get clients seen for auditions, but they are also required to negotiate the details of the actor’s contract including fee, hours worked, and promotional matters. In return for these

¹⁷ For the academic year of 2016/2017, undergraduate applicants are permitted to submit five applications through the UCAS system which charges £12 for a single application and £23 to apply to more than one institution.

¹⁸ Research into employment practice indicates that a degree of “cultural matching” often takes place in recruitment situations, see for example Lauren A. Rivera’s “Hiring as Cultural Matching”.

managerial services the actor will pay their agent somewhere between ten and fifteen percent of their fee, plus VAT where applicable (Dunmore 42). An individual agency operates as a business, representing enough of a variety of clients in order to be able to cover a broad range of possible casting brackets. In an interview conducted for Dean's "Recruiting a Self", one agent observed:

I have categories I have to fill...Basically, the sort of parts can put them up for. As well as that I need quite specific people, you know, older men and women and hate to say it, but large and ugly. If they're male sort of bruiser, criminal type look. I need young mums. I need categories like girls who are suitable for mums but for professional women as well. (qtd. in Dean, "Recruiting" 767)

In this way, agencies might be seen as businesses purveying particular commodities, and while actors officially employ agents to represent them, in reality the agent's role is akin to that of an employer, selecting their clients based on the demands of the market as they see it (see Dean, "Recruiting" 766).

The commodification of actors and their classification into "types" based on crude social stereotypes – the "bruiser", the "young mum" – will inevitably have consequences for theatrical representation and while many see recorded media such as film and television as the worst offenders in terms of stereotyping (Dean, "Age" 26) actors generally work across a range of media and will fashion themselves to make themselves as employable as possible in all genres. This sentiment comes across starkly in the interviews conducted by Roanna Mitchell in her study of aesthetic labour. Mitchell quotes one female actor who states "I feel by not making the changes that would be possible (losing weight, getting a blepharoplasty, being better groomed) I am being irresponsible. I know what the business requires and it's up to me to make myself as castable as possible" (66). Similar sentiments can be found throughout the interviews quoted in Mitchell's article, as well as research conducted by Deborah Dean ("Recruiting", "Age", "No Human Resource"). Mitchell's work also suggests that agents do not simply recruit actors based on their physical appearance, but are perceived as encouraging ongoing aesthetic labour;

she polled 48 drama school students whether they perceive demand from agents to look a certain way and 88% of respondents answered in the affirmative. Mitchell also cites a quotation from an interview in which a male student respondent stated that “One agent told me I should be ‘as big as possible’” (64), which suggests that while the demands of type-casting may require the majority of actors to conform to a particular physical ideal, actors whose physicalities represent an alternative to hegemonic beauty ideals may be encouraged to marketise the “unusual” aspect of their appearance as a unique selling point.

As “brokers” (Dunmore 41) of the acting industry, agents may fashion their commodities in ways that seem to meet the demands of the consumers (casting directors, directors, and producers) with whom they are most directly involved. There can be consequences when agents do not give casting directors what they want, as evidenced in this anonymous testimony from a casting director read out at the Act for Change event at The National Theatre in June 2015 by actor Hiran Abeysekera:

One casting director had a massive issue with this one actor I'd submitted for a Shakespeare in a “lovely” theatre. He kept calling and calling one day to speak to whoever had done the submission. That was me. He didn't think this actor was suitable. He didn't feel he had enough experience for me to suggest him for the part. [...] He kept saying things like “I won't be sending you any more breakdowns or get any of your people in if you don't apologise for submitting him for this role” [...] It's a fine line you have to walk as an agent: giving my actors the best opportunity without pissing people off... (qtd. in Act for Change “National Theatre Event”)

In the food chain of theatre, being ostracised for sending inappropriate candidates to audition could have serious professional consequences for agents, even though what constitutes an “inappropriate” candidate is clearly highly subjective. It might be for this reason that agents tend to opt for “safe” choices when selecting potential clients for roles. Dean cites the frustration of a senior casting director at the BBC who wanted to give agents “a bit of an imagination pill. You know, you put a breakdown [casting brief] out for a “solicitor, 40”, you can bet your life that 95% of the

suggestions will be middle-class white males” (qtd. in Dean, “Recruiting” 767). This example foregrounds the ideology embedded in these “safe” casting choices, as white men become overrepresented in culturally prestigious roles.¹⁹

While agents broker actors to casting directors, casting directors in turn broker the agent’s actors to directors and producers. As a result, the pressures of precarious employment situations also apply to casting directors. In *The Actors’ Yearbook* Simon Dunmore notes that while “Some casting directors are employed on a full-time basis; a significant number work freelance and can be as concerned about where their next job is coming from as you are” (95). Dunmore uses the term “director-employer” to describe the individual for whom the casting director is working and observes that ultimately it is not only the actor employed by the director, but the casting director too (95). Thus in some respects, the performance of an actor in an audition reflects not only on the performer, but also on the casting director who has invited them to audition and, indeed, the agent by whom the actor is represented. It is possible then, that “safe” casting choices, which are based on theatrical tradition and social stereotypes, might be preferable for casting directors working in a precarious field.

In their relationship with power, it is interesting to observe that casting directors have a tendency to play down the agency of their role. For example, casting director Sarah Marshall suggests that “The title Casting Director is perhaps a misnomer; s/he is more a facilitator, coordinator and encyclopaedia of information, rather than the final decision-maker – the latter has to be the director, at least in theatre” (Marshall 109). Wendy Spon, head of casting at the National Theatre makes a similar point when she asserts: “You’re in a position of influence but not power: we don’t ultimately decide who gets the job, but we can influence who’s in the frame” (qtd. in Barnett). While influence is

¹⁹ Dean observes that the “The actual gender balance among solicitors is approximately 60:40 male/female” (767).

undoubtedly a form of power, these assertions reflect the casting director's role as broker, rather than as determiner.

It is not by chance that both these quotations are from women: casting directing is an area of the arts dominated by women: of the 154 registered members of the Casting Directors' Guild, 121 are women, equating to 79% of membership (CDG "Full Members").²⁰ The gendered nature of the facilitator serving the still predominantly male role of director may in some way be seen to parallel the role of the voice coach as discussed in Sarah Werner's study of Shakespeare and feminist performance. Werner argues: "Voice coaches have been figured as enablers (they help actors do their jobs) rather than as determiners (the province of the director), a configuration that both reflects and contributes to the gendering of the work" (46). While the creative input of the casting director and voice coach are different, the gender ratios suggest a parallel: as female labour underpins male artistic success in both cases. This parallel perhaps indicates the gender politics of a production context which primarily values women as facilitators rather than artists.

Within the context of unstable employment conditions and a hierarchy of roles, the ultimate responsibility for casting generally lies with the director, as the quotations from both Marshall and Spon suggest. This hierarchy reflects the centrality of casting to the director's creative vision, as well as the veneration of director as auteur in contemporary theatre contexts (see Knowles). The director's position in the theatrical hierarchy is frequently reasserted in directing literature. Theatre director and academic Stephen Unwin asserts that performers "are the director's raw materials" (64), a statement that at once reinforces the privileged hierarchical position of the director and the actor as commodity.²¹

²⁰ This information is based on the registered casting directors listed on the CDG's website on 25th July 2016.

²¹ In a survey of directing manuals, Ric Knowles observed that these texts "casually employ metaphors of the director as 'a good general,' a 'ship's

Directing manuals stress the centrality of casting to the director's artistic endeavour, and the need to balance "the right actors for the play and the right actors for your rehearsal process" (K.Mitchell 99). They also often present specific theatrical approaches as universal. For example, Unwin identifies four key aspects that might constitute "good casting": "the actor must be the right age", "must be of the right class", "must look right", and "must have the right "feel" – or "quality" – for the part" (60-1). While Unwin's suggestion might hold for realist casting, its ideological implications go uninterrogated. Knowles suggests that a similar impulse towards universalising performance requirements is common to both directing manuals and director training in the West (25-28).

These assumptions present an issue for theatre directors wishing to challenge received wisdom, for while they might be nominally at the top of an individual production's employment hierarchy, in professional contexts they are generally answerable to producers or artistic directors as well as to reviewers and potential audience members. Convention shapes expectation and the reception of productions that challenge the theatrical status quo can be remarkably hostile. For example, reviewing Phyllida Lloyd's all-female *Julius Caesar* in *The Telegraph* Charles Moore took issue with Lloyd's advocacy of gender parity in casting and used Lloyd's politics to dismiss her staging on artistic grounds. He asserts that "the director herself does not understand what the play is about, or perhaps is not interested in understanding" and adds that "the noise of the grinding of the directorial axe drowns out his [Shakespeare's] play". Pitting the authority of the dead, white, male author against the vision of the contemporary, feminist, female theatre director clearly demonstrates the way in which Shakespeare can be used to reinforce a conservative ideology. Moore's review foregrounds the role that reviewers play in defining what is acceptable in contemporary Shakespearean performance. As Alan Sinfield has argued: "major role of theatre criticism is to police the boundaries of

captain,' 'missionary,' 'benevolent dictator,' and 'guiding genius'" (25), terms that are both hierarchical and gendered.

the permissible (which is perceived as the consistent or the credible), judging whether or not particular productions fall within the scope of Shakespeare as currently recognised" (200). Moore attempts to locate Lloyd's production outside the boundaries of the acceptable, by foregrounding its politics over its art and using the wounded figure of Shakespearean genius to belittle Lloyd's interpretation of the play.

As a celebrated and award-winning theatre and film director, Phyllida Lloyd has both the artistic credibility and the financial security to afford taking ideological risks with Shakespeare, but emerging directors and companies may not have the same freedom. It is notable, for example, that the UK's most established, standing all-female theatre company asserts that "As a company, we don't set out to promote any overt political message, feminist or otherwise" (Smooth Faced Gents "About"). In an economically precarious theatrical landscape overtly political ventures are a risky business and "faithful" productions of "Shakespeare's wonderful tales" (Smooth Faced Gents "About") have a broader appeal than those with an overt political agenda.

In this respect, even whilst acknowledging the hierarchy of theatrical production, the modes of reception including theatre criticism and anticipated audience response will shape a production's politics. Thus, while in the process of production the actor and their embodied attributes may be commodified, these in turn become part of the overall theatrical production that is sold as a product to the consumer-audience. Within this marketplace the director is not only serving her own vision, but the audience positioned to consume the production. Susan Bennett observes that:

Ultimately theatre is an economic commodity. Money is generally exchanged for a paper ticket which [...] promises the audience two performances: one is the show itself and the other is the experience of being in a theatre. To both performances is attached the anticipation of pleasure. (*Theatre Audiences* 126)

The audience's desire for pleasure relates to casting practices in two key ways. Firstly, it encourages producers and directors to cast celebrities in

their productions, as the pleasure of performance is increased by the anticipation of gaining access to a popular figure in a shared physical and temporal space.²² Secondly, it promotes the concept of scopic pleasure in which actors are “the object of the voyeuristic gaze of the audience as consumers” (Knowles 30). In order to gain pleasure from the gaze, its object must be constructed in a way that channels contemporary manifestations of desire, which is inherently gendered and extremely prescriptive in its embodied characteristics. Thus, directors may cast actors who conform to conventional manifestations of desire in order to increase the offer of pleasure to potential audience members. Within this context, the appearance of actors becomes a key aspect of rendering the production as a desirable commodity. Thus theatre processes, sexual politics, and capitalism combine to create conditions that nurture a conservative approach to casting’s construction of gender.

Casting, discrimination, and the law

The relationship between casting practices and audience response is often invoked in discussions of the discriminatory nature of casting. For example, despite acknowledging that “the process of great swathes of the theatre and television sectors are predicated on discrimination” (“Recruiting” 765), Dean terms this potential bias “second-order discrimination” because “its purpose is to anticipate what others will “read” from your choice: to attempt to communicate particular ideas or information in the form of an embodied representation” (“Recruiting” 770).²³ In a bid to create an easily “readable” semiotic, directors may draw on social stereotypes in their casting and they are free to do so because acting is one of the few employment contexts exempt from the Equality Act

²² In an opinion piece in *The Guardian*, Mark Lawson observes that in the current context of austerity politics with “high ticket prices and severely reduced discretionary income, there is a commercial imperative to cast stars” (“Why Star Casting”).

²³ Dean cites the use of headshots (a professional portrait of an actor) in the casting process as a demonstration of the industry’s focus on appearance, as opposed to acting ability, skills, and experience.

2010.²⁴ In the Act's explanatory notes, occupational requirements allow exceptions to be made because "The need for authenticity or realism might require someone of a particular race, sex or age for acting roles (for example, a black man to play the part of Othello) or modelling jobs" (Equality Act 2010). While the onus is on the employer to demonstrate that any possible act of discrimination is justified, in reality aspects of identity which in other employment fields are so called "protected characteristics", that is characteristics that legislation protects from discrimination including age, disability, gender reassignment, race, and sex, are not protected in the case of casting.

The logic of this exemption reflects casting's centrality to generating meaning in performance. In some ways this is designed to encourage "authentic" casting practices, so that the race of the character and actor correspond. Discussing casting from the perspective of employment legislation Thomas C. Grey observes that "few believe that casting actors in roles to match for race is the kind of injustice that employment discrimination laws were meant to prohibit" (90) and that this is why it is exempt from antidiscrimination legislation. Yet, while Shakespearean roles that are racially specific, such as Othello, Aaron, and Morocco,²⁵ are likely to be played by an actor whose ethnicity reflects that of the character, on the whole most major companies adopt an integrated casting policy in which roles for which race is irrelevant are cast in a colourblind way. The practice of colourblind casting reflects antidiscrimination legislation, with the meritocratic notion that the best actor for the role can be selected regardless of appearance. Robert C. Post observes that "Blindness renders forbidden characteristics invisible; it requires employers to base their

²⁴ This bill combined the Equal Pay Act of 1970, the Sex Discrimination Act of 1975, the Race Relations Act of 1976, the Disability Discrimination Act of 1995, the Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003, Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003, and the Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006 into one bill.

²⁵ The character of Cleopatra is an important exception from this list in performance, see "Shadowing Cleopatra: making whiteness strange" in Rutter's *Enter the Body*.

judgments instead on the deeper and more fundamental ground of “individual merit” or “intrinsic worth” (14). What begins in employment practice then manifests itself on stage, as the onus is then on the audience to be blind to the semiotic of race.

Racial identity is not the only protected characteristic to be subject to “blind” casting practices: gender- and age-blind casting have begun to make an appearance in twenty-first century stagings of Shakespeare.²⁶ A number of recent Shakespeare productions have been hailed as either gender-blind or age-blind. In the spring of 2016 *The Independent* reported on the cross-gender casting of Michelle Terry as Henry V, Glenda Jackson as King Lear, and Tamsin Greig as Malvolia under the headline “Gender-Blind Shakespeare: classic roles to be taken by women” (Williams). Before that, in 2013, Michael Billington in *The Guardian* and Simon Edge in *The Express* both referred to the performance of octogenarian James Earl Jones as Benedick and the then seventy-six year old Vanessa Redgrave as Beatrice in Mark Rylance’s *Much Ado About Nothing* as age-blind casting. Yet, in both these cases the operation of “blindness” was more complex: the casting was against type certainly, but there is no evidence that these productions were “blind” to gender or age.²⁷ Thus, in employment terms the casting might be “blind” but on stage gender and age remained semiotically significant.

Scholars have long critiqued so-called “blind” recruitment practices, both in performance contexts and elsewhere, arguing: “We are not blind to race (color)” and that “Colorblindness requires that we ignore three hundred years of history, or if not ignore them, render them meaningless. We must pretend that racism as an institution [...] has not created

²⁶ Gender- and age-blind casting are nothing new: in 1899 Sarah Bernhardt first played the role of Hamlet aged 54 (Hapgood 47).

²⁷ Terry’s Henry V was dressed in a skirt for the first few scenes of the production, Malvolio has been regendered to Malvolia for Grieg’s performance, while all the other roles in Rylance’s production were cast age-appropriately, giving no indication that spectators were suppose to be “blind” to age. Glenda Jackson’s Lear will take to the stage later in 2016.

significant differences in the real lives of real people” (Anderson 91). Furthermore, there is a danger that “blindness” can be used to leave discriminatory practices uninterrogated. Jami Rogers, who has conducted research into the “Shakespearean glass-ceiling” for BAME performers, warns that:

As long as the print media—so important to the creation of the coherent narrative of theatrical history—continues to state that colorblind casting is now standard in the theatre, repeating information without looking at the ways in which the policy itself is manifested, the glass ceiling will remain because the larger perception fostered in print is one of equality. (427-428)

Rogers’ quotation might also be applied to gender and age, and this may, in part, relate to acting’s status as an unsegregated profession. Deborah Dean asserts that “the achievement of status by its women workers is accepted and expected” (“Age” 7) and this can obfuscate the “disparities in access to work, pay and career longevity” (8). As I demonstrated in Chapter One, the appearance of meritocracy conceals inequality and justifies the overrepresentation of white men.

Not only can “blind” casting render inequality invisible, there have also been cases where “the principle of colorblindness [...is] evoked to contest legislation and institutional practices that were put in place to counter past and to prevent continued discrimination” (Pao, “Recasting” 11). This was the case in 1990 when white actor Jonathan Pryce was cast as the Mechanic in the musical *Miss Saigon*. Upon the transfer of the production to Broadway, American Equity challenged the casting decision, but capitulated when Cameron Mackintosh threatened to cancel the production. Writing of the controversy, one commentator asserted at the time that “By refusing to permit a white actor to play a Eurasian role, Equity makes a mockery of the hard-won principles of non-traditional casting and practices a hypocritical reverse racism” (Frank Rich qtd. in Minow 9), demonstrating how the notion of colourblind casting can protect casting practices that benefit white interests.

A more recent example of colourblind casting's insensitivity to the marginalisation of minority ethnic groups is Gregory Doran's 2012 production of *The Orphan of Zhao* at the RSC. Marketed as "the Chinese *Hamlet*", the production targeted the British East Asian community, with press releases translated into Chinese and publicity bearing the image of a boy of East Asian appearance (Rogers & Thorpe, "A Controversial Company" 431). Yet, for all its apparent celebration of Chinese culture, the production included just three British East Asian actors in the company, none of whom played leading roles.²⁸ When a group of British East Asian actors challenged the Royal Shakespeare Company about this casting, Doran argued that he had adopted a colourblind casting practice for the production (Trueman "Royal Shakespeare Company Under Fire"). In an open letter to the President of Equity, *Zhao's* acting company expressed frustration that the "debate about the casting of the show (which is apparently aimed at ending ethnic prejudice) has reduced us to being a company of 3 Asian actors, 3 Mixed Race actors, 10 Caucasian actors and 1 Arab actor" (Kerkour 494), stating that they "are part of a beautifully diverse family" and alluding to the RSC's history of colourblind casting. Yet, as Sita Thomas has observed:

The fact that so few East Asian actors have worked at the RSC over the last two decades suggests that Siu Hun Li, Susan Momoko Hingley, and Chris Lew Kum Hoi *were* cast because of their ethnicity, precisely to respond to the Chinese setting of this play. (479)

Thomas's analysis demonstrates the complexity of colourblind casting, which as a practice declares that the racial identity of the performer is not intended to signify in performance, but in a field in which anything within the theatrical frame is scrutinised for potential semiotic significance, race will inevitably signify on some level. The controversy also illustrates the limitations of colourblind casting in dealing with the complexity of discrimination facing specific minority groups. As Angela Pao observed, the casting of *The Orphan of Zhao* demonstrated that "East Asian actors are

²⁸ Broderick Chow observed that the parts played by East Asian actors were "purely reactive [...] It is the non-Asian actors who portray roles with agency and are able to determine the course of the narrative" (514).

too often left out of the vision of a multicultural and cosmopolitan Britain” (“The Red and the Purple” 471). Furthermore, the fact that of the three BEA actors, all were recent graduates and just one was female hints at the intersection of age and gender with racial discrimination.²⁹

The Role of Equity and Lobbying Groups in Performers’ Employment Rights

In an employment context with unlegislated recruitment practices and in which positive action such as colourblind casting can be used to justify privileging the already over-represented, professional bodies and unions play an important role in challenging discrimination. Equity is the only Trade Union in the UK to represent performers from across the artistic spectrum, including theatre, television, and film; it was established in 1930 and negotiates minimum employment standards for wages and working conditions, as well as lobbying both arts institutions and the government on issues affecting its members. Equity has a history of campaigning on the issue of diversity and their inclusive casting policy, adopted in June 2015, makes three key demands of the industry:

- greater incidental portrayal — where the artist’s personal characteristics are incidental to the role — providing real opportunities to increase diversity on stage and screen.
- greater care and consideration by productions when casting roles where the artist’s personal characteristics are relevant to the role
- all productions to play their part in improving equality practice across the industry... (Equity Report)

Equity’s work on integrated casting began with a focus on race and disability, but the policy statement in June 2015 indicated that the new campaign would address “persistent issues bound up with the lack of diversity — across the board — on stage and on screen” (Equity Report). Equity faces an uphill struggle, however; with little legal support for

²⁹ In their letter to the Royal Shakespeare Company the British East Asian Actors group observed that “It is also clear that all three are roughly in the same age demographic and this belies the diversity and experience that exists among British East Asian actors” (505), but did not comment on the way in which female BEA actors were uniquely marginalised by a production that featured a cast of seventeen performers, only four of whom were female.

equality in casting Equity is only in a position to highlight “equality law including relevant exemptions and positive action measures” (Equity Report) rather than enforce a specific policy. Furthermore in an employment market with far more actors than jobs, the “buyer’s market” favours employers (Roberts 87). The wide variety of performance contexts in which its members are employed, from profit-share fringe theatre to big-budget films, combine with the notion of casting as an artistic practice to make enforcement of antidiscrimination practice particularly difficult. Where Equity is most successful is with research and lobbying, highlighting existing issues and campaigning for change.

Equity’s Women’s Committee has contributed some important research to the field of on-stage gender representation. For example, in 2011 Equity’s Women’s Committee looked into the gender ratios of casts at 36 theatres across their 2009/10 seasons and found that only one featured more performances by women than by men (Equity “Women’s Committee”). The following year the North West branch of the Union criticised programming at the Hampstead Theatre, which they argued had “little regard for female performers’ right to work” (qtd. in Woolman). In an open letter to the artistic director, Edward Hall, they observed that the 2012 summer season of *Chariots of Fire*, *The Druid Murphy* Trilogy, and Propeller Theatre Company’s *Henry V* and *The Winter’s Tale*, featured a cast 18 men and three women, 13 men and four women, and 15 men respectively; out of fifty-three possible castings, only seven went to women, representing just 13% of roles.³⁰ Equity suggested that as a recipient of public subsidy, the Hampstead had “a duty to respect equality and diversity” (qtd. in Woolman) and demanded that subsequent seasons should make a conscious effort to redress the gender imbalance of the 2012 programming.³¹

³⁰ Excluding supernumeraries.

³¹ Woolman reports that the Hampstead countered the accusation, stating that in previous years they had employed 22 actors and 29 actresses (2010/11) and 37 actors and 24 actresses (2011/12).

The idea that companies in receipt of public subsidy should be particularly accountable in terms of their casting policies was furthered by the launch of “The Creative Case for Diversity” by the Arts Council England. Defining diversity as encompassing “race, ethnicity, faith, disability, age, gender, sexuality, class and economic disadvantage and any social and institutional barriers that prevent people from participating in and enjoying the arts” (ACE, “What is the Creative Case” 5), the approach marked a shift “from regarding diversity as a prescriptive aspect of equality legislation to understanding its creative potential” (ACE, “Equality and Diversity” 8). The policy aimed to address the concerns of some minority artists that “Arts Council England policies were contributing to them being devalued as artists” (ACE, “What is the Creative Case” 6), with diversity a “tick-box” issue. An early version of this programme, announced in the summer of 2014, required ACE’s National Portfolio Organisations (NPOs) to conduct diversity monitoring for the performers they employ, along with administrative and creative staff (Merrifield “ACE forces”). However, the requirements were later changed so that while data will be published on the diversity of individual theatres’ permanent staff, data concerning the diversity of on-stage employees will not be collected. Instead, NPOs “must provide an equal opportunities policy and equality action plan for the 2015–18 funding period” (ACE, “Briefing Notes” 40), which may include collecting data on the diversity of the workforce.

Alongside pressure from the union and funders, a body of lobbying organisations also scrutinise casting practices in theatre performance. Feminist theatre companies such as Sphinx Theatre and Tonic Theatre conduct research alongside programming feminist productions. More recently the Act for Change Project has been established by a group of actor-activists whose aims include:

The opposition to and elimination of discrimination on any grounds including, but not limited to, the grounds of race, gender, disability, sexual orientation, age, socio-economic background, nationality or religion, in live and recorded performance arts, arts and

production including, but not limited to, television drama, film, and live theatre and audio (the “Arts”). (Act for Change “Manifesto”)

The commitment of Sphinx, Tonic, and Act for Change to challenging discriminatory practice through positive action and research has led to a number of studies that, along with data from Equity and research by scholars, contributes to a picture of existing discrimination in the theatre and helps to contextualise my own findings that follow.

Existing Studies

There have been many qualitative and quantitative studies exploring gender in the theatre. From qualitative, interview-led feminist studies such as Carol Chillington Rutter’s *Clamorous Voices* and Elizabeth Schafer’s *Ms Directing Shakespeare*, which offer valuable insights into the gendered experiences of female practitioners working in Shakespeare, to quantitative research such as Carol Gardner’s “What Share of the Cake?” (1987) and Jennie Long’s “What Share of the Cake Now?” (1994), which demonstrate that gender inequality permeates every level of theatre practice, there is much evidence of sexism in the theatre. In the analysis of existing studies that follows I focus specifically on recent work that has looked at questions of representation and visibility, whether that is quantitative research into the number of female performers on stage, or qualitative research into actors’ experiences of gender and representation.

Women in Theatre (2006)

Two studies instigated by female practitioners provide a useful context for my research. The first was a report undertaken by Sphinx Theatre Company entitled the “Women in Theatre 2006 Survey”. Collecting details of 140 productions that took place in 112 theatres across England from 16th-29th January 2006, the study focussed on the presence of women in writing, directing, and performing roles. The survey found that on stage, women played just 423 out of a total of the 1,100 roles, while just 9% of plays were written by a solo women with a further 16% representing a

mixed collaboration, 23% of plays were directed by a woman with a further 4% as a mixed collaboration (Sphinx, “Women in Theatre” 2).

Snapshot studies such as this are useful for the theatre industry as they starkly illustrate the lack of gender parity in the theatre. They are perhaps slightly less useful for scholars seeking to draw inferences and conclusions because it is hard to know whether the fortnight in January nearly a decade ago was representative of wider trends. January in particular can be an anomalous month, with family shows and pantomimes dominating theatre programming, as is evidenced in the fact that neither of the RSC productions included in the survey was written by Shakespeare.³² Nonetheless, the report makes a valuable contribution to my research, not least because of the way it categorises its findings; along with the overall average, the report breaks down its figures by type of venue. Sphinx found that at fringe theatres, female performers made up 52% of casts, while in non-musical West End productions they made up only 30% (3). This raises questions about how repertoire, production type, and casting interact, something that my own research will explore.

Six years after the Sphinx report, in 2012, *The Guardian* newspaper published findings co-researched with theatre director Elizabeth Freestone. The work took a snapshot of English professional theatre in 2011-12, focussing on the gender balance at the top ten recipients of funding from Arts Council England. Exploring the average make-up of boards (33% female), artistic directors (36% female), executive directors (67% female), directors (24% female), creative team members (23% female), and actors (38% female) across the ten venues, the study found a persistent 2:1 ratio favouring men (Higgins). Of the new plays produced by these venues, women wrote just 35%, a figure that takes on a particular significance given that the study also found that female playwrights wrote on average 49% of their roles for women while male playwrights only

³² The two RSC productions were family shows: *Great Expectations* and *The Canterbury Tales*.

wrote an average of 37% female roles. Freestone argued that contemporary theatrical discrimination stems from the dominance of Shakespeare, suggesting that: “we've been caught thinking that 30% women is good enough. I'm not saying there's been institutional sexism, but there has been a sort of blindness to female actors because of the burden of the classical canon” (qtd. in Higgins). Accompanying the employment statistics, the authors also categorised Shakespeare's plays by number of lines for women, finding that one of the most popular Shakespeare plays in the theatre, *Hamlet*, is in the bottom five plays for female speaking parts with just 8.5% of lines spoken by women (“Women in Theatre”).

The research came at an important time for the discussion of gender equality in performance. Not only was 2012 the year that Equity criticised the Hampstead Theatre for its unequal casting, it was the year of the UK's Cultural Olympiad, and also the year that Josie Rourke made history by becoming Artistic Director of one of London's most influential producing theatres, The Donmar Warehouse. The detailed focus on this unique moment in theatre's history makes the research extremely valuable, but it also has limitations. While its yearlong focus offers a wider overview than the Sphinx research detailed above, it still only offers a snapshot of practice and provides no wider context of continuity or change. Focussing on just one year, the findings may not be representative, especially given the time span included the Cultural Olympiad which is likely to have influenced programming and casting during that time. Another limitation is that the research focuses only on subsidised theatres and omitted the work of Shakespeare's Globe, which along with the RSC, is likely to be uniquely influenced by the Shakespeare-dominated repertoire.

Dean 2008: “Age, Gender and Performer Employment in Europe”

In 2008 the International Federation of Actors (FIA) published a report on research conducted by Dr Deborah Dean entitled “Age, Gender and Performer Employment in Europe”. The project aimed to offer “the first

Europe-wide picture of key aspects of the working realities of performers' lives" with a specific focus on "the effects of gender stereotypes and portrayal of women on employment opportunities for performers and on images in society in general" (Dean, "Age" 4). Performers were asked to complete an online survey that asked a range of questions that aimed to gauge perceptions of career opportunities and limitations according to a variety of categories. Analysing the responses of 2,154 performers from across Europe, Dean found that ageing was a gendered experience for actors, observing that women consider their "gender as disadvantageous to them along every dimension (number and variety of roles, pay, ageing, 'type' most often cast as)" (5); have shorter careers than men (18-19) and are clustered in the lower income brackets with fewer in higher income brackets (19-22); who are from minority ethnic groups "perceive a triple burden (ethnicity, gender, ageing) in relation to employment issues" (5). The study's focus on participant perception affords a useful comparison with my own study, which looks specifically at employment outcomes in the form of on-stage representation. In the analysis that follows, I will consider how gender, age, and race intersect during the process of casting classical theatre and whether the performers' perceptions in Dean's study are borne out in the representation of women in Shakespeare.

British Black and Asian Shakespeare

In January 2016 the British Black and Asian Shakespeare Project presented its findings. This three year AHRC funded research project headed by Professor Tony Howard aimed to explore "the growing contribution of black and Asian performers to the UK's theatrical life, from 1930 to 2015" (BBA Shakespeare, "About") and produced a database that documented performances by black and Asian actors in over 1,194 productions of Shakespeare in Britain in the eighty-five year period (J.Rogers "Uncovering"). While the project aimed to celebrate the achievements of minority ethnic performers in Shakespeare, it also highlighted the limitations of existing casting practices and uncovered, what Research Assistant and Honorary Fellow Jami Rogers termed, a "black

canon” of Shakespearean roles. The data suggested that while the number of BAME performers has increased over the eighty-five year period, minority ethnic actors tend to be cast in supporting roles rather than as leads. Rogers illustrated this point with a list of the BAME actors who have performed in a leading Shakespearean role on one of Britain’s five main stages between 2000 and 2015 and found that only twenty-two actors matched the criteria.³³ Of the twenty-two actors, only five were female.³⁴ Rogers acknowledged the particularly bleak employment landscape for women of colour, observing “as much as the ‘black canon’ functions as a glass-ceiling for the men, for the women it’s impossible” (“Uncovering”).

The study’s main focus was on race and, while Rogers hinted at its intersection with gender, as well as the question of career longevity, its aims did not include assessing the complexity of discrimination faced by performers. Indeed, because its main focus as a study was the celebration of black and Asian performers in British stagings of Shakespeare, its methodology sought only to capture performances by BAME performers, leaving the status quo unexamined. Rogers noted, for example, that because the database only details performances by minority ethnic actors, the work of companies such as Shakespeare at the Tobacco Factory and Theatr Clwyd was rarely included, as their productions tend to feature predominantly white casts. The project was therefore also unable to contextualise the number of BAME performers within the wider performance landscape.³⁵ Despite these limitations, this groundbreaking study had an ambitious scope and the presentation of their findings via the

³³ Rogers defined the five main stages as the RSC’s Royal Shakespeare Theatre and Swan Theatre, the National Theatre’s Olivier and Lyttleton auditoria, and Shakespeare’s Globe Theatre. She classified leading roles by title characters and also according to number of lines spoken.

³⁴ Of these five female performances four were in productions mounted by the RSC, and one by Shakespeare’s Globe.

³⁵ Rogers’s “The Shakespearean Glass Ceiling” can usefully be read alongside the findings of the BBA Shakespeare Project for greater contextualisation, though the two projects adopt a different timeframe and methodology.

database makes it an invaluable resource for the study of casting in classical theatre.

The studies surveyed above provide a useful overview of the ways in which gender discrimination operates in performance. However, as Terri Power observes in her survey of recent research, “these studies take in a larger genre of work including contemporary plays rather than looking exclusively at classical roles and Shakespeare.” Power adds she suspects “that if we were to look empirically at women’s participation and employment in Shakespeare productions and roles such figures would be doubly appalling” (47). While my data includes new writing and revivals, its focus on two of the United Kingdom’s most prestigious classical stages will help to demonstrate how the Shakespearean repertoire interacts with gender discrimination in contemporary casting contexts.

The Companies: The Royal Shakespeare Company and Shakespeare’s Globe Theatre

The Royal Shakespeare Company and Shakespeare’s Globe Theatre are the bastions of Shakespearean performance in the UK and performances staged there might be seen to have a global significance. Productions at these venues have a unique access to Shakespearean authority and, as I have already argued, “might be thought to carry particular and significant cultural/historical weight” (Bennett, “The Presence of Shakespeare” 210). The Royal Shakespeare Company, endorsed by the British monarchy and funded, in part, by the British taxpayer, is inherently linked with the British establishment, despite its politically radical roots (Sinfield). Its geographical location in Shakespeare’s hometown of Stratford-upon-Avon also imbues the company with a sense of Shakespearean authority. Shakespeare’s Globe Theatre likewise derives a degree of its authority from its geographical location, with its proximity to the site of the original Globe Theatre, the foundations of which are just a few hundred metres away from the reconstructed theatre. Built to be as accurate a reconstruction of Shakespeare’s original theatre as possible, utilising methods and materials available to the early moderns and based on meticulously researched

historical evidence, Shakespeare's Globe Theatre's claim to authority is closely linked with notions of authenticity and nostalgia. For these reasons both venues are major tourist attractions, as well as having a reputation for staging world-class Shakespeare.

Despite their common aim of staging world-class Shakespearean productions, the Royal Shakespeare Company and Shakespeare's Globe are institutions with a very different history and operate on a very different financial model. The RSC was established in 1960 under the artistic directorship of Peter Hall, though it has roots dating back to Garrick's Shakespeare Jubilee in Stratford-upon-Avon in 1769. By the turn of the twenty-first century it had occupied a unique position in the UK's cultural landscape for forty years, as a definitive producer of Shakespeare's works. In contrast, the inaugural season at Shakespeare's Globe was in 1997.³⁶ American actor Sam Wanamaker had founded the Shakespeare Globe Trust and the International Shakespeare Globe Centre in 1970, but in the face of public scepticism and accusations of theme-park Shakespeare (see Worthen "Reconstructing the Globe") the project did not attract government funding and huge effort had to be put into fundraising: a project that took over twenty-five years.

Shakespeare's Globe remains an independent organisation, receiving no public subsidy. In contrast, the Royal Shakespeare Company receives the second-largest amount of public subsidy of any theatre in England. In the most recently reported financial year (2013/14) the RSC's annual income was £61.3m (RSC "Finance"). Public investment from Arts Council England grants accounted for 26% of their funding, at £15.7m (RSC "Finance"). In addition to this public subsidy, the RSC generated its income through box office receipts (£32.5m), commercial trading activity (£5.5m), and a mixture of corporate sponsorship and charitable donations (£3.9m) (RSC "Finance"). The Royal Shakespeare Company is one of Arts Council

³⁶ A "Prologue Season" was held in the partially constructed theatre in 1996, but this was not a full season of work.

England's National Portfolio Organisations and is the second largest funding recipient. It also has a successful relationship with commercial theatres, generating a significant portion of its revenue from transfers, with *Les Miserables* and *Matilda* representing particular success stories, and important income-generators, for the company.

In contrast, for the year ending October 2014, Shakespeare's Globe received no public subsidy, reflecting a financial independence that it has had since its inception. Its turnover was significantly smaller than the RSC's, with a total income of £21,538,000. Of this, 74% (£16m) was generated through Theatre and Exhibition Admissions, Educational Services and Touring receipts, while 16% (£3.4m) came from other trading receipts, 9% (£2m) came from Partnership Funds such as donations, legacies, and other gifts, and 1% (£76,000) came from Bank Interest (Shakespeare's Globe "Annual Review 2014").

The creative output of the two institutions reflects the sizeable difference in their income. In 2014 the RSC sold 1.8 million tickets and gave over 2000 performances of 28 productions and co-productions, in stagings which toured, both nationally and internationally, for 70 weeks, as well as broadcasting live to 17 countries (RSC, "Annual Review 2014-15" 3). In contrast, 368,000 spectators attended the Globe's April - October season, with an additional 171,000 people attending touring performances and the Broadway transfer of Tim Carroll's *Richard III* and *Twelfth Night*. On top of this, 54,000 people had attended the global tour of *Hamlet* by the 31st October 2014 (Shakespeare's Globe "Annual Review 2014").

Both theatres have more than one performance space. The Royal Shakespeare Company's two main spaces are the Royal Shakespeare Theatre and the Swan Theatre, which hold over 1,000 and 450 spectators respectively. It also has a studio space which has taken a number of incarnations including The Other Place (1974-2006) and the temporary Courtyard Theatre (2006-2010). Shakespeare's Globe Theatre's two spaces are the main Globe theatre, which can hold approximately 1,400

spectators, and the Sam Wanamaker Playhouse, opened in January 2014. The Sam Wanamaker Playhouse is a simulacrum of an early modern indoor playhouse and can hold 340 audience members. Since the millennium the works of Shakespeare have dominated the repertoire on the main stages at both venues, with the work of other early modern dramatists tending to be performed at the Swan Theatre and Sam Wanamaker Playhouse. At the RSC, The Other Place was a place for experimentation and new writing is a major feature in their studio spaces, though it also plays on the RST stage, along with revivals, musicals, and a family show at Christmas. New writing is also a feature at Shakespeare's Globe, particularly flourishing under the artistic directorship of Dominic Dromgoole, who commissioned at least two new works each season during his tenure. Both institutions also have large education departments and offer productions specifically aimed at young people. At the RSC this takes the form of small-scale touring productions that play in schools as well as theatres, while Shakespeare's Globe has the Playing Shakespeare with Deutsche Bank (PSwDB) scheme, created by Globe Education, which began in 2007 and takes place every spring, offering thousands of free tickets to state secondary schools.

The task of programming at the two venues falls primarily to the artistic director. The timescale that I am surveying spans the tenure of three artistic directors at the RSC, Adrian Noble (1991-2003), Michael Boyd (2003-2012) and Gregory Doran (2012-present) and two at Shakespeare's Globe, Mark Rylance (1996-2005) and Dominic Dromgoole (2005-2015). The scope of the repertoire and size of casts at Shakespeare's Globe has increased significantly over the period, starting with just 65 performers in 2000 and increasing to 204 by 2014. Shakespeare's Globe originally operated a company system under Rylance, with actors through-cast in two or more productions each year. The company system is not used under Dromgoole, though new writing productions often share the majority of their company members with a Shakespeare production programmed in the season.

The size of acting companies at the RSC between 2000 and 2014 fluctuates, reflecting the somewhat turbulent time at the company in the last few years of Noble's tenure (see Trowbridge 295-297), as well as the upheaval caused by the major redevelopment of the RST and Swan theatres in the mid 2000s. The RSC generally adopts company casting, with productions through-cast in the season. Both the RSC and Shakespeare's Globe employ permanent casting directors, a decision which reflects the size of the organisations as well as the complexities of through-casting, which can require negotiation between two or more directors about who is cast in their production.

Casting Figures: Methodology & Data Collection

The cultural prestige and stable, medium-to-long length contracts, paid at Equity agreed rates, at the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC) and Shakespeare's Globe Theatre (SGT) make them a particularly appealing prospect for professional actors working in a hierarchical and precarious employment context. The statistical analysis that follows aims to explore how the artistic, economic, and practical considerations of the casting process discussed thus far translate into performances on England's most prestigious Shakespearean stages. With a focus on just two venues and with a span of fifteen years, this study approaches the question of representation from a different perspective to the studies detailed above and aims to address some of the areas neglected by current research, with a combined focus on material conditions and identity politics. In doing so, it will provide an overview of casting practices in Shakespearean performance, offering a context for the case studies that follow.

The data that I have gathered aims to answer five key research questions, which are:

- How do the gender ratios at the RSC and Shakespeare's Globe Theatre (SGT) compare?
- How does race intersect with gender in performances on these stages?
- How does age intersect with gender in performances on these stages?

- How does repertoire affect gender ratios at these venues?
- How does production type affect gender ratios at these venues?

My focus is on representation rather than employment, as I look at the number of actors in an individual production, rather than the number of unique employment opportunities for actors across a season. In this way, I am approaching casting choices from the perspective of a spectator watching a play, rather than an industry professional working on a production. I have collected the data according to actor “tracks” within an individual production: I have noted the number of actors in a specific play rather than the number of characters they play, or the number of actors employed across a whole season. This approach enables a direct comparison between productions of a specific play, as well as facilitating a clearer assessment of the gendered opportunities in Shakespeare’s work versus plays by other playwrights.

I have drawn my data set from the programme listings in the archives at the RSC and Shakespeare’s Globe for productions staged between 1st January 2000 and 31st December 2014. The productions I consider are all full-scale stagings on the main stages of the respective venues. I have discounted from the data rehearsed readings, festival performances by non-RSC or Globe companies, or fundraising events, in order to ensure that the data is representative of the regular output of both venues. For productions of new writing at the RSC I have chosen not to consider plays that had twelve performances or fewer because the personnel in these productions are generally drawn from within the existing company. As a result, the diversity was arguably determined by the programming of the season in which these small-scale productions took place. I do, however, consider any full-scale production of new writing that ran as part of the main season.

Co-productions have been included in all but a few cases, as can be seen in the full list of productions detailed in my appendix. I have excluded

musicals from my consideration; as a genre musicals have different casting demands and draw on a different pool of actors, favouring performers trained in musical theatre rather than classically trained actors. For example, all but two members of the original company of the RSC's *Matilda* were making their RSC debut in the production, demonstrating that the musical was drawing on a different pool of actors than the Shakespearean and new writing productions usually cast by the venue.³⁷ I have, however, included plays with songs, as opposed to musicals, as these productions tend to require actors who can sing, rather than specifically trained musical theatre actors and so draw from a similar pool of actors as plays staged at these venues.

The data does not include the cast details of tours or transfers. This is, in part, because archives have less reliable data on tours, but also because, while they represent a new casting opportunity for professional actors in England, in practice the gender ratios remain the same for transfers and existing research suggests that more often than not the opportunities for BAME actors are similar (J.Rogers, "Glass Ceiling" 415). Thus the inclusion of tours and transfers would not make a valuable contribution to the data set. Furthermore, these productions would require greater contextualisation, as they take place outside the specific institutions with which I am concerned. I have identified in the notes where a production has had a particularly successful transfer, or where there was a major casting change.

I have collected only data pertaining to actors, discounting performers recruited solely as dancers, musicians, or supernumeraries. In cases where a performer is both a named character and a dancer they have been included in the figures, but where a performer is listed as simply "dancer" they have not been included. In part this decision reflects the status of

³⁷ In *Matilda* only Michael Rouse (Doctor) and Lauren Ward (Miss Honey) had acted at the RSC before, performing in the musical *The Secret Garden* and *The Winter's Tale* and *Pericles* respectively.

Shakespeare as the UK's national poet: I am concerned with which actors are afforded the opportunity of speaking Shakespeare's words and the agency that dialogue affords. On an employment level, musicians and dancers are likely to undergo a different selection process to actors, are represented by a different union, and subject to distinct employment conditions and rates of pay. Furthermore, artists working predominantly as musicians or dancers are significantly less likely to be listed in the *Spotlight Directory*, which has been a key resource in determining the gender, race, and age of the actors in my study: in an effort to control variables it has been necessary to restrict the parameters of my research.

When compiling this data set I began by consulting theatre programmes, listing every actor and the roles that he or she played within a specific production. I then crosschecked this information with the printed editions of the *Spotlight Directory*, which identify an actor's height, age-range, and eye colour, as well as providing the actor's headshot in order to identify the actor's gender, age-range, and a superficial identification of their racial identity.³⁸ I grouped information into categories, listing gender as male/female, race as white/BAME, and age according to *Spotlight Directory* categories 18-25, 25-35, 35-45, 45-55, 55-65, and 65+. I also collected the actors' names, character names, and place of training, along with production details including the date of the opening night, the stage on which it was performed, and the director's name.

Where possible I have crosschecked this information with the online *Spotlight Directory*, which provides a more detailed listing of the actor's physical characteristics as well offering a brief CV.³⁹ When information in the online *Spotlight Directory* was unavailable I have consulted as many

³⁸ *Spotlight Directories for 2012-2014* detail the actor's age, then from 2000-2009 they detail the actor's casting "type" which is divided into four categories.

³⁹ The online *Spotlight Directory* is accessible only to those working in casting who pay a subscription to access the information, but some actors and agents provide public links to their *Spotlight* page. Where a public link is available I have used it to cross-check my data.

sources as possible in order to compile this data set, particularly for determining an actor's racial identity. These include social media (Twitter in particular), newspaper articles and interviews, casting directories such as *Casting Call Pro* and *The British Blacklist*,⁴⁰ as well as theatre programmes, production shots and websites. I have also consulted the *British Black and Asian Shakespeare Performance Database*, which provides details of BAME performers who are working, or have worked, professionally in a UK staging of Shakespeare.⁴¹ Like the category of "appearance" in the *Spotlight Directory* I have focused on the semiotic of race rather than the cultural category of ethnicity.⁴²

There are problems inherent in reading race in performance, not least because race, like gender, is a social construct. As Omi and Winant have persuasively argued:

There is no biological basis for distinguishing among human groups along the lines of race [...] the categories employed to differentiate among human groups along racial lines reveal themselves upon serious examination to be imprecise, and at worst completely arbitrary. (183)

This is perhaps reflected by the fact that the online *Spotlight Directory* requires actors to identify their "appearance", that is, the racial identity they might signify in performance. This category of "appearance" does not reflect the nuances of ethnicity or national identity. It would be fairly standard, for example, for an actor of South Asian descent to utilise several "appearance" categories into which they might fall – such as Asian, Indian, Mixed Race, and Pakistani – to reflect the variety of possible identities that

⁴⁰ *Casting Call Pro* and *The British Blacklist* are searchable online directories that provide details of actors working in the industry.

⁴¹ The *British Black and Asian Shakespeare Performance Database* is the culmination of the research project detailed above (BBA Shakespeare "About").

⁴² Michael Banton defines the distinction between race and ethnicity as follows: "a physical feature is taken to indicate that an individual is to be assigned to a racial category while a cultural feature is taken as a sign that the individual is a member of an ethnic group" (qtd. in Pao, *No Safe Spaces* 11).

could be ascribed to them in performance. The way in which the actor's race is read in performance would then be influenced by the way in which the production controls the semiotics at its disposal, including costume, make-up, and accent. For example, Gregory Doran's 2012 production of *Julius Caesar* at the RSC featured an all-black cast and the colour-conscious casting was designed to evoke the "African" context of Doran's relocation of the play. Yet, the variety of ethnicities represented by the actors in the company was elided by a presumed common racial identity. Jeffrey Kissoon, who played Caesar in the production, highlighted the diversity of the company, noting "The group we have is made up of such diverse actors from Nigeria, Ghana, Jamaica, Trinidad, the US – and we all come from different backgrounds" (Murphy). Doran used the production's design, especially costumes, to unify the appearance of the cast, and the cast also all adopted "African accents" (L.Thompson "*Julius Caesar*"). The focus of the casting was on the semiotic of race, rather than the more nuanced category of ethnicity, and the staging utilised production elements to unify these disparate identities into a coherent semiotic.

Categorising race according to appearance has proved challenging for other studies. For example, there were discrepancies in the special edition of the *Contemporary Theatre Review* relating to the *Orphan of Zhao* controversy; discussing the diversity of the *Zhao* company, Angela Pao identified five BAME actors in the company ("The Red and the Purple" 473), while, in the same volume, the company's letter to Equity suggested that there were seven BAME members of the company (Kerkour 495).⁴³ In part, this could reflect the distinction between race and ethnicity, as Pao bases her definition on appearance, whereas Kerkour's identification stems from the self-definition of the actors themselves and thus may represent

⁴³ Another discrepancy was in the number of British East Asian (BEA) actors found to have worked at the RSC: Sita Thomas identified three (479-480), whereas British Asian Actors identified four actors (504). This is likely to be due to the methodology used to identify BEA actors in performance, but it demonstrates some of the pitfalls with trying to pinpoint racial identity in performance.

ethnicity, rather than race, but it also demonstrates the subjectivity of reading race in performance.

My utilisation of “white” and “BAME” as racial categories might appear reductive, eliding the nuances of ethnicity into the subjective semiotic of race. It is an approach that might also risk othering people of colour, grouping disparate identities in one “non-white” category. In this way, my approach is similar to that of Jami Rogers in her analysis of casting in “The Shakespearean Glass Ceiling” in which her data set “essentially polarizes the racial make-ups of casts into white and varieties of ‘other’” (409). There are clearly significant limitations to this approach, not least its inability to explore the nuances of discrimination and the way in which specific ethnic groups experience prejudice. The *Orphan of Zhao* controversy has demonstrated that further research is needed into the ways in which race discrimination operates in classical theatre. However, in a performance context that privileges white experience, the racial binary that I utilise remains a useful basic category of analysis and can offer a starting point for exploring the intersection of gender, race, and age discrimination, as well as for demonstrating the dominance of white, male performers.

Deciding on an approach to determining an actor’s age and gender has proved slightly easier, as these details are listed in the printed edition of the *Spotlight Directory*. For age I have used the self-categorisation required of *Spotlight* members for the 2013 and 2014 volumes.⁴⁴ Using the self-categorisation of actors is a fairly reliable way of ascertaining age, given it is such a subjective category semiotically. One point worth bearing in mind, however, is that actors detail their “playing age” rather than actual age, and there may be a discrepancy between the two. It also potentially might have a more complex relationship with the marketisation of the self, as women are encouraged to maintain a youthful appearance and to make

⁴⁴ Prior to this, actors were required to categorise themselves in one of four “types”: leading, young, character, and younger character.

their casting as young as possible.⁴⁵ As a result, it is important to bear in mind that the figures, as with race, are based on an actor's appearance and how their age will be read onstage and to locate this within a context of aesthetic labour and gendered ageism.

In order to keep my methodology consistent I have only offered an analysis of the ages of actors from 2013 and 2014, so that I can use the self-categorisation provided in *Spotlight* in those years. The subjective nature of "type" may provide interesting insights into casting trends, but it does not represent a stable category for analysing identity politics and so I have looked only at age. I have crosschecked each individual casting with the *Spotlight Directory* from the year in which the performance took place to ensure that my data reflects the information available to the gatekeepers casting a given production.

The directories are divided into actors and actresses, supporting Dean's assertion that "Women performers are largely not considered to be in competition with men for work; not by employers and gatekeepers and not by themselves" ("Recruiting" 763). It also demonstrates how gendered the casting process is: gatekeepers must know the gender of the role they are casting in order to search the printed directories. Within this context the concept of the gender binary is key: the means of professional categorisation assumes a binary and forecloses the possibility of gender fluidity or queer identity. If these somewhat reductive categories mean that the figures that follow appear to lack nuance then this is reflective of the performance context into which they offer an insight.

Data Analysis

The following graphs have been created using SPSS analysis of the data I have collected. For each area of focus I have utilised cross-tabulation

⁴⁵ This would be an interesting area in which to conduct qualitative research, especially given that Equity reports a rise in the numbers of would-be employers breaking employment legislation by asking actors their actual age (Alberge "Tyranny").

analysis that can be found in Appendix B. This analysis has then been used to generate the graphs below, which present the data in a more reader-friendly format than the tables themselves. The questions are designed to interrogate the data for what it might reveal about gender and representation on stage, on the one hand looking at how specific performance contexts influence gender ratios, but also looking at the complexity of discrimination faced by female performers and how the representation of gender intersects with race and age.

How do the gender ratios at the RSC and SGT compare?

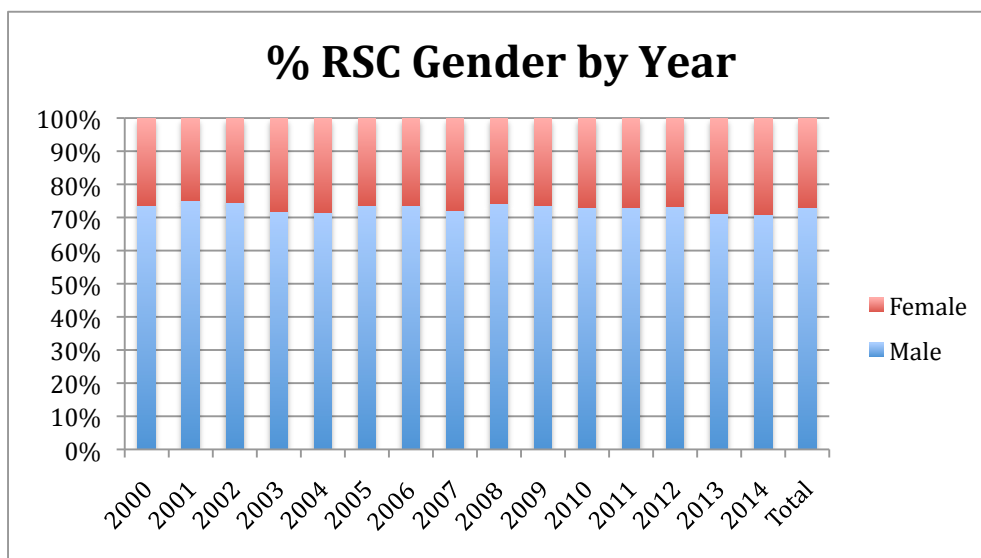


Figure 1 Casting by gender: RSC 2000-2014.

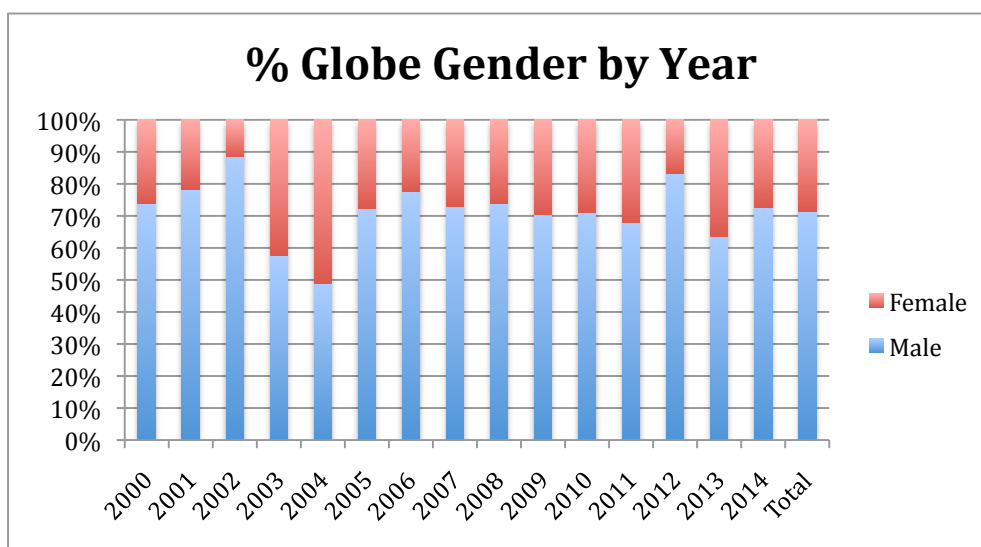


Figure 2 Casting by gender: SGT 2000-2014

The overall percentage of female performances at the Royal Shakespeare Company and Shakespeare's Globe Theatre across the fifteen-year period is very similar at 27% and 28% respectively. Comparing this to Freestone's research, which found that casts at the top ten recipients of ACE funding in 2012 had an average of 38% female performers, this data makes clear that women are particularly underrepresented on England's classical stages, with a gender ratio closer to 3:1 rather than the average 2:1.

What is perhaps most striking in the results is the relatively consistent gender ratio at the RSC and the significant fluctuation at SGT. The fluctuation at Shakespeare's Globe can, in part, be accounted for by the theatre's experimentation with single-sex casting. Its first single-sex production of the new millennium, under the Artistic Directorship of Mark Rylance, was *Twelfth Night* in 2002 directed by Tim Carroll, programmed alongside mixed-gender productions of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Golden Ass*.⁴⁶ In this year, women were just 12% of the performers on stage. Rylance addressed this imbalance the following year in his Season of Regime Change with two all-female productions, *Richard III* and *The Taming of the Shrew*, staged alongside two all-male productions, *Richard II* and *Edward II*, as well as a mixed production of Marlowe's *Dido Queen of Carthage*. With this positive action the gender balance at the venue went up to 43% female opposite 57% male performances. The Season of Star-Crossed Lovers in 2004 was the only year at either Shakespeare's Globe or the RSC to feature more performances by women than by men, with female performances making up 51% of the season. This reflects the fact that of the three plays in the season, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, and *Measure for Measure*, all were mixed-gender productions apart from *Much Ado* which was all-female. In a season of just three plays, the all-female casting balanced out the male dominated texts to create near gender parity.

⁴⁶ As this was an original practices production, Carroll was given the title Master of Play, though to all intents and purposes he was the play's director.

In 2005, Rylance's final year as Artistic Director, he programmed his biggest season, with seven productions that year. All-male productions of *Measure for Measure* and *The Tempest* (the latter of which featured just three actors) played alongside productions featuring near gender parity, such as *The Storm* and *Pericles*, taking the percentage of female performances down to 28%. For Dominic Dromgoole's first season in 2006 the gender ratios dropped, but climbed slowly but steadily through to 2011. They dropped again in 2012 when Dromgoole programmed a revival of Carroll's 2002 all-male production of *Twelfth Night* and commissioned a new production of *Richard III* through-cast with *Twelfth Night*.⁴⁷ Thus, in the year of the Cultural Olympiad female performances made up just 17% of performances staged in Shakespeare's Globe's main season.⁴⁸ In this year, it is also notable that there was no production in the Shakespeare's Globe main season directed by a woman.

The near gender parity of new writing commissioned for the venue in 2013 such as *The Lightning Child* and *Blue Stockings*, along with the only all-female production of Dromgoole's tenure, *The Taming of the Shrew* directed by Joe Murphy, saw the percentage of female performances peak at 36%, the highest of Dromgoole's tenure in the years examined. The opening of the Sam Wanamaker Playhouse in 2014 decreased the percentage of female performances, as the venue's repertoire was dominated by early modern plays, with no new writing or cross-gender casting to redress the male-heavy programming.

The consistency of gender ratios at the RSC is perhaps harder to account for, as it suggests a remarkably consistent policy towards both programming and casting that spans the tenure of three different artistic directors. During the fifteen-year period there was only one all-female

⁴⁷ These productions were the first productions from SGT to have a successful transfer run on Broadway.

⁴⁸ I have not included the performances that were held as part of the Globe to Globe Festival, as these featured international casts and received only two performances at the venue.

work programmed, an adaptation of Margaret Atwood's *The Penelopiad* in 2007 and this barely had an impact on the gender ratios of that year. It is worth noting, however, that the data from the two most recent years might hint at the beginning of a shift. In 2012 Maria Aberg regendered the role of the Bastard in *King John*, the first of a number of regenderings at the venue that have started to open up the canon to female performers. Another significant point about that time is that 2013 was Michael Boyd's final season at the RSC and featured a remarkable number of productions directed by women (see Rutter "Shakespeare Performances in England 2013"). Furthermore, the appointment of Erica Whyman as Deputy Artistic Director in January 2013 corresponds with two years of gender ratios that are slightly better than the average. This could be anomalous – 2003/2004 had similar ratios to 2013/2014– but soon after Whyman's appointment the Roaring Girl Season was announced for 2014, which aimed to stage "some of the greatest parts ever written for women" (N.Clark).⁴⁹ While female performances in 2014 were just 2% above the average at the venue, the season and the small shift over 2013 and 2014 might suggest that the question of gender is now on the agenda at the RSC.

⁴⁹ Though originally, of course, the female roles in the plays concerned were written to be played by male performers.

How does race intersect with gender in performances at these venues?

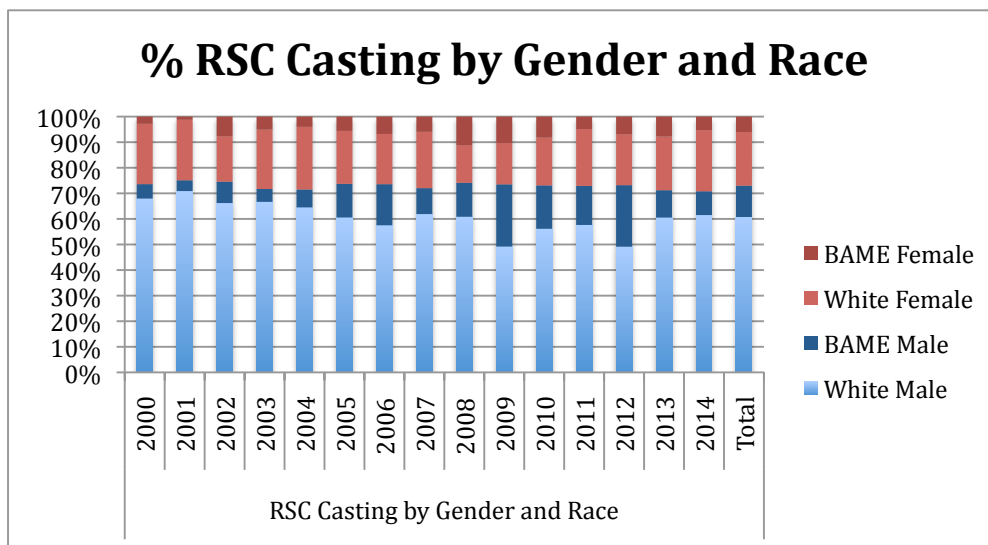


Figure 3 Casting by gender and race: RSC 2000-2014.

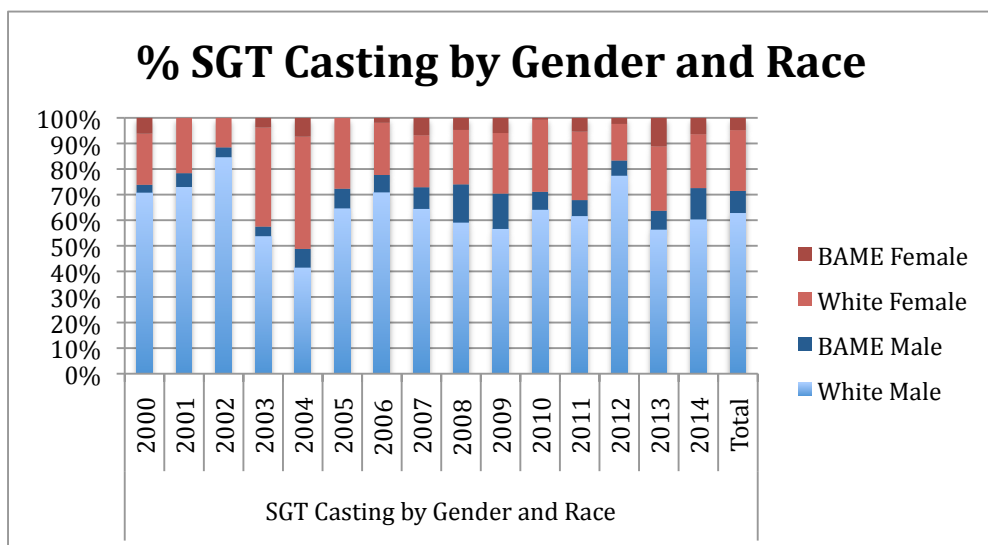


Figure 4 Company casting by gender and race: SGT 2000-2014.

While the RSC has not undertaken any major alternative casting practices in terms of gender, it has experimented with relocating Shakespeare to contexts that have called for colour-conscious casting. The impact of this conceptual Shakespeare on the race ratios is palpable. In 2012 Gregory Doran's "pan-African" *Julius Caesar*, discussed above, played alongside Iqbal Khan's "Indian" *Much Ado About Nothing* which featured a

cast of British Asian actors. The 2012 season was only one of two years to feature more performances by BAME men (70 performances, 24%) than white women (58 performances, 20%). Yet, while the percentage of male BAME performances was much higher than the average of 15%, the percentage of performances by BAME women was no higher than average at 7% of performances. Doran's *Julius Caesar* and Khan's *Much Ado* cast just three and six women respectively, in comparison with 17 and 15 men. This reflects the realist approach to casting these colour-conscious productions, with gendered casting corresponding to the gender of roles as written and no regendering of roles. The programming and colour-conscious casting of *Arabian Nights* in 2009 also contributed to the diversity of that season, as the only year at the RSC in which the majority of performances at the venue were not given by white men. The percentage of performances by women of colour in this year was higher than average, at 10%, but this was dwarfed by 24% male BAME performances.

There were no actresses from a visible ethnic minority performing at Shakespeare's Globe in 2001, 2002, and 2005. The 2001 season comprised productions of *Macbeth*, *Cymbeline*, and *King Lear* and featured eight female performances. In *Macbeth* the traditionally female roles of the Weird Sisters were played by two men and a woman (Paul Chahidi, Colin Hurley, and Liza Hayden), with Eve Best and Hilary Tones as the other female performers in the production. *Cymbeline* featured two female performers, while *King Lear* featured three, and all of the actresses were white. In 2002 the Cupid and Psyche season, an all-male *Twelfth Night* alongside mixed-gendered productions of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Golden Ass*, there were just six female tracks across the whole season and because the plays were through-cast this resulted in just three women being cast at the venue in 2002, all of whom were white. In both these years the number of performances by women were in single figures, in part because the season consisted of just three plays, but also because roles were either cast according to their gender or given to men: the data suggests that a context that is discriminatory towards women uniquely

disadvantages female performers of colour. Yet, even with 18 female tracks in 2005 (28% of performances), women of colour were still marginalised, as all roles went to white performers in this year, suggesting that female BAME performers face particular discrimination.

Under Dominic Dromgoole the diversity of casts at Shakespeare's Globe improved, though this also corresponds with an increase in the number of plays per season, so an increase in the number, if not the percentage, of female tracks across a season. It is noteworthy, however, that 2010 featured just one performance by a woman of colour, that of Karen Bryson as Lady McDuff/Witch in the Playing Shakespeare production of *Macbeth*. Out of 37 female performances, just one featured a BAME actor. Thus, the racial discrimination faced by female performers does not simply reflect the paucity of roles for women: even in seasons featuring a sizeable number of women, minority ethnic women are significantly underrepresented.

The prevalence of colourblind casting at the RSC and SGT makes it harder to account for the fluctuations in the representation of race than of gender on these stages, though it is clear when colour-conscious casting is utilised that this has a significant impact on the on-stage diversity.⁵⁰ However, women of colour do not necessarily see the benefits of the focus on racial diversity, meaning that greater attention must be paid to the complexity of discrimination operating at these venues if casting is to be more representative of contemporary UK society.

⁵⁰ I use diversity to describe the move away from the dominance of white male performances, so while racially specific casts themselves are not diverse, in the wider theatre landscape they contribute to diversity.

How does age intersect with gender in performances on these stages?

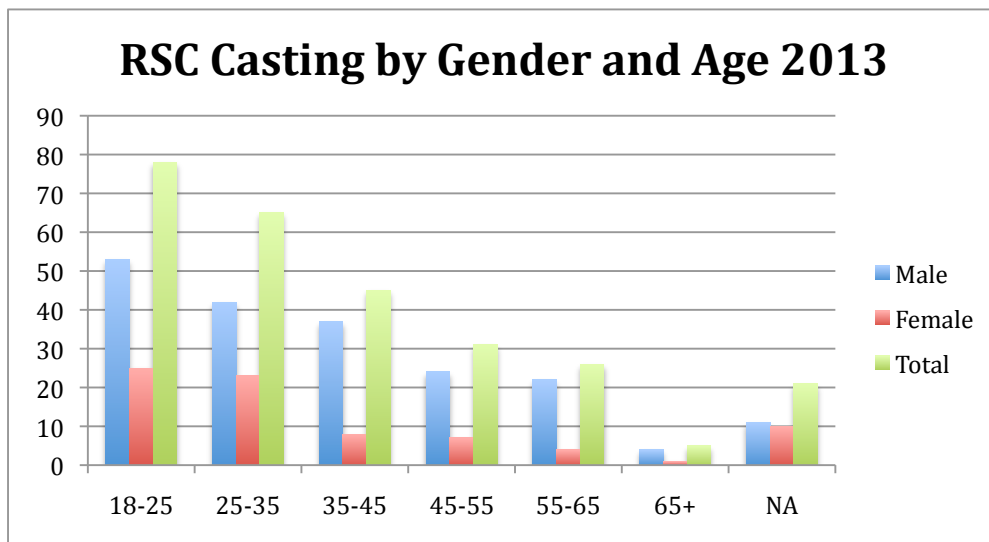


Figure 5 Casting by gender and age: RSC 2013, numerical count

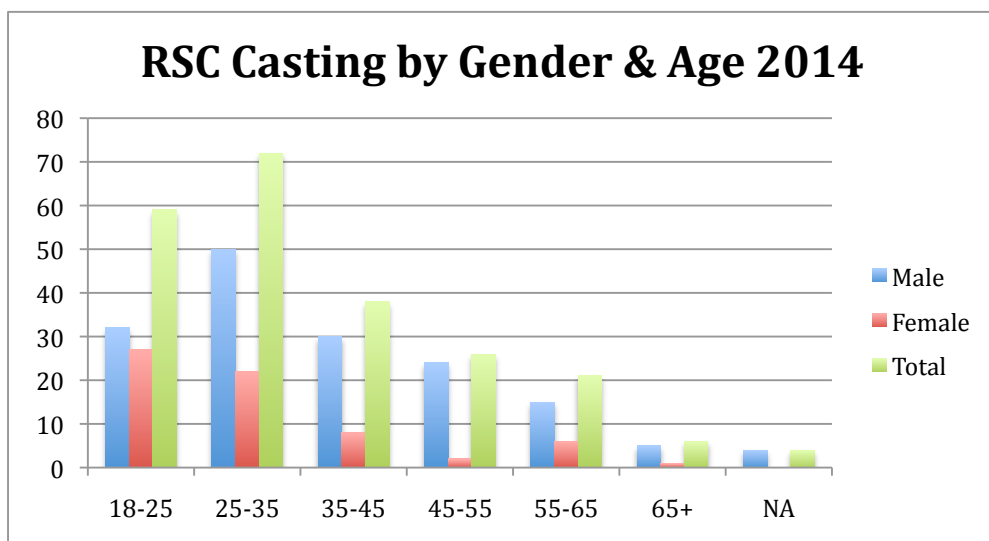


Figure 6 Casting by gender and age: RSC 2014, numerical count

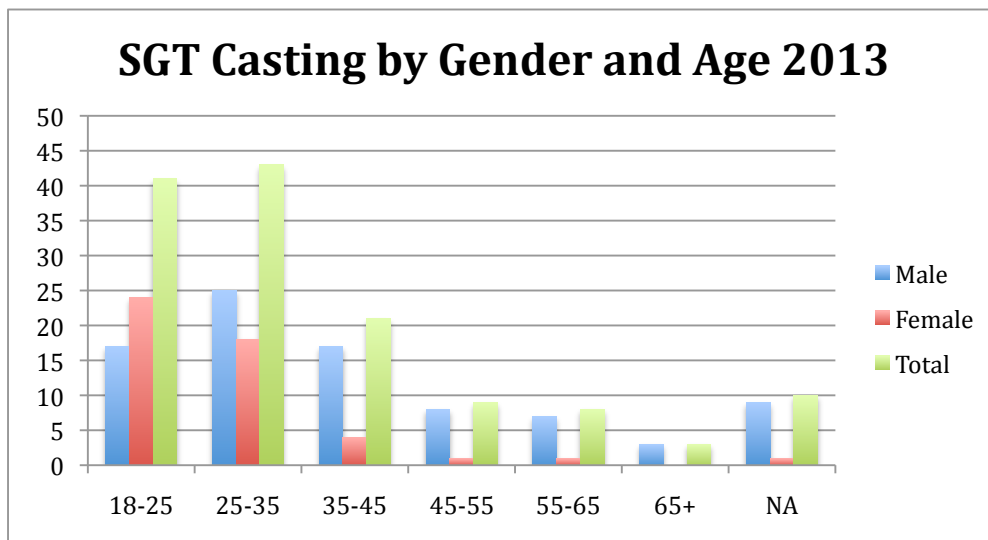


Figure 7 Casting by gender and age: SGT 2013, numerical count

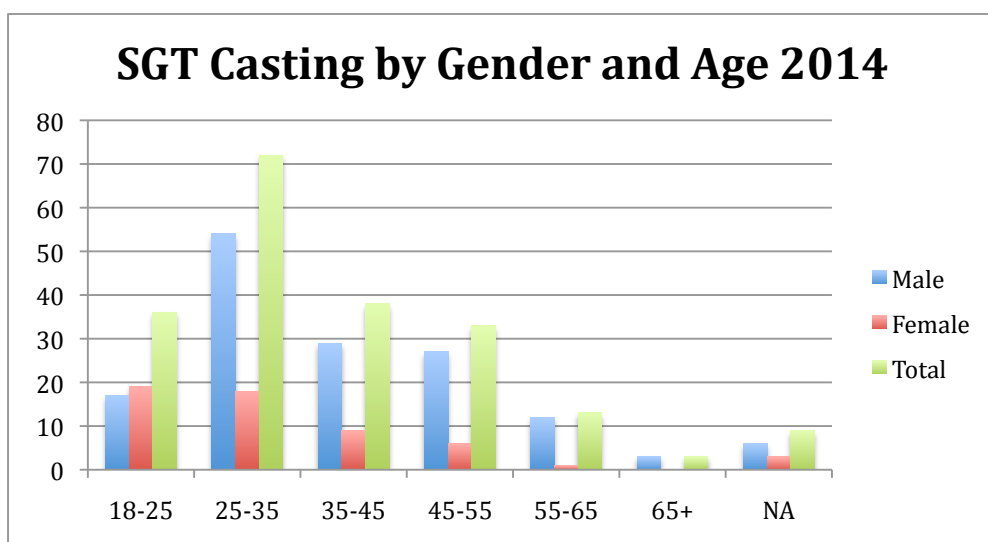


Figure 8 Casting by gender and age: SGT 2014, numerical count

Dean's 2008 study indicated that ageism is decidedly gendered and this finding is reflected in my own study. As observed above, actors have only been listed by age in the printed editions of the *Spotlight Directory* from 2013 and so I only have the age of performers at the RSC and Globe for two years of my study. While this means that the inferences I can draw from this data are likely to be inconclusive, the two years of figures nonetheless indicate a trend worthy of consideration. Figures 5-8 demonstrate that while performers at both venues experience ageism, it is particularly acute for female performers and sets in much earlier: at both venues the number of roles for both genders decreases after the age of 35

and looking specifically at female roles, the number of performances decreases from the age of 25 at both venues. Casting at Shakespeare's Globe particularly favours the young, whereas roles are more evenly distributed between the age categories at the RSC. This ageism is particularly acute for female performances at SGT, with 42 performances by women aged 18-35 in 2013 compared with just six from women over the age of 35; the following year there were 37 performances from women aged 18-25 at the same venue with only seven over the age of 35. In both 2013 and 2014 the RSC has actors from all age and gender categories, but at SGT there was not a performance by a woman who classified herself as over 65 in either year. The graphs above are useful because they visually represent the decrease in the number of roles with age. However, they are limited in their use because, using the numerical count, rather than percentages, they do not allow a direct comparison between the two venues. For this reason I have also generated charts 9-12.

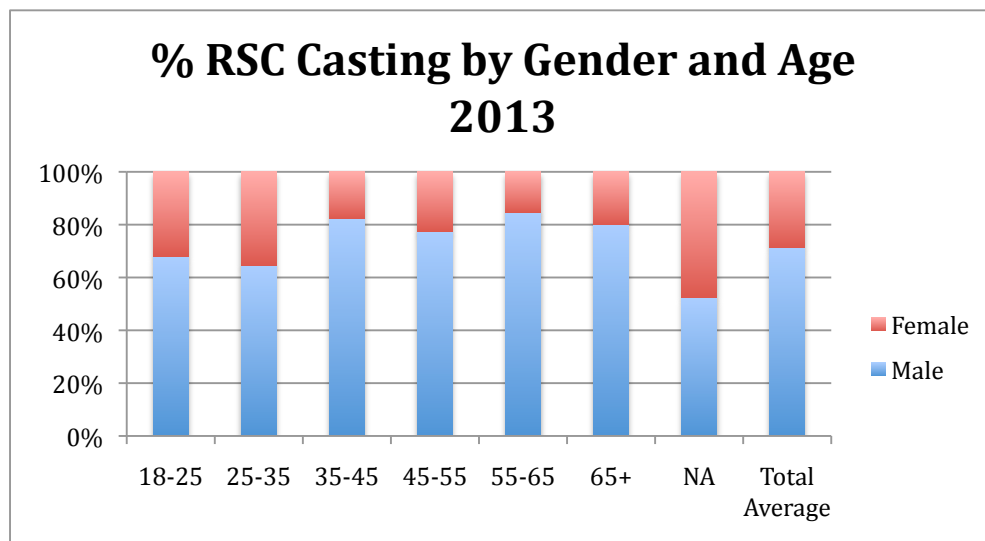


Figure 9 Casting by gender and age: RSC 2013, percentage.

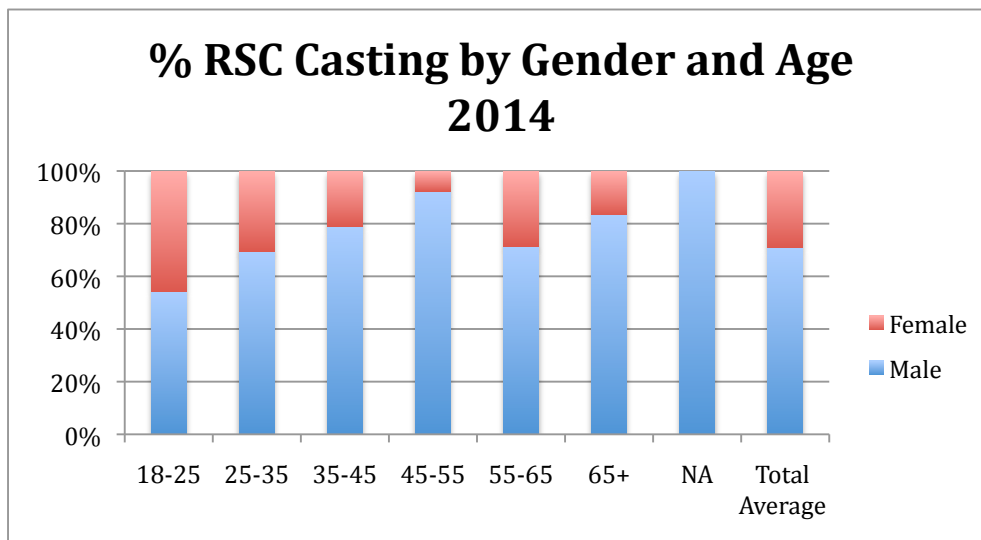


Figure 10 Casting by gender and age: RSC 2014, percentage.

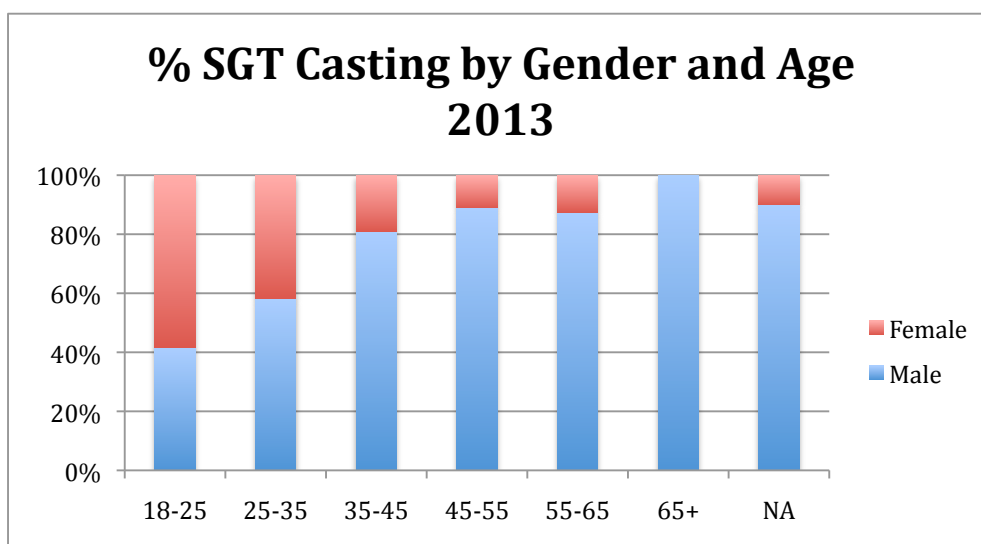


Figure 11 Casting by gender and age: SGT 2013, percentage.

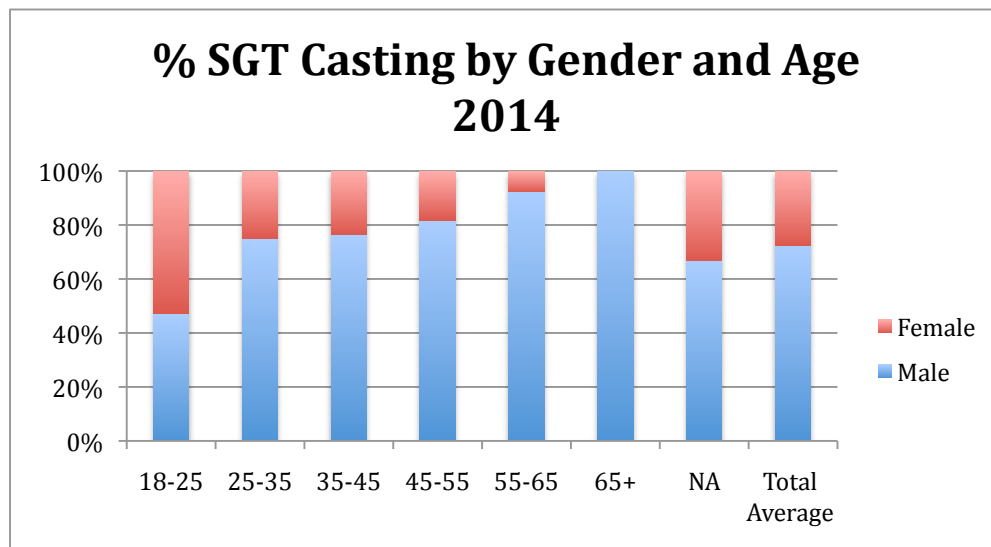


Figure 12 Casting by gender and age: SGT 2014, percentage.

Comparing the percentage of female performers in each age category with the venue average in Figures 9-12 it is clear that, while women are underrepresented at both venues, older women are particularly marginalised. The disparity between younger and older women is particularly acute at Shakespeare’s Globe where the number of women in 18-25 age category is not only significantly above the average percentage of female performers, but actually outnumbers male performers in that age category. As discussed above, this disparity may stem from the social construction of gender and its relationship with age: in an employment context where women expect to experience ageism they may be under pressure to make themselves appear as young as possible. Furthermore, they may feel that classifying themselves in an age category younger than their actual age might increase their chances of employment, meaning that the figures in *Spotlight* may represent the age an actor can “get away with” playing rather than a close representation of the age they appear. In contrast, men, who according to Dean saw ageing “either clearly as an advantage (most dimensions) or else as not either an advantage or disadvantage” (“Age” 24), may be more comfortable with owning their age, perhaps even attempting to be more mature. Equity has reported a rise in the number of actors being asked their age in auditions (Alberge “Tyranny”) and so it is unlikely that actors will significantly misrepresent

their age in *Spotlight*, but actors' perception of ageism is likely to influence their self-classification to some extent.

How does repertoire affect gender ratios at these venues?

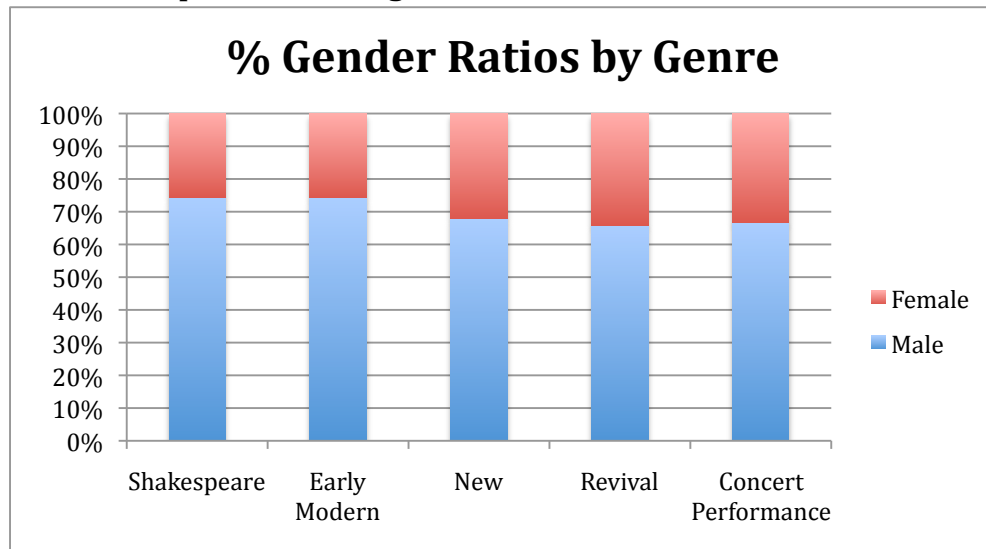


Figure 13 Casting by gender and genre

To explore the impact of repertoire on gender ratios at the RSC and SGT, I have divided my data into five distinct categories that reflect the genre of the work. I have separated Shakespeare from other early modern dramatists, defined as playwrights working between 1574 and 1642. New writing includes any plays that have received their premier at the venue as specially commissioned works, while revivals are defined as any play that has already previously been performed elsewhere, excluding the work of Shakespeare and his contemporaries. Concert performances are defined as recitations of Shakespeare's work, both poetry and drama, in an unstaged production usually featuring a company of four actors or fewer.

Shakespeare is by far the biggest category, representing 3,301 individual performances across the two venues, followed by new writing with 1,040, early modern with 489, and revivals at 220. Concert performances only contribute twelve performances to the data set. To allow for ease of comparison across genres I have detailed the gender ratios as a percentage and the results are strikingly similar, as is evident in

Figure Thirteen. Productions of the works of Shakespeare and other early modern dramatists have particularly unequal companies, but new writing and revivals only increase the on-stage female presence by an average of less than 10%. Even concert performances did not come close to gender parity. This appears to support Freestone’s assertion that as a result of the dominance of Shakespeare within the canon “we’ve been caught thinking that 30% women is good enough” (qtd. in Higgins). Certainly, the programming of new writing and revivals of popular plays has done little to redress the gender imbalance.

How does production type affect gender ratios at these venues?

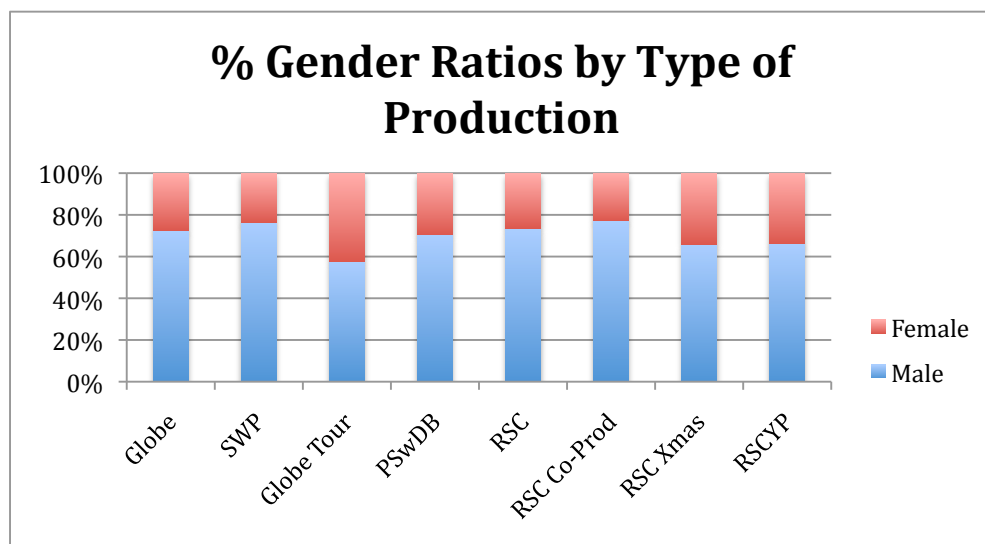


Figure 14 Casting by gender and type of production

Another aspect that might impact on the gender ratios at these companies is the type of production staged. For example, I observed above that the opening of the Sam Wanamaker Playhouse impacted on the overall gender ratios at SGT and Figure 14 demonstrates that 24% of roles went to women in the first four performances at the venue. RSC Co-Productions were even less representative, with just 23% of performances by women. The young people’s productions at both venues offer a different picture however: PSwDB (Playing Shakespeare with Deutsche Bank) and RSC YP (Young People’s Shakespeare) have on average a slightly higher percentage of female roles than main shows at their respective venues. Looking

specifically at the gender ratios at each company, the most significant difference is between the gender balance of main Globe productions and tours, which is 27% and 42% female respectively. This difference reflects the fact that Globe tours generally feature a cast of eight performers who each play a number of different roles. As a result the *number* of male and female roles in these productions is very different – 68 male and 50 female for touring shows compared with 907 male and 342 female respectively for main shows – though the percentage remains high.

In this way these statistics not only demonstrate current casting trends, but also hint at an alternative. The Globe's 2004 season shows that with a creative approach to casting it is possible to achieve gender parity at a venue committed to staging Shakespeare's plays. There are both practical and artistic limitations to single-sex casting, as I will explore in Chapter Six, and there can be a danger that the approach ghettoizes female performers, yet analysis of the data reveals another possible route for achieving gender parity in Shakespearean performance. Globe touring productions began in 2006 and, restricted by the practicalities of touring, work with a company of eight actors. Within this performance context the productions often utilise cross-gender casting and sometimes regender roles, with the multi-roling and cross-gender casting contributing to the playful metatheatricality of the staging. If we consider as well that touring and young people's productions target audiences who are likely to be less familiar with Shakespeare than the audiences of main shows, this seems to counter the argument that cross-gender casting might lead to narrative confusion, rendering a production outside the grasp of all but the most experienced theatre-goer.

Conclusion

Analysing the demographics of acting companies can tell us about the stories valued by a society at a specific moment and particular cultural fixations. If these statistics say anything, it is that the bastions of Shakespearean production in the UK are extremely androcentric and

privilege the experience of white, young men in their storytelling. Within this landscape the notion of Shakespearean authority combines with a sense of cultural nostalgia to create an environment which may not be intentionally sexist, but which is one in which gender discrimination has been allowed to thrive.

Sexism not only manifests itself in the employment opportunities for male and female performers, but also has a significant impact on the way that women are represented in performance. When exploring the complexity of discrimination it is evident that women of colour and older women experience the inequality of the profession particularly acutely and this has a damaging effect on the portrayal of women more generally, as the depiction of femininity, already limited by the number of roles available, is narrowed still further by the disproportionate employment of young, white women in the roles of Shakespeare's heroines. I would argue that the fact this demographic of women is particularly associated with objectified femininity indicates an approach to staging female characters who are defined primarily by their relationship with men.

It is also worth reflecting on how the experience of rehearsing a Shakespeare play might be influenced by a lack of gender parity in acting companies. Interviewed by Carol Chillington Rutter in *Clamorous Voices* Fiona Shaw articulates how a male dominated rehearsal room influenced her interpretation of Katherina:

You are often alone. You are often the only woman in the room. It's an old refrain but it goes on being a relevant state that affects the performances we ultimately give. Men don't experience it, so they never have to deal with it. The Kate I played in *The Shrew* was a direct product of the rehearsal process. I was conscious of wanting to radiate the sense of terribly clouded confusion that overwhelms you when you are the only woman around. That was Kate's position, and it was mine: she in that mad marriage, me in rehearsal. Men, together, sometimes speak a funny language. You don't know what's happening, and you get so confused that you can no longer see. You become one frown. I get like that sometimes; so did my Kate. (xvii)

That, nearly thirty years after Rutter's study, Shakespearean rehearsal rooms remain male dominated spaces, suggests that Shaw's experience may still be representative of the experience of performers working on the twenty-first century Shakespearean stage.

Within this context of male dominated creative spaces, female voices are often lost and female perspectives marginalised, meaning that the performances generated from this material context are likely to be androcentric in their approach. The coming three chapters will situate six Shakespearean productions within this context of gender disparity, exploring how those comparatively few roles that are available to women are depicted. Each case study takes a different play as its focus, alongside a different identity-constituting aspect, namely appearance, size, and height. By combining this quantitative and qualitative approach I intend to explore casting's relationship with the conservative construction of gender in contemporary stagings of Shakespeare's plays, before then embarking on an analysis of possible ways in which casting might queer the construction of gender in performance and offer new possibilities for the interpretation of Shakespeare's female roles.

Chapter Three – “Our youth got me to play the woman’s part”: casting and the construction of objectified femininity in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*

“a beautiful woman function[s] as a desirable commodity, to be possessed and displayed to competitors as a mirror of one’s own taste, desirability and pulling power” (Stevenson 119)

Introduction

Shakespeare’s early comedies are a useful reminder that Shakespeare is not our contemporary. Staged today, the romantic focus of the comedies of the 1590s, such as *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, *Much Ado About Nothing* and *As You Like It*, can allow the plays’ misogynist elements to be subsumed into a feel-good happy ending. However, with their focus on male friendships and women as objects of exchange between men, Shakespeare’s early comedies foreground the distance between early modern and contemporary values. Writing of Shakespearean tragedy, Michael Dobson remarked that its persistent draw for twenty-first century audiences is perhaps “the oddest phenomena in Anglophone culture” (*Performing Shakespeare’s Tragedies* 1), but I would argue that it is the continued popularity of Shakespeare’s comedies that is the real oddity. Michael Mangan has argued that “the celebratory tone with which a comedy ends invites an audience to endorse the values which the world of the play has propounded”, that “laughter is socially specific, and [...] “getting” a joke involves affirming an identity with a social grouping” (134). As a result, 400-year-old comic resolutions can cause problems for the contemporary theatre director.

The focus of this chapter is Shakespeare’s first comedy, and possibly his first play, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*.⁵¹ As its title suggests, the play’s focus is on male friendship and in the text female characters are often used to demonstrate the status of male characters and treated as objects of exchange between men. The play has faced years of critical neglect, which

⁵¹ Summarising the debate over the play’s date, Kurt Schlüeter observes that current scholarship dates the play between 1587 and 1595 and he makes the case for it having been written in the late 1580s (1-2).

may reflect the fact that, labelled an early work, it is often dismissed as “an apprentice piece, prefiguring some of the later and more successful comedies” (Mangan 129). I would argue that the play’s gender politics also contribute to its unpopularity in contemporary performance, as the play articulates a view of male friendship that has become archaic. Writing in the 1960s, E.M.W Tillyard attributed the critical neglect of the play to its “morally and dramatically monstrous” final scene, suggesting:

that a proposal to hand over a girl to the man who has just proposed to rape her revolts our moral sense and that the perfunctory speed with which these staggering events are recounted can only provoke our laughter. (112)

More recently, critics have described it as an “unaccountably silly final scene” (Ornstein 48) and an “absurd conclusion” (Carlisle & Derrick 127), reflecting the fact that within the play:

male friendship between Proteus and Valentine is [...] more important than Valentine’s feelings for Sylvia. More to the point it is more important than Sylvia’s own feelings. (Mangan 133)

This final scene enacts the kind of male heterosexual desire, described by Eve Sedgwick, in which “a desire to consolidate partnership with authoritative males” is conducted “in and through the bodies of females” (38).

Sedgwick here develops the theory of Gayle Rubin, defining patriarchal heterosexuality as “the traffic in women: it is the use of women as exchangeable, perhaps symbolic property for the primary purpose of cementing the bonds of men with men” (25). Sedgwick engages with the analysis of Heidi Hartmann, whose definition of patriarchy can usefully be applied to *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*. Hartmann defines “patriarchy as a set of social relations which has a material base and in which there are hierarchical relations between men and solidarity among them which enable them in turn to dominate women” (190). *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* dramatises the conflict that arises through the establishing of male hierarchies and resolves this conflict through the exchange of women. As a result the play can be seen both to articulate and invest in patriarchal

values. Whilst this ideological background clearly locates the play within its early modern context, its patriarchal logic is perhaps not as far from contemporary beliefs as Tillyard's response to the "monstrous" final scene would suggest.

Enshrined in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* is the idea that a beautiful, wealthy female partner is a definitive status symbol for a man. This idea remains prevalent in contemporary culture, from the depiction of "Bond girls" as sex objects in the film franchise *James Bond*, to the state funding of a style advisor for Samantha Cameron, when her husband was Prime Minister of the UK. The woman-as-status-symbol model is grounded in the patriarchal idea of women as objects of exchange and, whilst gender equality is enshrined in contemporary UK law, culturally the notion of women belonging to men remains common: from the act of the father-of-the-bride giving his daughter away in the wedding ceremony, to the pervasiveness of cat-calling and the notion that a woman's appearance is inherently available for male comment. Thus, whilst the legal and cultural context has changed significantly, the themes of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* reflect long-standing gender inequalities that remain enshrined in contemporary culture.

***The Two Gentlemen of Verona* on Stage**

The complex relationship between the celebration of male friendship in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* and contemporary gender inequality make this play particularly worthy of scrutiny in performance. Directors must negotiate a path between the play's endorsement of patriarchy and a performance context that in some ways appears to be post-patriarchal, yet remains decidedly masculinist. This chapter takes as its focus two recent productions of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*: Andrew Hilton's 2013 staging at the Tobacco Factory and Simon Godwin's 2014 production for the RSC. Both productions had an impact outside their initial performance context, as Hilton's 2013 staging embarked on a national tour after a month-long run at the Tobacco Factory Theatre in Bristol, whilst Godwin's toured to

Newcastle and was given a live broadcast, the DVD of which is now available to buy.⁵² In this chapter I aim to explore how Hilton and Godwin's approaches to casting the play might be seen to reinforce or challenge the objectification of Silvia. I will also explore how the casting of Julia, who adopts a cross-gender disguise, contributes to the construction of gender in performance. My analysis will foreground the significance of the actors' appearance, interrogating how age, body-size, and racial identity generated meaning in performance.

The two productions with which this chapter engages represent the most recent high-profile professional productions of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* in England between 2012 and 2014. Hilton's 2013 staging at the Tobacco Factory in Bristol was mounted by Shakespeare at the Tobacco Factory. The company established by Hilton in 1999 and produces an average of two productions each year, all but two of which have been directed by artistic director Andrew Hilton.⁵³ Productions staged at the 350 seat flexible studio space Tobacco Factory Theatre in Bristol often transfer to other venues, and more recently have toured to a number of regional venues. The small company has received much critical acclaim, evidenced by the many press quotations on its website which foreground its status as "one of the country's most admired theatre companies" (Jeremy Kingston, *The Times* qtd. in SATTF). As a result it has attracted a great deal of attention from theatre critics and scholars, as well as being popular with local and national audiences. Hilton's 2013 production was Shakespeare At The Tobacco Factory's first staging of the play and Hilton suggested that he chose to programme it because of the company's commitment to working through the canon of Shakespeare's plays (Hilton). In contrast, Godwin's 2014 production at the RSC was the thirteenth

⁵² Hilton's production toured to Lancaster, Scarborough, Cheltenham, Exeter and Winchester in the weeks immediately following the Bristol run.

⁵³ The exceptions were the 2008 staging of *Hamlet* directed by Sir Jonathan Miller and Polina Kalinina's staging of *Romeo and Juliet* in 2015.

staging of the play at the RSC since 1879 (Carlisle & Derrick).⁵⁴ Godwin is a director particularly associated with new writing, having been an Associate Director at the Royal Court Theatre. The staging of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* marked his directing debut for the RSC. Godwin's production marked the first time in 45 years that a full production of the play had been mounted in the RST.

The acting company of both productions had similar gender ratios: Hilton's production at the Tobacco Factory comprised 13 actors, nine of whom were male and four were female, Godwin's RST company was slightly larger, with 15 speaking roles, eleven of whom were male and four female. Both productions' casting was to some extent shaped by the season in which the staging took place: Andrew Hilton's production at the Tobacco Factory in Bristol was through-cast with a staging of *Richard III* which he also directed, while nearly two thirds of Godwin's company were cast from the production of *Henry IV Parts One and Two* which ran at the RST and was directed by the company's artistic director, Gregory Doran.⁵⁵ Both productions featured live music and, whilst Hilton's 13-strong company included three actor-musicians, Godwin's production utilised a separate band, made up of eight additional performers. Both companies were predominantly white, with no BAME members of the Shakespeare at the Tobacco Factory company and only two visibly BAME members of the RSC ensemble plus an additional three members who identified themselves on Spotlight as white, as well as possibly "Mediterranean" plus "mixed race" or "Middle Eastern".⁵⁶

Hilton's production transposed the action of the play to the Edwardian era and Harriett de Winton's design gave the production an elegant,

⁵⁴ This makes it one of the least frequently performed of Shakespeare's plays by the company.

⁵⁵ It is worth noting that the roles of the lovers in the production were not through-cast with *Henry IV*, meaning that Godwin would have had more control over the casting of the four lead roles than the smaller roles in the production.

⁵⁶ Notably, none of the leads identified themselves as anything other than white.

sophisticated feel, which one reviewer felt was reminiscent of *Downton Abbey* (Geary). Hilton had worked with all four of the production's leads before, with Piers Wehner as Proteus, Jack Bannell as Valentine, Dorothea Myer-Bennett as Julia and Lisa Kay Silvia, all of whom were in their mid-twenties to late-thirties. Godwin's company was younger and less experienced than Hinton's, with all four of the lovers identified in Spotlight's 18-25 age category and all making their RSC debut in the production. The casting paired Mark Arends as Proteus with Pearl Chanda's Julia, whilst Michael Marcus was cast as Valentine opposite Sarah MacRae's Silvia. Opting for a realist staging and locating the production in a contemporary setting, Godwin created three distinct worlds for the play: a small-town Verona, a chic urban Milan, and a foreboding forest. This performance analysis will consider how casting contributed to the directorial vision of each production, interacting with the play's ideology to reinforce or challenge the objectification of its female characters through the age and appearance of the actors playing them.

Male Rivalry and the Hierarchy of Female Desirability

At the start of the play, Valentine scorns Proteus for his love of Julia, but when he reaches Milan quickly becomes lovelorn himself, falling for Silvia, the daughter of the Duke of Milan. His attention toward Silvia shapes and is shaped by his relationship with Proteus, something that becomes evident in Act 2, Scene 4 when the two gentlemen are reunited and we see their friendship take on a competitive quality; in describing Silvia's beauty, Valentine simultaneously denigrates Proteus's love, Julia:

VALENTINE: [...] and is she not a heavenly saint?

PROTEUS: No, but she is an earthly paragon.

VALENTINE: Call her divine.

PROTEUS: I will not flatter her.

VALENTINE: O, flatter me; for love delights in praises.

PROTEUS: When I was sick, you gave me bitter pills,
And I must minister the like to you.

VALENTINE: Then speak the truth by her; if not divine,
Yet let her be a principality,

Sovereign to all the creatures on the earth.

PROTEUS: Except my mistress.

VALENTINE: Sweet, except not any;
 Except thou wilt except against my love.
PROTEUS: Have I not reason to prefer mine own?
VALENTINE: And I will help thee to prefer her too:
 She shall be dignified with this high honour--
 To bear my lady's train, lest the base earth
 Should from her vesture chance to steal a kiss
 And, of so great a favour growing proud,
 Disdain to root the summer-swelling flower
 And make rough winter everlastingly.
PROTEUS: Why, Valentine, what braggardism is this?
VALENTINE: Pardon me, Proteus: all I can is nothing
 To her whose worth makes other worthies nothing;
 She is alone.
PROTEUS: Then let her alone.
VALENTINE: Not for the world: why, man, she is mine own,
 And I as rich in having such a jewel
 As twenty seas, if all their sand were pearl,
 The water nectar and the rocks pure gold. (143-169)⁵⁷

In this exchange, Silvia is turned into an object that can be desired by all the world. Jonathan Hall observes that Valentine casts Silvia as “possessable riches” and this “takes the ritual joking combat of boasting about the qualities of their respective mistresses [...] beyond its normal bounds and into a competitive aggression of rival owners” (123).

As the competition between Valentine and Proteus is enacted through the desirability of their female partners, the women in question are also required to compete for male attention. In this way, the scene illustrates Naomi Wolf's argument that:

“Beauty” is a currency system like the gold standard. Like any economy, it is determined by politics [...] In assigning value in a vertical hierarchy according to a culturally imposed physical standard, it is an expression of power relations in which women must unnaturally compete for resources that men have appropriated for themselves. (12)

Valentine clearly establishes a hierarchy of female desirability, creating a scenario in which Silvia is “a heavenly saint” and “divine”, and Julia is “dignified” by being cast in the role of Silvia's train-beglossaryarer. Silvia's

⁵⁷ All references taken from The Arden Shakespeare *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* edited by William C. Carroll.

value as a commodity is directly linked with her sexuality: the pun on the word “jewel” “stands for Silvia’s value (*rich*) but also, in the drama of the period, for her sexuality – literally, her maidenhead” (Carroll 190). Thus, a woman’s performance of desirable femininity determines her place within the social hierarchy and she must compete with other women in order to achieve a position of privilege determined by men.

Valentine’s “poetic and patriarchally possessive” (Carroll 189) claim to Silvia “*produces a rivalry for possession of the same object*’ (J. Hall 123 - emphasis original). Within the capitalist marketplace value is assigned by demand and in this exchange Valentine turns Silvia into an object to be desired by all. As Jonathan Hall observes: “It is as though Silvia’s desirability for Valentine depends upon her being desired by others. So that her triumph in the little beauty contest being constructed here is in a covert way the triumph of her owner over his rival” (123). Presenting Silvia in a deified yet objectified way establishes the idea that she “exists, not as a character in her own right, but as a commodity to be transferred between the two men” (Mangan 133).

If we accept that the play objectifies its female characters in order to focus on the central friendship of the eponymous two gentlemen then there is clearly a risk that in performance Silvia, and to a lesser extent, Julia, become little more than props: present simply to tell us something about the play’s male characters. Productions that foreground Silvia’s beauty and depict a conventionalised female desirability are more likely to collude in a misogynist ideology, enacting the hierarchy of desire established by Valentine in this scene. The casting of Silvia and the staging of her first entrance are thus central to the gender politics of the play in performance, as elements that can either intervene in the culture of male rivalry over objectified femininity, or reinforce the objectification of Silvia through staging choices that promote scopophilia.⁵⁸

⁵⁸ Scopophilia is a term used in psychoanalytic theory that describes visual pleasure. Laura Mulvey uses it in her analysis of the construction of the female love-interest on screen.

Godwin's 2014 staging participated in the objectification of Silvia. Played by Sarah MacRae, Silvia was presented in scopophilic terms. When she first entered, she was lit in silhouette before the lights came up to reveal a glamorous image: a tall, thin figure in a fitted, cream knee-length dress with a large, broad-brimmed hat on her head [Figure 15]. Her positioning on a gallery up stage centre, framed by a doorway and lit from above and behind, presented her as the focus of the scene. Although the RST is configured as a thrust stage, its upstage area is often used for moments of spectacle and directs the gaze in a manner more traditionally associated with proscenium arch stagings. As a result MacRae's Silvia offered the "isolated, glamorous, on display, sexualized" objectified female figure identified by Laura Mulvey in her seminal essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" (348). Mulvey's psychoanalytic criticism of film can usefully be applied to the depiction of Silvia in Godwin's production; Mulvey argues:

In a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female. The determining male gaze projects its phantasy on to the female figure which is styled accordingly. In their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote *to-be-looked-at-ness*. (346 – emphasis original)

The blocking, costuming, and lighting of Silvia's first two scenes drew on MacRae's embodied characteristics, a tall, thin, blonde actor in her early twenties, to foreground her "*to-be-looked-at-ness*", presenting Silvia as a desired object.



Figure 15 Sarah MacRae as Silvia. *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*. Dir. Simon Godwin. Photo by Simon Annand. © RSC

Reviews of the production often referred to Silvia's appearance, with descriptions – such as Sujata Iyengar's reference to her "shellacked Princess-Grace-type beauty" ("*Two Gentlemen*" 144) – focussing more on MacRae's appearance than her performance. Taking the lead from Valentine, some reviewers even constructed their own beauty contest for the two female leads. For example, Gabriel Egan writing in the peer-reviewed journal *Shakespeare* observed that:

Pearl Chanda was rather more attractive as Julia-as-Sebastian than as plain Julia, partly because as Julia she struggled to define her character when playing opposite the screeching Lucetta, but mainly because she was given a particularly unflattering dress for the scene of Proteus' leave-taking. *It was little surprise that Proteus' head was turned by the svelte and much-better dressed Silvia [...]* once he got to Milan. (Egan 329 – emphasis added)

That the success of a female actor's performance should be analysed in terms of how attractive she was at specific points in the play is indicative of the chauvinism often found in theatre reviews.⁵⁹ Yet, in many ways Egan's response reflects the logic of a production that arguably foregrounded appearance as an actress's most significant contribution to the drama. Egan was not the only commentator to reiterate the production's beauty contest logic; writing in *The Daily Mail* Quentin Letts rather unkindly juxtaposed the female leads: "Pearl Chanda's eggy-eyed Julia and her cool "rival" Silvia" ("Shakespeare Gets Upstaged").

Egan's reference to Julia's "unflattering dress" and Letts's focus on Chanda's physical appearance demonstrate how the casting and costuming of the production made a direct contribution to the gender politics of the production. In a play which posits women as rivals for male affection, Martin Esslin's suggestion that "it is not merely the attractiveness or magnetism of individual performers that has its semiotic weight, but the *interaction* between several of them" (*The Field of Drama* 60) takes on a particular significance; the production encouraged a focus on MacRae's "drop dead gorgeous" (Collins) glamour, but we were also encouraged to view it in contrast to Chanda's "pretty Verona girl" (Collins). MacRae's tall, slender, fair appearance was set up in contrast with the shorter, brunette Chanda and the pair were costumed so that they represented chic sophistication and workaday charm respectively.

⁵⁹ Egan's adjectives, "plain", "screeching", and "unflattering", are somewhat gendered and are used to define superficial characteristics rather than behaviour or performance ability.

The play constructs both women as objects of idolatry at various points (Dusinberre 152) and in Godwin's production this manifested itself in casting that invested in contemporary definitions of beauty: the roles were embodied by young, thin, able-bodied performers who conformed to the aesthetic required of the female love interest. Yet the contrasting appearance of MacRae and Chanda, the former tall and fair, the latter shorter and brunette, as well as the distinction between the stylish Milan and small-town Verona, constructed their characters in binary terms. Within the binary, MacRae might be seen to embody the "the slender, blue-eyed, blond-haired, fairy princesses of our collective imagination" (Stevenson 121), a construction that arguably relegated Chanda's Julia to the abject position in the binary.⁶⁰

The beauty ideals of Godwin's production were the "fundamentally ethnocentric" ideals identified by Karen Stevenson (121). While it might not be immediately apparent with Caucasian performers playing Silvia and Julia, the characters were depicted along racialised lines. Richard Dyer argues that blonde hair "is the ultimate sign of whiteness" and occupies a particularly privileged position in the West because it is "racially unambiguous" (*Heavenly Bodies* 40). Thus, any juxtaposition of appearance that sets blonde opposite brunette might be read in racial terms. That Chanda's name hails from the Indian sub-continent may have added a layer of racial complexity to the reading of her character for those spectators who had read the programme or seen a cast list. Thus, whilst both MacRae and Chanda may read as Caucasian on stage, the juxtaposition of their appearance drew on racialised notions of femininity and beauty, privileging white as a definitive element of attractiveness.⁶¹

⁶⁰ In "Scolding Brides" Lynda E. Boose explores the idea of the abject position in a binary in relation to gender (194), a point to which I will return in Chapter Five.

⁶¹ The BBA Shakespeare database records only two professional performances by a woman of colour in the role of Silvia, Josette Bushell-Mingo for the RSC in 1991 and B.J. Arnau for The New York Shakespeare Festival at the Phoenix Theatre, London in 1973. Significantly, Jami Rogers observes that Bushell-Mingo originally played the role of Lucetta in

Age was another important factor in establishing desirable femininity within the production, though in this respect Godwin's casting was decidedly uniform: all the female members of his cast identified in the 18-25 age category on *Spotlight*. The youthful cast reflects the practicalities of casting at the RSC, as every major role is required to have an understudy: Leigh Quinn understudied Julia and Molly Gromadzki understudied Silvia. While it may have stemmed from practical requirements, this casting choice had major artistic implications for the interpretation of the play; with every female performer in the company cast according to the conventions of the female love interest, Godwin's production offered a very narrow depiction of femininity: all the company's female performers were young, white, and thin.

In an onstage world populated only by conventionally attractive women, the "beauty contest" element of the text is emphasised and female performers' *to-be-looked-at-ness* is naturalised. Offering a broader spectrum of femininities on stage can help to resist the objectification of female characters, emphasising female subjectivity. Hilton's staging depicted a wider range of female identities through the casting of a greater variety of embodied femininities. The age of the female members of Hilton's company was much broader than Godwin's: Dorothea Myer-Bennett's Julia and Eva Tausig's Ursula were in their twenties, Lisa Kay's Silvia was in her thirties and Nicky Goldie's Lucetta was in her fifties. On a practical level, this artistic decision is likely to have been influenced by the requirements of through-casting *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* with *Richard III*, in which Myer-Bennett played Lady Anne, Kay played Queen Elizabeth, and Goldie played the Duchess of York. Nonetheless, this casting

Stratford, but was promoted to the role of Silvia for the London transfer of the production ("Shakespearean Glass Ceiling" 425). There are an additional three instances of women of colour playing Lucetta and no record of BAME performers in the role of Julia. There are twelve productions of the play listed in the database, which does not include Hilton's staging as it featured no BAME actors (BBA Shakespeare "*Two Gentlemen*").

choice had a significant impact on the gender politics of the production. Increasing the range of ages represented by women in the production helped to depict femininity as a spectrum rather than a hierarchy. Nicky Goldie's Lucetta was a practical and down-to-earth servant in her 50s, reminiscent of Juliet's Nurse.⁶² Lucetta represented a playful maternal figure in a drama that is otherwise devoid of mature female presence [Fig 16]. Furthermore, the gap in age between Lucetta and her mistress allowed her wry observations about her mistress's love to come from a place of mature experience, rather than youthful rivalry, foregrounding female compassion over competition.

⁶² The parallels with Juliet's Nurse Shakespearean character were drawn out through an inserted passage of dialogue in which Lucetta advised her young ward that: "If you be wise, there's comfort to be had./ Your lord will soon return. Yet if he tarry/ In Verona dwell many goodly men/Equal in fortune, as fair of feature" (13). Advice that is redolent of the Nurse's guidance after Romeo's banishment in Act III, Scene v of *Romeo and Juliet*.



Figure 16 Nicky Goldie as Lucetta. *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*. Dir. Andrew Hilton. Photo courtesy of Farrows Creative.

Depicting femininity as a spectrum of identities enabled the production to resist the play's hierarchical engagement with female appearance. Julia and Silvia were not inherently rivals in this production. Kay's slightly older Silvia lent the character an elegance and sophistication that contrasted with Myer-Bennett's wide-eyed girlishness, but, both dressed in elegant Edwardian gowns and performing a poised upper-class femininity, their respective femininities were not depicted in a hierarchical way. With no clear hierarchy of female desirability the ideology inscribed in Valentine's

constructed “beauty competition” became more evident: it was about male power rather than female beauty.



Figure 17 Lisa Kay as Silvia. *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*. Dir. Andrew Hilton. Image courtesy of Farrows Creative.

Kay’s Silvia was stylish and elegant, a character who conformed to the conventions of female desirability, but without the overwhelming *to-be-looked-at-ness* of MacRae’s heroine. Unlike MacRae, who wore a different outfit in every scene, Kay sported the same costume throughout, wearing a matching cream skirt and jacket with brown embellishments, as well as a white shirt, a small beige hat decorated with a brown feather and white lace gloves [Fig. 17]. Whereas MacRae represented a definitive version of feminine desirability in Godwin’s production, in Hilton’s staging it was arguable that Myer-Bennett who was the more objectified of the two female leads. Hers was a hyperfeminine Julia, whose girlish femininity was reflected in her costuming: her floor-length, puce and plum-coloured gown was the most vivid shade in a production whose costume design on the whole utilised a colour palette of cream, beige, and grey. Julia styled her hair in a half pony tail and wore a white rose pinned in her long auburn tresses: a style that connoted youth in contrast with the other female

members of the company, who all wore their hair pinned up. This costuming emphasised Julia's status as a romantic lead, but the production's Edwardian setting complicated the objectification of its female leads. In the production's historicised setting, the signification of female beauty was not as readily intelligible as Godwin's and, by drawing on a historicised version of femininity, Hilton's staging did not participate in the reiteration of contemporary beauty ideals to quite the same degree as Godwin's production. Furthermore, the in-the-round configuration of the Tobacco Factory Theatre meant that the "isolated [...and] on display" objectified femininity identified by Mulvey (348) could not be achieved, as the presence of the audience on the other side of the auditorium meant that female beauty was never subject to an unimpeded objectifying gaze.

Female Bodies and Male Impersonation

When Julia dons male clothing to follow Proteus to Milan she undertakes a number of crossings: on the one hand she is crossing from a female to a male identity, she is also undertaking a crossing from a position of social status, to one of servility. Perhaps the most significant crossing in the case of Hilton and Godwin's productions is the crossing from an object of idolatry to an effective agent. Proteus idolises Julia, just as he later idolises Silvia, worshipping and objectifying both women at different points in the play. Juliet Dusinberre argues that "Idolatry by tradition emphasises the separate worlds of the two sexes, because it is a homage paid *en bloc* by the male to the female, thriving on the exaggeration and idealizing of difference" (152-3). Thus, Julia's disguise does not simply cross gender but engages with issues of class and sexuality to transgress a number of social hierarchies and notions of difference.

Hilton's use of an Edwardian setting enabled Proteus's idolisation of Julia to come to the fore and established a meaningful context in which her crossing could occur. Carol Chillington Rutter argues that Hilton's relocation of the play helped to contextualise Julia's behaviour, suggesting that in the Edwardian setting:

a prim deb like Julia [...] would have to feign insult at receiving a love letter but having ripped it to shreds, would scramble in an undignified sprawl across the floor kissing each mutilated piece as she put the paper back together. The fact that Nicky Goldie's Lucetta, a hard-boiled biddy who could definitely tell a hawk from a handsaw, caught her at it was not just comic. It discovered the kinds of hypocritical cover-ups formally structuring this male-defined culture where the honour- struck guys played fast and loose with honour... ("Shakespeare Performances 2013" 415)

Within this context of carefully delineated social performances of gender, sexuality, and class, the relationship between Julia and Proteus was presented as both formal and chaste. Proteus's adoration of Julia appeared to be an at-a-distance infatuation rather than a love based on mutuality and shared experience, reflecting the idolatry of women inherent in Shakespeare's text. The formality of their courtship was particularly evident in Proteus's leave-taking, which was played as comically chaste, as Proteus kissed Julia's hand and cheek, leaving it up to Julia to take his face in her hands and plant a kiss on his lips.

In contrast, the contemporary setting of Godwin's production gave Julia more agency: she was presented as the girl next-door rather than an idolised and objectified other. The youth of Arends and Chanda, combined with their costuming, gave the sense that this Proteus and Julia might be school sweethearts who had known each other for a long time. At Proteus's leave-taking, Julia appeared in a shapeless navy evening dress and with bare feet, which one reviewer argued looked "as though she had just left his bed" (Iyengar, "*Two Gentlemen*" 142). Iyengar also suggested that their earnest kisses and Proteus's blood oath "hinted that the relationship had been consummated" (142). Presented in this way Proteus's switch of affection was more of a betrayal than when the relationship is one of distance and formality. I would argue that the production attempted to mitigate Proteus's actions by presenting them as an inevitable outcome of Silvia's desirability.



Figure 18 Leigh Quinn as Lucetta and Pearl Chanda as Julia. *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*. Dir. Simon Godwin. Photo by Simon Annand © RSC

The two settings established a very different context for Julia's crossing. Myer-Bennett's Julia was a woman for whom her feminine identity was important, squealing when Lucetta suggested that she should cut her hair and immediately rebuffing the idea, saying she would wear it up (2.7.44-46). The crossing of Myer-Bennett's hyperfeminine Julia read very differently to that of Chanda's down-to-earth Julia. Chanda's Julia was carefree and unfashionable, wearing two shapeless dresses for her scenes in Verona, accompanied with sensible flat, brown ankle-boots. She planned her sojourn to Milan with Quinn's Lucetta over a drunken picnic, at which she seemed unfazed and indeed excited by the thought of adventure [Fig 18]. She appeared almost to take pleasure in the idea that her cross-dressing might cause a scandal, smiling when she said "I fear me it will make me scandalized" (line 61) and quickly rebuffing Lucetta's suggestion that she should stay at home. Myer-Bennett's Julia, on the other hand,

oscillated between excitement and fear at the prospect of her transvestism and, in a passage added by dramaturg Dominic Power, it was only when Lucetta said she would accompany Julia that Julia became firmly resolved to go.⁶³ That Myer-Bennett's Julia appeared so wary reflects the fact that, in the Edwardian setting of Hilton production, Julia's crossing was a transgression. Hilton's relocation of the play to a historical era with strictly defined patriarchal codes rendered Julia's unease that "it will make me scandalized" (61) a genuine concern.

Despite moving from a position of social status to one of servility, Julia's crossing is ultimately towards power, as her ability to move free from the "loose encounters of lascivious men" (41) outweighs the slight drop in social status she undergoes by becoming a gentleman's servant. Ostensibly, Julia's crossing appears to conform to Garber's notion of a "progress narrative" as it is a practical necessity for her journey rather than a crossing undertaken for pleasure (69). Yet to some extent, the nature of the crossing is determined by the context in which it is presented: Myer-Bennett's Julia dressed as a boy because she inhabited a context in which female behaviour was policed by men and in which there were severe consequences for transgression; whereas in Godwin's contemporary Italianate context, Julia's cross-dressing appeared less an act of necessity and perhaps more indicative of Julia's spirit of adventure.⁶⁴

Chanda's Julia made a convincing Sebastian and while the question of passing is subjective, her short wig, large shapeless suit and dark glasses, helped to conceal any feminine signifiers. In contrast, the idea that Myer-

⁶³ In the additional text, Julia and Lucetta discuss what disguise the maid will wear and, having discussed wearing male habit or pretending to be Julia's sister, resolve that Lucetta will Julia's "mother be,/ For a sister may draw gallants in her wake./ A mother yet may pass without annoy" (Power 29); this choice further emphasised Lucetta's maternal role.

⁶⁴ That Hilton's production regendered one of the Outlaws and Godwin's production regendered two of the Outlaws perhaps hinted that Julia's fears about travelling as a woman were unfounded, though equally might represent the risk to respectability for a woman travelling alone.

Bennett's Julia could pass as a boy in Milan involved a suspension of disbelief, as Andrew Hilton observed (Hilton). In the text, it is the codpiece that is inscribed with "masculine power and virility" (Klett *Cross-Gender Shakespeare* 1), but in both Hilton and Godwin's productions Julia exchanged her dress for a suit.⁶⁵ In *Sex and Suits* Anne Hollander observes that in Western male fashion "The body itself must remain articulated, never swathed, and be unified only by the idea, not by loose fabric"(112). Thus, the fact that both productions costumed their Julias in a dress in Verona, followed by a trouser suit in Milan, foregrounds the difference between gendered sartorial styles, emphasising the crossing. When Julia wears a suit, she is dressed in "the uniform of official power", an item of clothing which on the one hand "has a reputation of being inexpressive" but in being inexpressive signifies "a confident adult masculinity, unflavored with either violence or passivity" (Hollander 113). Moving from a dress to a suit foregrounds the fact that Julia is crossing towards power.

It is interesting to observe that a number of reviews of Godwin's production suggest that "Julia gets into her stride when she, well, gets into her strides" (Shuttleworth). On the one hand, this might reflect a dramaturgical change in Julia's characterisation, as she takes on the identity of the cheeky page and has a greater degree of agency and audience interaction (Shapiro, *Gender in Play* 69). Yet, it might also reflect the way in which femininity was constructed by the production and its emphasis on scopophilia. Egan's assertion that "Chanda was rather more attractive as Julia-as-Sebastian than as plain Julia" (329) brings the notion of desire to the fore. Whether we take attractive to mean specifically appearance, or more generally a charismatic desirability, Egan's statement suggests that Julia was generally less desirable as Julia than as her male persona, Sebastian. It is possible that Chanda's Julia became desirable

⁶⁵ Power changed the line in Hilton's production so that instead of "You must needs have them with a codpiece, madam" (53), the text became "You must needs have them with a fly, madam" (28).

because her male disguise freed her from the expectations of desirable femininity, allowing a focus on her personality rather than her appearance, though it is also possible that cross-gendered disguise itself has an erotic quality.

Alisa Solomon suggests that the eroticism of female transvestism stems from the idea that “it’s sexy for women to take on a little power, a little hint of power; nothing more” (“It’s Never Too Late” 146). By becoming Sebastian, Julia is accessing the male privilege that resides in their clothing. She dons the suit in order to escape the “loose encounters of lascivious men” (2.7.41), reflecting the fact that as a woman she is seen as inherently sexually available. Yet, in performance the spectator’s awareness of this crossing means that Julia retains the *to-be-looked-at-ness* associated with femininity and her male performance is viewed through this lens. The act of cross-dressing causes the body to be read differently: a body that originally read as female signifies as male because of its clothing. Laurence Senelick articulates the contradiction of the cross-dressed woman suggesting that “on the one hand, they seem to threaten by usurping male prerogative, but on the other, their transformation can be interpreted as yet one more adornment on an already available body” (8). In the “double-vision” evoked by the disguised heroine it is possible that the notion of biological gender will be asserted, but equally the interplay of sartorial identities might destabilise a stable gendered identity.

Michael Shapiro has explored the complexity of the male performer playing a disguised heroine and compared it with contemporary performance practice. Looking specifically at Act 4, Scene 4, in which Silvia gives Julia her portrait and arguing that:

A modern actress can use some of her feminine “Julia” mannerisms and then switch to playing the page with exaggerated and patently artificial boyishness, as many do. But a boy actor would probably have done the reverse, signaling that he is Julia through whatever feminine mannerisms he devised to establish himself in a female role, and then switching abruptly to the equally constructed but seemingly more “natural” persona of a pert and witty boy. Although everything

actors do on stage is artificial, audiences are inclined to accept as “natural” – that is, unconstructed, spontaneous – behaviour that accords with their notions of the performer’s authentic personality. (*Gender in Play* 73)

The “authentic personality” described by Shapiro is the apparently stable gender identity of the actor and this reference foregrounds how theatrical transvestism can utilise the notion of a stable gendered identity to create dramatic irony. Godwin’s production emphasised the dramatic irony of the scene, with Chanda’s Julia giving knowing glances to the audience early in the exchange, prompting laughter as Sebastian told of his female impersonation at Pentecost. Hilton’s production adopted the technique of gender alienation described by Shapiro: “A modern actress can use some of her feminine “Julia” mannerisms and then switch to playing the page with exaggerated and patently artificial boyishness” (Shapiro 73). When Silvia passionately condemned Proteus’s behaviour exclaiming:

SILVIA: The more shame for him that he sends it me;
For I have heard him say a thousand times
His Julia gave it him at his departure.
Though his false finger have profaned the ring,
Mine shall not do his Julia so much wrong. (lines 131-5)

Myer-Bennett quickly and earnestly said “She thanks you” (136) in a high, feminine register. When Kay’s Silvia paused and questioned suspiciously “What sayest thou?” (137), Julia lowered the pitch of her voice and nonchalantly repeated “I thank you” (138). The moment was comic, but simultaneously conveyed a sense of the emotional conflict involved in Julia’s performance as Sebastian. This may be giving Julia a “greater psychological complexity than the text itself indicates” (Shapiro 72), but it was in keeping with the ideology of Hilton’s production, which sought to afford the female characters greater humanity and agency.

The character of Julia-as-Sebastian was also afforded emotional depth through Hilton’s staging of Act 4, Scene 4, in which she provides a commentary on Proteus and Turio discussion of the latter’s wooing of

Silvia.⁶⁶ During the exchange Julia-as-Sebastian provides a commentary, punning on Turio's assertions and making witty observations at his expense. Traditionally these lines have been labelled as asides⁶⁷ and Shapiro observes: "As Proteus gives no indication that he hears Sebastian's jests, eighteenth-century editors are probably correct in labelling this line and subsequent jests as asides" (70). However, in the theatre it is quite possible for Proteus to respond to Sebastian's quips without saying a word and in Hilton's staging the pair very clearly shared a joke at Paul Currier's foppish Turio's expense. Delivering the lines as asides to her master rather than to the audience, the pair became allies and Julia demonstrated an ability to relate to her former suitor in a witty and playful way. The fact that Julia-as-Sebastian was successful in making her master laugh gave the scene echoes *Twelfth Night*, hinting that this master might fall for his servant. The ease with which the pair interacted in this scene was in sharp contrast to their awkward parting earlier in the play and the fact that Julia was capable of making Proteus laugh contributed to a growing affinity between the pair. Myer-Bennett's Julia was able to find her voice through her disguise and interact with her love in a way free of the gendered conventions governing male-female interaction in the production's Edwardian context.

While a female performer in the role may not have the layering of gendered identity and the queer potential of a male performer, playing a female character, who is disguised as a boy, she does have the potential to destabilise the construction of femininity and specifically the theatrical construction of female beauty. Farah Karim-Cooper observes that:

Whilst the interrogation of normative beauty in this scene [4.4] may stem from its unrepresentability on stage, true beauty can nevertheless be enacted, encoded through the bodies of the actors, through their cosmeticised impersonations, and through their gestures and movements... ("Performing Beauty" 101)

⁶⁶ I use the spelling "Turio", rather than "Thurio", in line with the Arden edition of the play.

⁶⁷ They are labelled as such in the Arden and Cambridge editions of the play.

The practicalities of early modern theatrical representation and the personnel of the Shakespearean company may have rendered beauty unrepresentable on stage, but in contemporary performance, the conventions of realism tend to require female love interests to conform to the conventions of desirable femininity, as was the case with MacRae and Chanda, and Kay and Myer-Bennett. In this context, the moment reads rather differently. Instead of foregrounding beauty's unrepresentability on stage, the moment can instead foreground the constructed nature of beauty more generally. Spoken by a woman selected, in part, for her ability to embody desirable femininity but passing as a man at that point, Chanda was able to alienate the question of beauty: her male persona detailed the qualities of female beauty, while her female body performed those qualities, drawing into focus the way in which female bodies are constructed on stage through the casting of particular embodied characteristics and the encoding of those bodies within the theatrical frame.

Female Agency and Male Violence

The final scene of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* takes female objectification to its logical extreme, as Proteus violently denies Silvia's autonomy, threatening to "woo you like a soldier, at arms' end,/And love you 'gainst the nature of love,--force ye" (5.4.57-8). Feminists have long argued that "rape is not an unchanging consequence of male biology" but rather "sexual violence functions as a means of patriarchal domination" (A. Clark 2-3). Proteus's attempted rape might be seen to stem from a wish to gain power over Valentine and Silvia, rather than sexual desire. How this moment reads in performance depends, in part, on the depiction of Silvia. Productions that emphasise Silvia's *to-be-looked-at-ness* risk colluding with a text that silences her, turning her into an object rather than an agent. By emphasising Silvia's desirability there is a danger that Proteus's attack is figured as "a consequence of male biology", caused by his inability to control his lust for a desirable object, rather than an "act of patriarchal

domination” in which he achieves power over both Silvia and Valentine through assault. Obscuring the politics of sexual violence can naturalise it and also risks assigning a degree of culpability to the victim, as her appearance or behaviour becomes a motivating aspect in the attack. Furthermore within a play that focuses on male friendship and depicts women as objects of exchange, an objectified Silvia may contribute to the framing of Proteus’s crime as an act of theft, as he takes Valentine’s possession without his consent, rather than acknowledging female experience of violence.⁶⁸ In his review of Godwin’s production in *The Guardian*, Michael Billington wrote that Proteus “falls for his chum’s girl” (“*The Two Gentlemen of Verona*”), which demonstrates that the notion of male possession and ownership of their female partners remains prevalent today.

Having invested in MacRae’s *to-be-looked-at-ness*, Arends’s Proteus’s violence was inherently linked with desire. By this point in the play, Silvia had swapped her glamorous dresses for a more practical combination of grey tracksuit bottoms and a fitted grey top. However, even in this attire she did not escape the objectifying gaze of the spectator; Sujata Iyengar described the fleeing Silvia as having an “appearance and vigor [that] evoked a blonde Lara Croft” (144).⁶⁹ That Croft is a cultural icon who is both “a strong, independent woman” and “functions as the sexualized object of the gaze” (Case, “Foreword” ix) reflects the somewhat contradictory depiction of MacRae’s Silvia: even when “dressing-down” MacRae’s Silvia was sexualised.

There was a tension in Godwin’s production between the investment in MacRae’s Silvia as an object of scopophilic pleasure and the desire to give her agency in the final scene. She initially disarmed Proteus, but he soon overpowered her, and it was up to Valentine to prevent Proteus’s assault.

⁶⁸ Marion Wynne-Davies observes that in 1597 the legal definition of rape in English law changed from being primarily a crime of theft to “making the crime against the woman’s person more important” (131).

⁶⁹ Lara Croft is the heroine of the *Tomb Raider* games franchise.

The enraged Valentine then proceeded to waterboard his friend in a large water-filled drum on stage. On the line “I must never trust thee more” (line 69) it appeared Valentine had resolved to drown his friend, at which point the watching Silvia rose and pulled Valentine away. Dragging Proteus out of the water, Valentine drew out a gun and aimed it at his kneeling friend. A chastened Proteus seemed to accept his forthcoming execution and looking to Silvia, begged “forgive me” (74). He then fell silent and shut his eyes, bracing himself for death. Silvia approached the faltering Valentine, and appeared to steady his hand, the stage picture implying that they would murder Proteus together. However, after a moment she knocked Valentine’s hand down and the gun fell to the floor. Proteus then looked at his friend questioningly, “Valentine?” (74), before turning to Silvia to state “if hearty sorrow/ Be a sufficient ransom for offence,/ I tender’t here” (74-76). Silvia’s acceptance of Proteus’ apology and the mercy she showed him gave the character extratextual agency. However, one of the most significant moments of the plot was staged so ambiguously that the not insignificant agency afforded to Silvia in sparing Proteus’s life was undermined.

When Marcus’s Valentine stated “All that was mine in Silvia, I give to thee” (83), Chanda’s Julia interjected straight away, giving MacRae’s Silvia no opportunity to respond to her betrothed’s offer of her to his friend. From her position, crouched on the floor, the next time Silvia moved was to tend to Chanda’s distressed Sebastian, giving no response whatsoever to her partner’s gift of her. While this could reflect the fact that Silvia is deeply distressed by the attempted rape and therefore unresponsive, the fact that she had shown agency, first in steadying Valentine’s hand and then in knocking it away, implied that she was capable of taking control after the distressing incident earlier in the scene but did not respond to her partner’s “gifting” of her.

Hilton’s production had a much clearer and more feminist approach to the staging of the final scene, which began by diminishing the threat of

Proteus's violence. In part, this was achieved through the depiction of Jack Bannell's Valentine, who in the final scene was transformed into a swashbuckling outlaw with a greatcoat and scarf and wielding the sword gifted by Proteus in the play's opening scene. An image of heroic valour, Valentine was likened to Robin Hood in a number of reviews (Jobson; Kirwan "*Two Gentlemen*"). The depiction of Valentine contributed to the play's comic agenda, as his assured and charismatic heroism contrasted with the incompetent behaviour of the outlaws and the oily charm of Wehner's Proteus. Within this context Valentine's presence appeared to mitigate the risk of the scene, as the swashbuckling hero was on hand to save the day. The staging emphasised this depiction of the scene: in the intimate venue of the Tobacco Factory, when Valentine withdrew from the scene to observe the altercation between Proteus and Silvia, he hid behind one of the Tobacco Factory's pillars. As he was still visible to the audience, Bannell's Valentine was a hero lying in wait to save a damsel in distress. Thus Proteus' violence was rendered impotent in the presence of the heroic masculinity of Bannell's Valentine. The danger of this approach is, of course, that it risks implying that female sexuality must be defended by valiant men and could perpetuate the idea of patriarchy as a protection racket (see Peterson) but this was circumvented by Hilton, whose textual emendations foregrounded female agency within the scene.

Hilton's production included additional text, written by Dominic Power, which gave both Silvia and Julia greater agency, and emphasised Proteus's contrition. Just as Godwin's production saw Valentine threaten Proteus's life, so in Hilton's production Proteus's life also hung in the balance; when Bannell's Valentine stated "I must never see thee more" (D.Power 60) it was with a sword held to the kneeling Proteus's throat.⁷⁰ Proteus welcomed his death in a specially written passage:

Proteus: My shame and guilt confounds me.
 Forgive me, Valentine. That face I lov'd
 Is now a mirror that shows to me my soul

⁷⁰ Power adapted this line from the original "I must never trust the more" (5.4.69).

Blotted and decay'd with sin. Thou hast a sword
 In love t'was giv'n thee. Now by love's command
 Cleave my heart and kill the shame within.
 I kneel before thee. Stay not your rage.
 My death I do embrace. (D.Power 64)

This is in contrast to the rather more prosaic apology of the original text:

Proteus: My shame and guilt confounds me.
 Forgive me, Valentine: if hearty sorrow
 Be a sufficient ransom for offence,
 I tender't here. I do as truly suffer
 As e'er I did commit. (77-81)

The penitent offer of self-sacrifice on Proteus's part in Hilton and Power's edition of the play afforded the female characters greater agency and the capacity for forgiveness. As Proteus's speech was followed by Julia's intervention:

Julia: [*Aside*] Will no one speak for him?
 Good madam, were I woman born as you
 So would compassion pardon injury.
 Let not your wrongs by his blood be assuag'd.

Silvia: Though he be false, I would not see him die.
 Put up thy sword, good Valentine, I pray.⁷¹ (D. Power 60)

Upon hearing the pleas of Silvia to spare his friend, Bannell's Valentine took pity upon Wehner's Proteus and made the offer of "All that was mine in Silvia I give thee" (61) in response to which Silvia was given an additional line "Oh me, I am lost!" (61). This was not an offer to be Silvia's servant or the opportunity to refuse the gift, but a spontaneous gifting of a female love object by the male hero to his friend. Hilton did not shy away from the play's traffic in women, and the fact that within the play women are seen as "exchangeable, perhaps symbolic, property for the primary purpose of cementing the bonds of men with men" (Hartmann 25-26).

⁷¹ Rutter observed the parallels between this added text and the final scene in *Measure for Measure* in which Mariana elicits a similar pardon from Isabella ("Shakespeare Performances 2013" 417).

Indeed, Hilton's revised text actively critiqued the two gentlemen's performance of masculinity via asides from Silvia. When Turio entered with the Duke, Power's revised text foregrounded Valentine's rather erratic response to his love, "Turio, give back, or else embrace thy death [...] I dare thee but to breathe upon my love" (62), by including an aside from Silvia in which she asked "Whose love am I?" (62). Silvia's response playfully highlighted the fact that only moments before, Valentine had offered Silvia to his best friend, and, more seriously, demonstrated the way in which women are used within the play to assert a male positions within the social hierarchy.

In the subsequent discussion about Silvia, Turio's relinquishing of his suit, "I claim her not and therefore she is thine", and the Duke's offer to Valentine, "Take thou thy Silvia, for thou hast deserv'd her", were punctuated with asides from Silvia, who voiced her indignation at being passed around between the men in the scene like a gift:

[*Aside*] Twice this day I have been given.
 [...]
 [*Aside*] Thrice given! I am the gift, yet I would be the giver.
 (D. Power 62)

Ultimately, the conclusion of the play saw a chastened Valentine seek Silvia's consent to be his wife and in doing so, rendered him a suitable subject for Silvia's affection. In words written by Power, Valentine declared:

Valentine: I thank your grace. The gift hath made me happy.
 Yet must I entreat, with true and humble heart
 If, Silvia, thou give me thy consent
 To be my wife, that undeserving am.

Silvia: Willingly I gift to thee my body and my heart.
 So shall I be thy wife. I am content. (63)

Kay paused before delivering her consent, a performance choice that further emphasised the fact that Kay's Silvia was capable of deciding her own fate.

The fact that Kay's Silvia was in her late thirties, rather than her late teens or early twenties contributed to the production's critique of the play's exchange in women. The Duke's attempts to marry Silvia off to Currier's Turio were more clearly enshrined within patriarchy with a Silvia who was described by reviewers as "capable and forthright" (Kirwan, "*Two Gentlemen*"). When played by a younger actor, Silvia's arranged marriage can appear to stem from paternalism – a father caring for his young daughter – but played by an actor in her late thirties, whose capable demeanour contributed to her agency, Kay's Silvia was able to critique the ideology in which women are objects of exchange.

As well as her age, the agency of Kay's Silvia might also be attributed to the ghosting of the actor: Kay was a regular actor on ITV's *Heartbeat* for four years from 2006 to 2010. I would also argue that Kay's celebrity persona contributed to the reception of the character, giving her a greater sense of dynamism and agency.⁷² With an established and experienced actor in the role, and ghosted by the social prestige of celebrity, Silvia resisted objectification and Valentine's attempt to pass her to his best friend was rendered faintly ridiculous.

The agency of Kay's Silvia allowed the character to resist victimisation and in many ways it was Myer-Bennett's Julia who appeared to be the more wronged of the two women by the production's final scene. While Silvia offered a critique of male behaviour, Julia's swoon presented her more as a victim than agent. Catherine Belsey has argued that the swoon "reaffirms her [Julia's] femininity" (179) and in this production, the design of Julia's disguise as Sebastian contributed to a double-vision in the audience so that Sebastian was openly ghosted by Julia: her auburn hair was visible under her flat cap and her fitted suit did not hide her feminine silhouette. While these signifiers may serve to remind the audience of Julia's "true" identity,

⁷² The impact of celebrity casting on the depiction of Shakespeare's heroines is discussed further in Chapter Seven.

the production's depiction of her transition from straight-laced femininity in the first half of the play to Proteus's witty equal in the second half, contributed to a sense that all gendered behaviour is to some extent a performance.

In contrast to the gendered swoon of Myer-Bennett's Julia, Chanda's character used the moment strategically. Indeed, Chanda's Julia did not "swoon" at all, but rather fell to her knees and cried "O me unhappy" (89). The extent to which the swoon is natural or deliberate will significantly impact on the way in which the scene reads. Shapiro articulates this as follows:

if Julia continues to play the cheeky boy rather than the forlorn cast-off maiden, then her swoon or whatever she does to attract attention must seem a deliberate stratagem to divert Proteus's attention away from Valentine and Silvia and back to herself. (*Gender in Play* 78)

While Shapiro's focus is specifically on the boy player, this interpretation also applies to Godwin's staging, reflecting the fact that Chanda's self-assured Julia was not a stereotypical feminine heroine, but someone who boldly took control of her fate rather than passively allowing things to happen to her. Thus, Julia did not swoon out of feminine weakness, but rather actively attempted to pull focus. Once again, Chanda's characterisation reflected the plucky acumen of Shapiro's "cheeky page", rather than the stereotypical female love-interest.⁷³

Resolving the relationship between Julia and Proteus rests on the delivery of her subsequent speech, in which she criticises Proteus for his falsehood and articulates her own constancy. Shapiro has observed that:

With enough momentum behind it, the speech could also dazzle Proteus with Julia's presence and convince spectators that he truly does find her beauty no less than Silvia's, now that he sees her with "a constant eye." (*Gender in Play* 80)

⁷³ Shapiro argues that the "cheeky page" emerges dramaturgically once Julia dons her disguise and reflects the fact that in the original performance context a boy would have played the role (*Gender in Play* 69).

Julia's delivery of this speech represented an emotional climax in both productions and facilitated a transformation in Proteus that suggested it was the rekindling of love, rather than simply guilt, that prompted his return to Julia. Dorothea Myer-Bennett's emotional exchange with Proteus ended in a reconciliatory embrace; a moment of connection which contrasted with the physical awkwardness of their parting. The fact that the staging of the scenes with Sebastian had already indicated a growing affinity between the two added a greater weight to their reconciliation and offered the promise that this was not a reunion of convenience or guilt.

In Godwin's production there was not an equivalent sense of a connection between Proteus and Julia-as-Sebastian, but Chanda's change from Sebastian back to Julia offered a powerful and poignant point of connection between Proteus and his lover. Chanda's Julia slowly unbuttoned her shirt to reveal her bound breasts to Arends's Proteus and stood, holding her shirt open, for the whole of her final speech.⁷⁴ Julia's act of unbuttoning her shirt foregrounded to the gendered body underneath the costume, suggesting a stable female identity beneath the trappings of male identity. It also located this gendered body within the realms of objectified femininity: in the onstage act of undressing, Julia invited the gaze of Proteus and, by default, the audience who, like the spectator in Monks's analysis of the striptease, was "free to look at her body voyeuristically" (*The Actor* 102). A number of reviewers described this moment as erotically charged, with Iyengar describing the moment as a "sad, slow, matter-of-fact striptease" ("*The Two Gentlemen*" 145) and Spencer remarking that the scene was "at once erotic and deeply touching" ("*The Two Gentlemen*"). The attitude of these reviewers might reflect the fact that the act of disrobing has an inherently erotic quality in western culture, but it also foregrounds the way in which female bodies in this specific production were objectified, as a poignant moment of vulnerability

⁷⁴ Godwin's decision to stage the moment this way may have drawn on the revelation of the disguised page in *Of Apolonius and Silla* (see Stallybrass 75).

became titillating. Just as Silvia was established as an object of scopophilia in her early scenes, so Julia became a figure in which the audience was encouraged to take voyeuristic pleasure. This moment confirmed Julia's *to-be-looked-at-ness*, rendering Julia an acceptable object of attraction and allowing the dispute between Valentine and Proteus to be resolved through the exchange of desirable female bodies.

The production's attention on Chanda's breasts presented Julia's female identity as a biological certainty, demonstrating that beneath the male clothing, the gendered identity of both the character and actor remained stable. Furthermore, the fact that Julia found herself "The unwilling center of erotic attention" (Iyengar, "*Two Gentlemen*" 145) returned her to the female world of objectification and passivity, perhaps suggesting that she had at last achieved the status of romantic heroine. Furthermore, Julia's "resigned and helpless love" (145) for Proteus, further foregrounded the passivity, and perhaps masochism, of Julia's return to her female identity.

Like much of the final scene, the tone of the conclusion of Godwin's production was decidedly ambivalent. The production did not challenge the misogyny of the text as effectively as Hilton's staging, something evident in the response of reviewers who remained focussed on the male friendship. For example, online reviewer Stephen Collins observed: "Valentine's intervention saves him [Proteus] from himself and the shock seems to knock him back on course". That Valentine's intervention in Proteus' attempted rape can be seen as saving Proteus from himself suggests that, whether intended or not, Godwin's approach did little to address the play's patriarchal ideology. Thus in the final scene presented an ambiguous image: Valentine took Silvia by the hand and the pair headed off stage, towards their "mutual happiness" (171), Proteus and Julia were left looking at each other, frozen. They took two faltering steps towards each other as a dissonant chord grew to a crescendo and the lights went to

black. Unlike the joyful musical ending of Hilton's staging, in Godwin's production the happiness of both couples looked unlikely.

The final image of Hilton's staging of the play emphasised his comic and feminist vision for the play: as Valentine delivered his final line he offered his arm to Silvia and Proteus did likewise for Julia. At this point the women looked at each other, paused for a moment, then took each other's arm, exiting together between their bemused fiancés. Writing in *The Guardian*, Lyn Gardner felt that this implied that their future wives would not stand for "any nonsense" ("*Two Gentlemen*"), while Peter Kirwan suggested that the friendship of Proteus and Valentine "was amusingly undermined" ("*Richard III*" 515). Carol Chillington Rutter observed that in Hilton's staging "the men [were] spare parts to this happy ending" ("*Shakespeare Performances 2013*" 417). The production's closing dance enacted a joyful reconciliation between the couples, allowing for a comic and romantic conclusion to this troubling play.⁷⁵

Conclusion

In the reviews of these two productions of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* there is a distinct difference in the response to the characters. Reviews of Hilton's production tended to single out Julia and Silvia for praise (Gardner; Rutter; Kirwan), whereas responses to Godwin's production tended to focus on Arends' Proteus, and to a lesser extent Chanda's Julia (Billington; Letts; Iyengar). Thus, while the play may seem to celebrate male bonding at the expense of developed female characterisation, Hilton's staging was able to foreground the subjectivity of Julia and Silvia, making them into rounded, and indeed show-stealing, characters. While some of this critical attention will have stemmed from Hilton and Power's interpolated dialogue, I would argue that the additional lines only account for some of this critical focus and that Hilton's casting

⁷⁵ Friedman has noted, when productions attempt to use Silvia's silence to make a feminist point at the end of the play "its tone tends to become something other than comic" (217).

and staging was just as important in foregrounding female agency as the interpolated dialogue.

The Two Gentlemen of Verona is a play that self-consciously frames the appearance of its female characters in terms of gendered beauty standards and the way in which this construction reads will depend on the casting of the roles. While the appearance of the actor will be shaped by the production's design, more often than not in contemporary performance the performative power of references to a character's beauty is neglected in favour of a literal representation of contemporary normative beauty standards which can be amplified by cosmetics and costuming, but which are ultimately only achievable by casting an actor whose body conforms to those beauty qualities in terms of its height, weight, lack of disability and aesthetic qualities. In part, this reflects the requirements of realism and the expectation of verisimilitude in performance, but it also reflects the increasing relationship between the operation of desire in the capitalist marketplace and theatre as a commodity. The impact of the commodification of actors' appearance is that the narrow definition of desirable femininity is applied to Shakespeare's heroines and the comparatively few roles written for women by Shakespeare increasingly only available to performers who conform to normative notions of beauty.

Having explored the ways in which female performers are constructed as objects of desire and their relationship with contemporary notions of beauty and realism, I will now go on to examine the way in which monstrous femininity is portrayed on stage. Investigating the methods by which female corporeality is rendered grotesque and how this is used to police femininity more generally, my focus moves to *The Comedy of Errors* and the role of the kitchen wench, Luce.

Chapter Four - “a fat friend”: Embodying Monstrous Femininity in *The Comedy of Errors*

“women’s fat is measured against a hegemonic ideal of beauty so powerful that any variation from it is considered a personal deficiency or aggressive act” (Mosher 167).

Introduction

The Comedy of Errors is the only play by Shakespeare to feature on stage a female character who is described as fat.⁷⁶ Unlike the corpulent, show-stealing male role of Falstaff, the character in question is the minor role of Luce, the kitchen maid who mistakes Dromio of Syracuse for her fiancée, Dromio of Ephesus. With only six lines of speech, the character is essentially an extended joke, though, significantly for my purposes, Luce’s error offers a parallel to that of her mistress, Adriana, who also misdirects attention meant for her partner toward his twin. It is significant that both a high status and low status woman should accost a man other than their partner, and this chapter will explore the ways in which corporeal humiliation contributes to the construction of the femininity of the play’s female characters.

Despite what John R. Ford has identified as a history of “dismissive critical neglect” (12), *The Comedy of Errors* is a popular play in contemporary performance. The RSC has mounted ten productions of the play – four since the millennium – including one Young People’s Production in 2009, seven of which were performed on the RST stage.⁷⁷ *Errors* is the most frequently staged comedy at Shakespeare’s Globe Theatre to date, with six productions since 1999 (three on the main stage and three small-

⁷⁶ The only other possible contender in the Shakespeare canon is Mother Prat in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, but she is not a character in her own right, played by the disguised Falstaff as he tries to escape Mistress Ford’s house unseen by her husband.

⁷⁷ The directors of these productions are as follows: Clifford Williams (1962 and revived in 1972), Trevor Nunn (1976), Adrian Noble (1983), Ian Judge (1990), Tim Supple (1996), Lynne Parker (2000), Nancy Meckler (2005), Paul Hunter (2009) and Amir Nizar Zuabi (2012).

scale tours).⁷⁸ In addition, there have been a number of major twenty-first century productions, including stagings at the Bristol Old Vic (2003), Northern Broadsides (2005) and the National Theatre (2012).⁷⁹

Jonathan Bate and Eric Rasmussen suggest that *Errors* is “Shakespeare’s only farce” (102),⁸⁰ and the text’s potential for slapstick comedy has been a contributing factor to the play’s success in performance. Looking at the play’s post-war performance history, it is possible to identify two key approaches to staging the drama: on the one hand it has been treated as a farce with directors employing elements from the *commedia dell’arte* performance tradition (Williams 1962, Noble 1983, Hunter 2009), whilst on the other it has been modernised and the menacing nature of the totalitarian nature of the Ephesian state explored (Nunn 1976, Judge 1990, Meckler 2005). Perhaps the theme linking these two performance traditions is the tendency in contemporary stagings of the play to police femininity through comic humiliation of the female characters. The ways in which casting facilitates this humiliation through the embodied characteristics of the actors is the central focus of this chapter.

The Field of Fat

It is impossible to write about fat without evoking the pejorative connotations of the word in contemporary parlance; this is addressed by the field of Fat Studies which has adopted the word, acknowledging its subjectivity and fluidity, but also recognising its importance as a cultural term, eschewing as it does the medicalised expressions of obese and overweight. The subjectivity of fat as an adjective means that it can be

⁷⁸ Directed for the main stage by Kathryn Hunter (1999), Chris Luscombe (2006) and Blanche McIntyre (2014) and directed for a small-scale tour by Rebecca Gatward (2009, 2010, 2011).

⁷⁹ Directed by David Farr (Bristol Old Vic, 2003), Barrie Rutter (Northern Broadsides, 2005), Dominic Cooke (National Theatre, 2012).

⁸⁰ This assertion seems to overlook the farcical qualities of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, as well as the critical history of *The Taming of the Shrew*, which makes a case for seeing the play as a farce (see Saccio).

applied to a whole range of body types that are classed as somehow beyond “neutral”, whether that be “overweight”, or as Jennifer-Scott Mobley highlights “oversize”. Mobley continues:

This “more-than-ness” might include a woman who is of above-average height, broad shouldered, thick waisted, or large breasted, to someone you might describe as “big boned”, “chunky,” “zaftig,” or simply fat. (3)⁸¹

While it is essential to acknowledge the subjectivity of fat and its possible application to a range of body types, fat phobia and body shaming have real social consequences and Stefanie A. Jones argues that while:

A deconstructionist approach might recognize the fluidity and temporality of bodies and the ultimate meaninglessness of the sign ‘fat’ in order to challenge the sign’s power, individuals are clearly affected by the material consequences of anti-fat bias on their quotidian lives... (37)

Thus, just as the concept of fat might be considered a socially constructed category, perhaps not dissimilar to race and gender, like race and gender it is also a powerful social signifier.

The semiotic of fat can be constructed on stage and casting is central to the performance of fat, along with costuming and sometimes prosthesis. Obviously, an actor who is significantly larger than, for example, the average UK dress-size is likely to read as fat on stage, as social expectations from outside the theatre colour perceptions of the bodies on stage. It is also possible, however, that the casting of the company might designate performing body as fat: if, for example, an average-sized actor is cast in a company of extremely thin actors, their body is like to be read in relation to the thinner bodies and therefore assume a fat quality, despite the fact that in a different context that same body might be read as average, or even thin.

The depiction of fat women on stage is inherently linked with the construction of gender and also corresponds to issues of class and racial identity. Writing a history of fat, Amy Erdman Farrell notes that:

⁸¹ I would add that being muscly might also be included in the body-types that are somehow “oversize”.

the cultural hatred of fat emerged simultaneously with the constructions of hierarchies of race, sexuality, gender, and class. Fat denigration was linked to the overall process of mapping political and social hierarchies onto bodies. (180)

Within these hierarchies, fat became a marker of “inferior bodies” (Farrell 8) and fat and the fat person came to signify qualities that are “lazy, gluttonous, greedy, immoral, uncontrolled, stupid, ugly and lacking in will power” (Farrell 6). More intrinsically, “The fat body is the body without the rule of the mind: the body let loose, animalistic, instinctive, out of control. Thus, sexual voraciousness, stupidity, and helplessness are all associated with the fat body” (Kuppers 180). It is evident that these qualities have become gendered and racialised to represent the antithesis of the idealised athleticism, discipline, and control of the white, male body. Furthermore it is possible to see how fear of fat and its negative social connotations might help to manipulate and control marginalised groups within society.

Naomi Wolf argues that ensuring that women are preoccupied with their appearance facilitates patriarchal oppression and suggests that the “cultural fixation on female thinness is not an obsession about female beauty but an obsession about female obedience” (183). As I demonstrated in the previous chapter, casting plays an important role in the construction of desirable femininity, but equally it also defines and constructs *undesirable* femininity. As part of this project “Fat women are [...] vilified and mocked in popular culture and theatre, most often used as a source of humour or farce” (Jester 252); inherently linked with the policing of gender identity, women who are fat are generally depicted as giving a failed performance of their femininity.

It may seem to be a contradiction that on the one hand fat should be identified as a feminine attribute, whilst on the other, the fat woman should be seen as subverting her gendered identity. Yet this paradox stems from the misogynist assumption that women are inherently weak – or rather

that weakness is an inherently feminine attribute – women are either physically weak with petite, infantile bodies, or they are mentally weak, unable to control their bodily urges and their desire for food. Significantly, the prepubescent physicality represented by the androgynous, hairless female bodily ideal corresponds with the petite, weak, and ultimately controllable version of femininity which is particularly celebrated in contemporary western society, an identity which the fat woman with her “unmistakably, maturely female” body openly challenges (C.Hartley 68).

Fat represents a challenge to a number of feminine ideals, as Laura Brown notes: “Fat oppression carries the less than subtle message that women are forbidden to take up space (by being large of body) or resources (by eating food ad libitum)” (20). As a result:

when a woman’s stature or girth approaches or exceeds that of a man’s she becomes something freakish. By becoming large [...] she implicitly violates the sexual rules that place her in physical subordination to the man. (Brown 62)

Thus, “The fat woman demonstrates by her very presence that she has not submitted to the rules that society has established for feminine behaviour” (C.Hartley 66).

The successful policing of bodily identity and the creation of what Foucault defines as “docile bodies” – that is to say a body “that may be subjected, used, transformed and improved” (Foucault 136) – ensures that through the act of self-policing, subjects remain disempowered. To facilitate the internalisation of self-hatred, the signification of fat in popular culture must be carefully controlled and as a result “portrayals of fat women are rarely positive, often recycling hurtful and degrading stereotypes” (Bernstein & St.John 263). In this context, the depiction of Shakespeare’s only fat female character might reveal some of the entrenched attitudes about gender, desirability, and appearance in contemporary society.

“She’s too big, I hope, for me to compass”: Casting Luce⁸²

In the Folio Luce appears in only one scene – Act 3, Scene 1 – and speaks only six lines, scorning Antipholus of Ephesus when he is locked out of his house by his wife. In a number of productions the role of the Messenger in Act 5, Scene 1, is also given to the actor playing Luce which increases the role by ten lines, though this is not a universally adopted practice. For a character who has so few lines, she is spoken about a great deal in the play and is a particular fixation of Dromio of Syracuse’s, whom Luce mistakes for her betrothed, Dromio of Ephesus. In the following exchange from Act 3, Scene 2, Dromio tells his master, Antipholus of Syracuse, about his encounter with the amorous servant:

ANTIPHOLUS OF SYRACUSE: What is she?

DROMIO OF SYRACUSE: A very reverent body; ay, such a one as a man may not speak of without he say 'Sir-reverence.' I have but lean luck in the match, and yet is she a wondrous fat marriage.

ANTIPHOLUS OF SYRACUSE: How dost thou mean a fat marriage?

DROMIO OF SYRACUSE: Marry, sir, she's the kitchen wench and all grease; and I know not what use to put her to but to make a lamp of her and run from her by her own light. I warrant, her rags and the tallow in them will burn a Poland winter: if she lives till doomsday, she'll burn a week longer than the whole world.

ANTIPHOLUS OF SYRACUSE: What complexion is she of?

DROMIO OF SYRACUSE: Swart, like my shoe, but her face nothing half so clean kept: for why, she sweats; a man may go over shoes in the grime of it.

ANTIPHOLUS OF SYRACUSE: That's a fault that water will mend.

DROMIO OF SYRACUSE: No, sir, 'tis in grain; Noah's flood could not do it.

ANTIPHOLUS OF SYRACUSE: What's her name?

DROMIO OF SYRACUSE: Nell, sir; but her name and three quarters, that's an ell and three quarters, will not measure her from hip to hip.

ANTIPHOLUS OF SYRACUSE: Then she bears some breadth?

DROMIO OF SYRACUSE: No longer from head to foot than from hip to hip: she is spherical, like a globe; I could find out countries in her.

ANTIPHOLUS OF SYRACUSE: In what part of her body stands Ireland?

DROMIO OF SYRACUSE: Marry, in her buttocks: I found it out by the bogs.

ANTIPHOLUS OF SYRACUSE: Where Scotland?

⁸² Act 4, Scene 1, line 111. All references to the text are taken from William Shakespeare, *The Comedy of Errors*. Ed. T.S. Dorsch. Cambridge University Press, 1988, 2005.

DROMIO OF SYRACUSE: I found it by the barrenness; hard in the palm of the hand.

ANTIPHOLUS OF SYRACUSE: Where France?

DROMIO OF SYRACUSE: In her forehead; armed and reverted, making war against her heir.

ANTIPHOLUS OF SYRACUSE: Where England?

DROMIO OF SYRACUSE: I looked for the chalky cliffs, but I could find no whiteness in them; but I guess it stood in her chin, by the salt rheum that ran between France and it.

ANTIPHOLUS OF SYRACUSE: Where Spain?

DROMIO OF SYRACUSE: Faith, I saw it not; but I felt it hot in her breath.

ANTIPHOLUS OF SYRACUSE: Where America, the Indies?

DROMIO OF SYRACUSE: Oh, sir, upon her nose all o'er embellished with rubies, carbuncles, sapphires, declining their rich aspect to the hot breath of Spain; who sent whole armadoes of caracks to be ballast at her nose.

ANTIPHOLUS OF SYRACUSE: Where stood Belgia, the Netherlands?

DROMIO OF SYRACUSE: Oh, sir, I did not look so low. To conclude, this drudge, or diviner, laid claim to me, call'd me Dromio; swore I was assured to her; told me what privy marks I had about me, as, the mark of my shoulder, the mole in my neck, the great wart on my left arm, that I amazed ran from her as a witch: And, I think, if my breast had not been made of faith and my heart of steel, She had transform'd me to a curtal dog and made me turn i' the wheel.

(lines 84-130)

The exchange subverts the popular trope in early modern literature of the desirable female body as a country that can be conquered by the amorous male poet. In this passage what should be the passive country is a sexual agent, seeking gratification for herself. The reference to “armed and reverted, making war against her heir” (line 110) puns on the meaning of heir/hair and critics have argued that “reverted” represents the hair (“heir”) receding, or falling out, as a result of venereal disease, and “armed” the scabs of the chancres caused by the same disease” (Dorsch fn.92). Sexual voracity is frequently linked with fat, as another attribute seen as representing excessive appetite and the inability to control bodily urges. Luce’s voracious sexuality is also linked with early modern discourse on witchcraft, as the witch’s sometimes sexual relationship with her familiars is invoked in Dromio’s reference to Luce’s potential ability to turn a grown man into “a curtal dog”. That this reference should foreground the

castrating power of witchcraft's subversion of gender identity, demonstrates the complexity of the image of the fat woman on stage.

The description of Luce relates in many ways to the emerging notion that fat is a gendered, racial and class attribute. As a female servant, Luce is of a low social status and significantly Dromio also describes her skin colour as "swart", meaning "swarthy" or "dark" (Dorsch fn 91). In its original context this description highlights the fact that Luce works in a hot and smoky kitchen, but it also presents her complexion in opposition to the fair skin of desirable femininity. Early modern ideology celebrated fair skin as a feminine beauty ideal, with darker skin being associated with working class women who worked outside or in dirty conditions, as well as linked to societies deemed less refined than the English Court. Thus, Dromio's description arguably combines class, gender, and racial signifiers to depict Luce as undesirable. Antipholus's response suggests that Luce's complexion may be "a fault that water will mend", but Dromio asserts, "'tis in grain; Noah's flood could not do it" (97; 98). This response indicates that Luce's dark, greasy skin is a fundamental part of her identity which cannot be changed, linking it to identity categories such as gender, race, and class.

Writing of the play in performance, Bate and Rasmussen suggest that "the geographical tour round the physical characteristics of Nell, the fat serving maid" is a comic set-piece of the play in performance (113-4). They offer the following example from Lynne Parker's production of the play in which the exchange above was:

performed [...] as a piece of vaudeville, a hilarious double act played directly to the audience featuring, among other things, a retractable tape-measure and often reducing the actors themselves to helpless laughter. (114)

This double-act approach is adopted in the majority of contemporary productions of the play, and often constitutes a comic highlight of *Errors* in performance. Yet, given the dubious sexual, racial, and class politics of the depiction of Luce, the embodiment of the character's revolting (pun

intended) corpulence on stage represents a challenge for directors of this play.

Some productions avoid the challenge of depicting the monstrous physicality described by Dromio by cutting the character of Luce altogether. With only six lines attributed to the character, it is fairly straightforward either to attribute them to another character or to cut them completely, something that is often done in fringe productions of the play. Another popular casting decision in small scale productions – such as the Globe’s 2009 tour directed by Rebecca Gatward and the RSC’s 2009 Young People’s Shakespeare production directed by Paul Hunter – is to double the role with another small role such as Angelo the Goldsmith. In both these cases the bearded male actor playing Luce donned a fat suit, contributing to the sense that Luce fails to perform her gender successfully.⁸³ In the Globe’s 2006 production directed by Chris Luscombe, the cutting and the cross-gender casting options combined and Luce herself was not depicted on stage, but her lines were given to a male actor who took the name Lucius. As a result, we heard about Luce’s monstrous physicality, but never saw it.

Given the gender ratio of Shakespearean roles already discussed in this thesis, cutting any female roles, or giving them to a male actor, is problematic because it further reduces the number of employment opportunities for women in professional productions of Shakespeare. Furthermore, the cross-gender casting of Luce can contribute to depicting her in a negative way, as the bearded man playing her renders her femininity ridiculous. These casting and costuming decisions also collude in a depiction of the fat woman as undesirable and risible. Perhaps the most significant element of these staging choices was the decision to make

⁸³ Based on the terminology set out in Chapter One, this casting choice may be considered a practical doubling. However, I would argue that the fact that the actor’s gender did not align with that of the character contributed to the characterisation of Luce, rendering her particularly undesirable. Therefore, the doubling took on an artistic significance.

fat the key signifier of grotesqueness: fat was the only element of Dromio's abject description of Luce's physicality that was depicted in performance. The receding hair, the syphilitic sores, the rosy nose, and the greasy skin were all absent, and indeed have not been featured in any of the ten productions of the play that I have seen in the course of my research. Instead, fat has been used as a shorthand for undesirable femininity.

In the two most recent RSC productions, the actors playing Luce have donned fat suits in order to portray Luce's spherical physicality: Bettrys Jones (2005) and Sarah Belcher (2012) were given prostheses to ensure that they embodied the "oversized" corpulence of Luce. The actor wears the fat suit under their costume and its foam padding mimics the size and shape of the fat body allowing them to signify as fat. Given the ensemble nature of casting at the RSC, it is possible that the fat suit was utilised so that an actor could be recruited for the role of Luce who could also understudy the roles of Adriana or Luciana. Yet, the recourse to prosthesis to facilitate the process of understudying renders visible the ideology underpinning contemporary performances of Shakespeare: fat women cannot play love-interests. As I demonstrated in the previous chapter, contemporary performances of Shakespeare still invest in the idea that the desirability of a female character is inherently related to the status of the hero and a fat female heroine would undermine the status of the male lead.

Understudying is not the only reason that a thin performer may be chosen ahead of a fat actor: doubling might also contribute to the casting choice. Julia Grace Jester suggests that "roles that do not specify the character's weight will rarely be given to fat women" (249). If this is indeed the case and the actor playing Luce is required to double with other roles, casting conventions may dictate that a fat woman cannot play a role not denoted as fat. Petra Kupperts notes: "For the fat woman the sign of difference is overpowering [...] she cannot jump from discourse to discourse, from passing to being. Fat is the master sign that determines the body and rules all discourses" (Kupperts 281). If fat is the "master sign",

then the fat woman in the theatrical company might not “disappear” into the ensemble in the same way that a thin woman might and while the practice of doubling is an accepted theatrical convention, directors may nonetheless try avoid casting an actor who will stand out in the ensemble. The paucity of roles for women in Shakespeare and the fact that many of those roles are love-interests make a fat woman particularly unlikely to be cast.

The fat suit therefore participates in a form of cultural erasure, as fat bodies are written out of representation, replaced by the latex and foam of which the fat suit is generally made.⁸⁴ In a context in which fat has decidedly pejorative connotations, fat suits have been likened to a form of blackface, as the actor is crossing from a position of social advantage to one of marginalisation (LeBesco, “Situating” 237). LeBesco also argues that the two practices share the common aim of rendering a marginalised identity both monstrous and ridiculous for comic effect. Fat suits are generally associated with comic genres and it could be argued that if the actress herself is fat this might contribute to an alienation effect in which the audience experience empathy with the actor playing the role and therefore do not revel in the gross depiction of Luce provided by Dromio. If the actress herself is thin, she is shielded from Dromio’s cruelty by the prosthetic fat, leaving the audience free to engage in uncritical laughter at the monstrous nature of the fat female body. Just as the male performer playing Luce was a drag performance, so the thin female performer wearing a fat suit might also be seen as a form of drag act, as LeBesco argues that fat is a form of drag, which inevitably contributes to a parody of femininity (“Situating” 233). More generally, the use of fat suits in Shakespeare makes a statement that fat women do not belong on the classical stage and is a clear demonstration of the way in which casting contributes to the policing of female bodies, not only on stage but in wider society.

⁸⁴ The cultural erasure of fat people from representation is a key focus of Fat Studies.

There have been a number of examples of “fat” actresses playing the role.⁸⁵ Most recently Anne Odeke played Luce in Blanche McIntyre’s 2014 production at Shakespeare’s Globe. Odeke is a mixed-race woman whose website openly engages with body-image, detailing that she appeared on reality TV show *Big Meets Bigger* in 2009 (Odeke). The costuming of Odeke, in a low-cut pale blue dress that accentuated her bosom, contributed to the depiction of the character’s voracious sexuality, whilst the cockney accent that she adopted for the role was used to denote her social rank. Thus, whether inadvertently or otherwise Odeke’s size and race, along with the signification of stereotypical working class characteristics, contributed to the depiction of the character. While McIntyre’s production ostensibly utilised colourblind casting, Dromio’s specific reference to Luce’s complexion inevitably drew attention to the actor’s skin colour, meaning the performance foregrounded Odeke’s skin colour, even if the casting practice was colourblind. Thus, McIntyre’s casting choice drew on Odeke’s embodied characteristics and combined them with character choices which drew on cultural stereotypes related to body-image, race, and socio-economic status in order to create a character at whom spectators were encouraged to laugh.

The representation of Luce as other does not only manifest itself in racial and class terms, but also in those of nationality. Both Ian Forrest’s 2014 production at Theatre By The Lake in Keswick and Kathryn Hunter’s 1999 staging at the Globe saw the role played by thin, white actresses who were costumed in such a way to render the character ethnically “other”. In these productions, the role of Luce was rendered other not through fat, but through her ethnic identity. She was depicted in “eastern” costuming, signifying the Greek/Turkish context of the play and wore darker colours and less-fitted costumes than the other female characters. Whilst the

⁸⁵ Whilst I acknowledge the crassness of this term and of the reductive nature of defining a female performer based on her physical appearance, given the current focus of my discussion I employ this term in a descriptive and comparative way, acknowledging its subjectivity.

casting of BAME actors in this role is problematic, the “whitewashing” of a role, whom the production fashions as Middle Eastern, but who is played by a white actor, is troubling and reminiscent of minstrelsy, as white actors play negative stereotypes of a specific ethnic identity.

In addition to this racialised interpretation of the role, it is also possible to observe a casting trend in which white actresses dominate the acting company of the play, with only one black or Asian actress cast per production. According to the BBA Shakespeare Database Luciana has only been played by a woman of colour on two occasions and Adriana has never been played by a BAME actor in productions since the millennium.⁸⁶ Instead, the few BAME female members of the cast have tended, with the exception of the Abbess in Cooke’s 2011 staging, to take the more low-status roles of Luce and the Courtesan.⁸⁷ This casting trend is confirmed by the BBA Shakespeare Database, which lists four Courtesans and five Luce/Nells since the millennium (BBA Shakespeare “*The Comedy of Errors*”). It is an unfortunate reality that colourblind casting practices tend to cast actors of colour in more minor roles than their white counterparts, a trend which all too often puts BAME actors in low-status, servile roles which lack prestige. In this way, the performance history of *The Comedy of Errors* might be seen as a microcosm for colourblind casting in English productions of Shakespeare, as Luce is perhaps one of the roles in the “black canon” identified by Jami Rogers and the BBA Shakespeare Project. In the case of Luce, this is particularly problematic as it is a role associated

⁸⁶ According to the BBA Shakespeare database the role of Luciana was played by Debbie Korley in the RSC tour of the play in 2009, while Kezrena James played the role at Grosvenor Park in 2014 (BBA Shakespeare “Luciana”).

⁸⁷ By low-status I mean both in terms of their social context within the world of the play, that of kitchen maid and courtesan, but also within the context of contemporary theatre employability, in that the roles of Luce and the Courtesan offer fewer lines and less stage time than that of the sisters. The Abbess is an interesting exception to this rule as she is a more mature and higher status role, yet she only appears in the final scene and – like the Widow in *The Taming of the Shrew* – serves as a plot device for the happy conclusion of the play rather than as a rounded character in her own right.

with the notion of “inferior bodies”, linking racism, xenophobia, and elitism to emphasise the character’s undesirability.

Through these manifestations of Luce we see that racial and class signifiers, along with the character’s physicality, contribute to Luce’s grotesqueness. Yet, this depiction is generally at odds with the description given by Dromio. I have been unable to find a professional production of the play in England since the millennium that has depicted the character in all her Rabelaisian glory – with yellow teeth, spots, and receding hair – something which troublingly suggests that fat, and sometimes national or racial identity, are being used by directors and designers as a semiotic shorthand for all that is undesirable about the character. It would be possible to use the gap between Dromio’s monstrous description of Luce and the reality of her appearance in a playful and creative way, implying that Dromio’s response stems from sexual anxiety rather than because Luce’s inherent undesirability. However, whether it is because the role is so minor or because fat shaming is so ubiquitous, I have found no evidence of this being attempted in major professional productions of the play in England. Instead, the character’s corpulence is enough to render her monstrous.

Ultimately, Luce is presented as comic because she gives a failed performance of her femininity: she does not fashion her body in a way that conforms to contemporary ideals of femininity and her misplaced enthusiasm for Dromio of Syracuse implies both agency and sexual voraciousness, neither of which correspond with the ideal of the chaste and passive woman. This inappropriate behaviour has its parallel in the role of Adriana, the wife of Antipholus of Ephesus, whose shrewish characterisation challenges the model of desirable femininity. In contemporary performance Adriana and Luce are generally depicted as at different ends of the spectrum of femininity: Adriana is physically desirable, Luce is physically repulsive; Adriana is high status, Luce is low status; Adriana is articulate, Luce often speaks falteringly and with a

regional accent. However, as characters they are thematically linked as both operate outside the bounds of acceptable femininity: both are demanding partners, and, most significantly, both women mistake their brother-in-law for their partner and are socially, and often sexually, humiliated for this transgression. In order to explore how femininity is both constructed and policed in *The Comedy of Errors* in performance, I will now focus specifically on two stagings of the play to demonstrate the way in which this humiliation functions as a punishment for wayward femininity and how the casting of Luce and Adriana contributes to the construction of gender in the play.

Case Study

The two productions that I have chosen to analyse in this section are the two of the highest profile productions of *The Comedy of Errors* in England over the last five years.⁸⁸ The first was directed by Dominic Cooke at the National Theatre, opening at the end of 2011 and starring popular British comedian Lenny Henry in the role of Antipholus of Syracuse. The second was directed by Amir Nizar Zuabi and was performed by the RSC as part of the World Shakespeare Festival which took place as part of the Cultural Olympiad in 2012. These productions of *Errors* were mounted by the two largest beneficiaries of Arts Council England funding: in 2012 the National Theatre received £17.5m and the RSC received £15.7m (Freestone). The scale and reach of both productions reflect this financial clout, with Cooke's production playing in the 1,100-seat Olivier Theatre and receiving an NT Live broadcast, in which the production was screened live to cinemas across the UK on 1st March 2012. Zuabi's production was staged in the RST and played in repertory with *Twelfth Night* and *The Tempest* as part of the "What Country Friend is This?" season, both of which were directed by David Farr and all three of which were through-cast. After a run at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre, the production transferred to the Roundhouse

⁸⁸ Blanche McIntyre's 2014 staging at Shakespeare's Globe had a shorter run than these productions, though its subsequent release on DVD means that it may reach a wider audience than these two productions did during their run.

in London, before heading back to Stratford to complete its run.⁸⁹ Both productions had relatively large companies: there were fifteen men in Cooke's production, plus another four men in the on-stage band, opposite seven women and thirteen men and five women in Zuabi's, with an additional five musicians, one of whom was female.

In the context of London 2012, both productions engaged with issues of identity, nationality, and what it means to be an outsider. Relocating the play to a contemporary setting, both productions utilised slapstick and farce, alongside a depiction of the brutality of a totalitarian regime to create a performance dominated by realism. As well as sharing an approach which explored the more troubling side of the play, with its depiction of the Duke's oppressive regime in Ephesus, these productions had similar ideologies in terms of their depiction of the female roles: Adriana, played by Claudie Blakley, at the National Theatre and Kirsty Bushell at the RSC, was a trophy wife whose shrewish behaviour contributed to her husband's desire to seek comfort in the arms of the Courtesan. Both productions included a bed-trick in which Adriana inadvertently slept with her brother-in-law; both productions depicted Luce as a cultural outsider whose fatness was a shorthand for negative character traits. The Adrianas in both productions were depicted as pampered and vain, women who chose to make their husbands' lives difficult for the sake of petty narcissism rather than as a result of any justified grievance. At the other end of the play's social spectrum, Luce was depicted as a cultural outsider, a different nationality from her employers, of lower social status and physically different from most of the women in the production. The way in which the female characters in these productions were rendered risible will be the focus of this case study.

⁸⁹ It was at the Roundhouse that I saw Zuabi's production in July 2012, and I also saw a live performance of Cooke's production at the National Theatre in March 2012. In addition, I have consulted archive recordings of both these productions.

Both productions treated Antipholus of Syracuse as the central character in the play and presented the world of Ephesus to the audience through his eyes. Cooke suggested that the play is about “the experience of being a foreigner” and to explore this idea, reimagined Ephesus as London, and Syracuse as West Africa (“Dominic Cooke on *The Comedy of Errors*”). In his ethnically diverse, colour-conscious production each scene was relocated to a recognisable contemporary location: the first scene was set in a warehouse, while the Phoenix became a modern, gated apartment block and the Porcupine a seedy red light district. It was into this busy, urban world that Lenny Henry’s Antipholus of Syracuse was thrust; seeing the play from his perspective, the production depicted the strangeness of the city through the eyes of an outsider. Thus, in Cooke’s staging, *The Comedy of Errors* became Antipholus of Syracuse’s play: a lost man searching for his twin. In this context, the play’s subplots were used to flesh-out the world, as well as to provide obstacles that Henry’s Antipholus must overcome. On the one hand this reflects the fact that Antipholus of Syracuse has the greatest number of lines of speech in the play, but it combined with the celebrity casting of Henry in the role to make it Antipholus’s play. As a result, the second largest speaking role in the text, that of Adriana, became a supporting role, used for what she could tell us about the relationship between the men, rather than as an active agent within the drama.⁹⁰

Trophy Wives

The text of *The Comedy of Errors* suggests that the Duke played a role in the marriage of Adriana and Antipholus of Ephesus, when Antipholus describes Adriana as “She whom thou gav’st me to be my wife” (5.1.198). From this reference, Cooke’s production interpreted the character as a trophy wife, with Cooke describing Adriana as “a woman who can only see

⁹⁰ According to the RSC edition of the play, Adriana has 15% of the lines, 79 speeches and 6 scenes, topped only by Antipholus of Syracuse who has 15% of the lines, 103 speeches and 6 scenes and closely followed by Dromio of Syracuse who has 14% of lines, 99 speeches and 9 scenes (Bate & Rasmussen 18).

herself in terms of her husband and his recognition of her" ("Dominic Cooke on *The Comedy of Errors*"). In this interpretation, Adriana's femininity and performance of her sexuality became central to her characterisation. She was played as an "Essex girl", with long, platinum blonde hair and an Essex accent. Blakley's tall, thin frame was accentuated with high heels and she wore a variety of dresses which revealed her toned calf muscles. She frequently changed outfits and had a range of accessories, such as bags, sunglasses, and jackets, which gave the impression of an expansive wardrobe. The trappings of her economically comfortable life created a character who was "nouveau riche", lacking taste, and subject to ridicule, unable to perform her class and gender identity in a socially accepted way. Furthermore, the casting of Blakley, an actor known for her classical work at the RSC as well as from appearances in popular BBC costume dramas *Cranford* and *Lark Rise to Candleford*, ghosted this "Essex girl" Adriana with these more culturally prestigious roles, meaning that humour was garnered from the gap between the character and the actor. Charles Spencer, reviewing the production in *The Telegraph*, observed:

Blakley, usually the poshest of actresses, hilariously comes across here as a shrewish dyed blonde Essex vulgarian much given to manicures, foot spas and lavish bling... (*The Comedy of Errors*)

For Spencer, some of the humour was derived from the gap between the actor and the character. This gap in status might be compared with the traditional drag act, in which a male performer apes femininity, crossing from a position of cultural dominance to one of disempowerment. With a host of classical roles behind her, Blakley's performance as an "Essex vulgarian" became a kind of drag act, as she crossed from a position of privilege to one of marginalisation. Just as "drag has sometimes been read as an acknowledgment of and capitulation to a restrictive, superficial, and still powerful set of gender signifiers, rather than an attempt to disrupt such signifiers" (LeBesco 232), so Blakley's crossing could generate humour stemming from stereotypes that deride working class culture. As with all ghosting, the reading of the character is inevitably subjective and for those audiences who had not seen Blakley's previous performances, or

who did not recognise the actor in the role, the character would read differently. However, the recurring idea of “comic turn” (Spencer “*The Comedy*”) and “lovely turn” (Letts “*A Comedy*”) in reviews, foregrounded the assumed superficiality of the character. Whilst I would argue that some of this stems from the snobbery of the reviewers rather than the depiction itself, the production clearly attempted to derive comedy from the character’s performance of hyper-femininity.

Zuabi’s relocation of the play was less culturally specific than Cooke’s version of London, and drew on more generalised cultural stereotypes. Like Cooke, Zuabi sought to uncover some of the play’s troubling undercurrents, stating “I think it’s a much darker play than you expect. I think it’s a play about grief and loss more than it is a play about funny twins” (“Interview”). Zuabi stated that his interpretation of the play was influenced by his experience of being a Palestinian, saying “Coming from where I come, of course the whole thing of being illegal somewhere has a very strong echo” and that contributed to “That sense of making the comedy real: you know, they’re running for their lives, they’re not running to be funny” (“Interview”). To explore a sense of exile, Zuabi also set the play in a contemporary urban context, but unlike Bunny Christie’s realist design for Cooke’s staging, Jon Bausor’s design for the production was more abstract, taking the idea of freight and haulage transforming the gently-raked, bareboard stage from scene to scene with the addition of cargo containers and oil drums, along with several doors and openings in the back wall of the set, which denoted different areas within Ephesus. The Phoenix setting, for example, was the shell of a cargo container that was flown in with Adriana, Luciana, and their dinner table inside it. Zuabi’s Syracuse was a menacing world, overseen by a totalitarian regime, with a gangster Duke who waterboarded Egeon in a fishtank in the first scene, and in which stowaways scurried out of crates, desperately trying to avoid attracting the attention of the armed guards who patrolled the stage.

In this context of life and death stakes, comedy was primarily generated through heightened characterisation and physical comedy.

Bushell played Adriana as border-line hysterical, prone to violence and vocal extremes. Like Blakley, Bushell's Adriana was something of a trophy wife: dressed in a long, flowing dress which had slits in the arms and one in the skirt, long wavy brunette hair, and, in all but her first scene, wearing extremely high heels, she oscillated between loudly berating the man she took to be her husband and trying to seduce him. Her volatile characterisation obscured any rational grievance that she might have, while the obvious satisfaction she took from punching Dromio of Ephesus in the stomach in Act 2, Scene 1 and enthusiastically dunking Luciana's head into a fishtank in Act 4, Scene 2 rendered her unsympathetic. For some reviewers, Bushell's Adriana offered some welcome comedy relief from the menacing world of Zuabi's Ephesus, with Patrick Marmion claiming in *The Daily Mail* "Best of all is Kirsty Bushell's randy, jealous wife who is a self-theatricalising shrew" (Marmion). I would argue that some of Marmion's enthusiasm for Bushell's Adriana stemmed from the fact that Zuabi's production punished and humiliated this "self-theatricalising shrew" extratextually.

Both productions interpolated a bed-trick into the action of the play. In the text, Adriana goes out to seek her wayward husband and encounters Antipholus of Syracuse. Mistaking her brother-in-law for her husband, she invites him to come home with her to dinner, seeking reconciliation. Interpreting Antipholus's confusion as hesitation, she takes his arm, saying "Come, I will fasten on this sleeve of thine" (2.1.164), presumably in a bid to guide him back towards the Phoenix. However, for both productions this indication of stage action was a cue to interpolate a lot of stage business into the scene. In Zuabi's staging Bushell's Adriana met Antipholus of Syracuse in the street and immediately began berating him for his slack timekeeping. Adriana physically dominated Jonathan McGuinness's slight Antipholus, whom she was taller than in her heels, controlling the space and forcing him to back away [Figure 19]. Bushell's Adriana was at times threatening, at times sensual, attempting to seduce Antipholus, pushing his head into her cleavage before grabbing his face and

passionately kissing him. Antipholus of Syracuse eagerly reciprocated her kiss and the pair grabbed each other's bodies enthusiastically. After this, Adriana led Antipholus away, telling him in a low, sultry voice "I'll *dine* above with you today" (2.2.198 - emphasis added), emphasising the "dine" euphemistically.⁹¹



Figure 19 Kirsty Bushell as Adriana and Jonathan McGuinness as Antipholus of Syracuse. *The Comedy of Errors*. Dir. Amir Nizar Zuabi. Photo by Keith Pattison © RSC

In keeping with Cooke's realist vision for the production, the action of 2.2 was relocated to a specific contemporary context: a snooker hall. When the sisters entered this male-dominated world they were greeted by wolf-whistles and catcalls. Tottering after Henry's Antipholus in six-inch heels,

⁹¹ In using the word "dine" in this way, the production further emphasised the link between food consumption and sexual appetite, though there is no record in *The Oxford English Dictionary* of a formal link between the word dine and sex.

Blakley's Adriana was a comic spectacle, an image that was only exacerbated when she leaped up onto a snooker table, entreating Antipholus to listen to her. Having failed to reason with him verbally, Adriana clung to Antipholus, wrapping her arms around his legs and pulling him close to her, before passionately kissing him. Henry's bewildered Antipholus used the moment to establish a point of connection with the audience, asking them a series of direct questions:

To me she speaks; she moves me for her theme.
What, was I married to her in my dream?
Or sleep I now, and think I hear all this?
What error drives our eyes and ears amiss? (2.2.172-175)

Delivered whilst being kissed and generally manhandled by Adriana, Antipholus's direct address framed the scene from his perspective and encouraged empathy with his confusion rather than with Adriana's desperation. Furthermore, it foregrounded Adriana's error by emphasising the fact that the man she was smothering with kisses did not know who she was. Ultimately, he resolved:

Until I know this sure uncertainty,
I'll entertain the offered fallacy. (176-7)

At which point he reciprocated her kisses and the pair engaged in a passionate embrace.



Figure 20 Claudie Blakley as Adriana and Lenny Henry as Antipholus of Syracuse. *The Comedy of Errors*. Dir. Dominic Cooke. Photo by Nigel Norrington/ArenaPAL

The very public nature of this scene compounded Adriana's humiliation, as her seduction of a man other than her husband was played out in front of a jeering and whistling on-stage audience of male snooker players [Figure 20]. The fact that her desperate attempts to attract her "husband" involved lavishing sexual attention on the unwitting Syracusan Antipholus subverted stereotypical gender norms in which an older man attempts to seduce a younger more attractive woman. Henry's affable Antipholus rendered this moment of sexual opportunism comic, but the production exaggerated Adriana's humiliation for its comic potential. Another woman in the play who inadvertently directs sexual attention at the wrong man is Luce, the kitchen maid.

“A very reverent body”

In Cooke’s production, Luce was played by Clare Cathcart, an actor known for her appearances in *Holby City* and *Call the Midwife* who sadly passed away just two years after her performance in *Errors*, at the age of 48. Cathcart’s Luce was styled as a Hispanic cleaner, who wore an unflattering white pinafore dress with flat shoes and spoke with a Spanish accent. By no means the spherical monster of Dromio’s description, Cathcart’s Luce was depicted as frumpy rather than fat. However, in the context of the world in which we saw her, alongside Blakley and Terry, both of whom were extremely thin and wore high heels to accentuate their height to waist ratio, Cathcart’s Luce, did not embody the slender femininity celebrated by the production. Furthermore, Luce was one of the only female characters who was shown not to invest time or money in her appearance, wearing a costume that suggested the character valued practicality over how she looked. In the image-conscious world of Ephesus, Luce stood out as operating outside the norms of femininity.

Until the entrance of the Mother Abbess in the final scene, all women in this production were either objectified or servile. Blakley’s Adriana, Terry’s Luciana, and Grace Thurgood’s Courtesan, were all depicted as objects of male desire, who presented themselves in a hyper-feminine way in order to attract the attention of the male characters in the play. Rhiannon Oliver, one of two female ensemble members, played Solinus’s partner in the opening scene, as well as a prostitute in the scene outside the Porcupine. Pamela Nomvete also played a prostitute and her other roles included a waitress. The female roles in the production are almost divisible by age and race, as the younger, white actors played the desirable and objectified roles, whilst the older BAME performers played the servile roles: a category into which Cathcart’s Hispanic Luce fell.⁹²

⁹² The role of the Mother Abbess does not fit neatly into these categories, yet, depicted as the head of an upmarket rehabilitation clinic, she was initially defined by her profession, albeit a more high status profession than cleaner or waitress.

Cathcart's Luce was understated, shuffling about the balcony of her employer's apartment watering the topiary. When the Ephesians made a disturbance outside the window she threatened them with the watering can, but other than this gesture of irritation and a moment where she mistook Dromio of Syracuse for her betrothed and attempted to hug him from behind, her behaviour was not depicted as extreme or confrontational. If anything, the character was rather unassuming, rendering Dromio's description of her hyperbolically cruel. Luce is often presented as a cultural outsider and I would argue that this is closely related to the fact that, according to Dromio of Syracuse's description, she does not conform to the ideals of feminine behaviour which include chastity and careful self-fashioning. In Cooke's performance Luce's failure to perform her femininity was translated into three main aspects of her identity: her class, her nationality, and her physicality. This links with the contemporary view that fat is a marker of an "inferior body", an ideology which links fat with the gendered, racial and economic other. In terms of theatrical signification, Cooke opted for a combination of cultural stereotypes to render Luce undesirable, drawing on the stereotype that a fat, foreign female represents an undesirable performance of identity. That the production chose to evoke Luce's gargantuan proportions through dress and characterisation alone, rather than casting a fat actress or by utilising a fat suit, as well as its failure to depict any of the other physical features described by Dromio, such as her carbuncled nose and yellow teeth, worryingly created a signification process which interwove fat, national identity and gender to demonstrate that Luce was undesirable: fat and national identity rendered the female character monstrous.

Zuabi's production also marked Luce as nationally other, as Sarah Belcher's Luce spoke with an Irish accent in a production context dominated by received pronunciation. Where Cathcart's Luce was understated and unassuming, Belcher took the character to a pantomime-esque extreme. She was a Rabelaisian figure, who demonstrated a love of eating and of sex. Wearing an ankle-length lime green dress and white

apron, she frequently lifted her skirts above her knees, revealing her red boots, tights, and white bloomers, to a horrified Dromio of Syracuse. Belcher's Luce did not only enjoy sex, she was depicted as comically predatory, relentlessly chasing Dromio of Syracuse. Like Bushell's Adriana, Luce controlled the space, but whereas Adriana used her height and smothering sexuality to control Antipholus of Syracuse, Belcher's Luce used her ample physicality to corner Dromio. This ample physicality was created by a fat suit; rather than casting a fat actor in the role, Zuabi opted to pad Belcher's frame to create a fat corporeality. The fat suit in this context was used to generate comedy, contributing to the excesses of a pantomime character. LeBesco asserts that fat suits have a tendency to court "cheap laughs at the expense of fat people" (237) and this was evident in Zuabi's staging. In her analysis of the performance for *Shakespeare Survey*, Carol Chillington Rutter asserted that the production engaged with an "aren't-fat-girls-funny" brand of humour, citing chase sequences in which Luce wielded a "giant, phallic courgette" ("Shakespeare Performances 2012" 370).

Indeed, the character appeared to have an unusual relationship with vegetables, as in Act 3, Scene 1 Belcher's Luce entered eating a lettuce as if it were an apple. In what appeared to be a gross parody of the dieting woman, she took enormous bites out of the vegetable and at times was unable to respond to other characters on stage because her mouth was so full. Stefanie A. Jones has argued that "the salad is the symbol of a dieter" and analyses how, when eaten by a fat person, it becomes "a conduit of excess" so that what is normally a symbol of health and well being, becomes associated with fatness. She goes on to argue that "Because fat bodies are cast as out-of-control, human needs (food, clothing, shelter) are recast as uncontrolled desires" (40). By staging Luce's voracious devouring of a lettuce, Zuabi's production was trading in cultural ideas associated with the fat woman and consumption. The image that was produced could be read in a number of ways: was Luce hungrily eating a lettuce because she was on a diet and it represents a permissible food, or

was she a woman failing to diet, devouring even the most bland food with enthusiasm? Either way, the moment staged Luce's appetite as both voracious and somehow abnormal, casting her behaviour as the kind of out-of-control consumption associated with fatness (Jones 38).



Figure 21 Sarah Belcher as Luce. *The Comedy of Errors*. Dir. Amir Nizar Zuabi. Photo by Keith Pattison © RSC

This was a production that foregrounded the idea that “Hysteria and powerlessness are the discourses most often linked with attitudes toward their [women’s] bodies and their food” (Kuppers 284). While Luce indulged in eating a lettuce enthusiastically, in Act 2, Scene 1, Adriana and Luciana, played by Emily Taaffe, sat down for afternoon tea together. Taaffe’s demure Luciana unenthusiastically nibbled at an iced bun, Adriana vociferously complained about her husband’s absence. As she grew increasingly frustrated, Adriana thrust a cupcake into her own face, leaving her cheek covered with icing. Thus, as she delivered a tract on female

beauty, her face smeared with cake, the speech was rendered somewhat bathetic, given the character's obliviousness to her own appearance. Later in the scene she knelt to wipe some of the icing from the floor, presumably readying the stage for the next scene, but inexplicably didn't wipe the icing from her face; another example of Zuabi's production deriving easy laughs at the expense of its female characters.

Perhaps the most troubling instance of these productions' humiliation of their female characters was the interpolation of a bed-trick.⁹³ In Zuabi's production, Adriana's mistake became evident when she appeared at a window panel at the back of the set wrapped only in a sheet, giving the impression that she had been interrupted *in flagrante delicto*. As if this set of signifiers was not clear enough – Adriana had mistakenly had sex with her brother-in-law – on the line “Your wife, sir knave” (3.1.64) an unseen Antipholus of Syracuse slapped Adriana's backside, causing her to laugh and move inside, shutting the window again. When we next saw him Antipholus of Syracuse was leaving the door at the top of the set, hurrying to put on his jacket and zipping up his flies, trying to keep up with Luciana as he earnestly pleaded with her. This staging choice compounded Adriana's sexual humiliation through the suggestion that Antipholus of Syracuse had used Adriana to satiate his desire and had already moved on.

Cooke's production also interpolated a bed-trick into the action of the play, as in Act 3, Scene 1, Adriana appeared on the balcony of her luxury apartment, wrapped in a sheet. Antipholus of Syracuse followed her out, similarly attired and pointedly offered her a tissue from the box that he was holding, crudely implying that we were seeing the couple immediately post-coitus. Four plays by Shakespeare include bed-tricks (see Desens 149-150) and it was a convention regularly used in Renaissance literature,

⁹³ The play informs us that Adriana dines with her brother-in-law, but there is no textual evidence that the encounter goes any further. Whilst the notion of appetite can apply to both food and sex, as I have established, etymologically the word “dine” has no recognised euphemistic qualities in *The Oxford English Dictionary*.

yet contemporary definitions of sexual consent have highlighted that “All bed-tricks, even the most seemingly benign, involve at least one partner who does not have informed consent to the sexual contact. In effect, all bed-tricks are forms of rape” (Desens 116). In her excellent analysis of the convention Marliss C. Desens argues that “The absence of physical violence in most bed-tricks should not become a pretext for ignoring the physical and emotional violation that occurs whether the deceived person is female or male” (Desens 17). In the farcical world of Cooke’s production the interpolation of a bed-trick was, for some reviewers, simply taking the confusion of the twins to its logical extreme, as Adriana “not only gives the wrong twin supper, but also takes him to bed, much to Lenny Henry’s amazement and guilty pleasure” (Spencer “*The Comedy*”).⁹⁴ Again, the moment was presented through Antipholus’s eyes, rather than Adriana’s, and it was rendered benign and comic through the ghosting of Henry’s affable and comic celebrity persona.

Adriana makes the mistake of attempting to have a degree of agency within her marital relationship and for this overreaching behaviour she is punished. It is a motif reminiscent of the dalliance between Bottom and Titania in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*: a sexually voracious woman unwittingly seduces an inappropriate partner, who, though initially reluctant, willingly engages in sex with the desirable woman. In both plays a sexual encounter between the couple is not made explicit in the text, yet in contemporary performance more often than not the relationship is consummated. Within the context of *Comedy*, with its themes of confusion and mistaken identity, the inclusion of a bed-trick may simply be an extension of the play’s existing themes. Yet, I would argue that in the case of these two stagings it is part of a wider motif of the humiliation of women that was central to the generation of comedy; there was the potential to read Adriana’s situation sympathetically, considering the fact that her

⁹⁴ It is interesting to note the conflation of Henry and his role in Spencer’s review. I would argue that this stems, in part, from his celebrity persona and the fact that his notoriety stems from a career in comedy rather than classical roles.

desirability was the only access to power that she had as a woman in Ephesian society. Furthermore, as Cooke's depiction of their loveless marriage showed, sex was one of the few tools that Adriana had available to attempt to salvage her relationship with her husband. Nonetheless, Adriana's use of sex as a means of power, combined with her outspoken characterisation, presented her as manipulative character, one who attempted to access power denied to her as a woman and was punished for this presumption with non-consensual sex.

Female behaviour is frequently policed through the medium of sexuality, both in terms of sexual violence and sexual humiliation, and if we compare the depiction of the misplaced sexual desires of Adriana and Luce they reflect the two possible outcomes for women who dare to express their sexuality. In both productions, Antipholus of Syracuse was presented as a sexual opportunist: not one to turn down the amorous advances of an attractive woman, regardless of whether she is, as he fears, mad or a witch. Adriana's motivation for having sex was presented differently in the two productions. In Zuabi's staging, Adriana's seduction of Antipholus came from a place of sexual empowerment: she was sexually voracious and demanded sex from the man she mistook for her husband. In Cooke's staging, Adriana's desire was figured as reconciliatory and potentially manipulative as she attempted to reclaim her wayward husband through a sex act. In Zuabi's production Adriana was punished for being angry, in Cooke's production she was punished for being controlling. In both cases, the woman was the sexual agent and in both cases her consent was negated, punishing her attempt at agency with non-consensual sex.

In contrast, when Luce was presented as the sexual agent in this context of male sexual promiscuity, her advances were not reciprocated: for Luce, her humiliation came from the experience of sexual disqualification as her advances were rejected by the disgusted Dromio of Syracuse, who renders her monstrous and risible in his description of her to his master. In both cases women were punished for being sexually

forward, yet this punishment manifested itself in contrasting forms. The long exchange between the Syracusan Antipholus and Dromio in Act 3, Scene 2, demonstrates the way in which patriarchy polices women's bodies, showing how they will be mocked and rejected if they fail to perform their gender appropriately. The text and its embodiment combine to humiliate Luce. Compounding this humiliation is the fact that Luce is foolish enough to think that she is desirable: she is unashamed of her monstrous body and is therefore a particularly subversive character who must be punished. In this way, Luce conforms to Julia Grace Jester's assertion that "Fat women are still vilified and mocked in popular culture and theatre, most often used as a source of humour or farce" (252).

In the depiction of Luce we see what Jana Evans Braziel has described as "the double paradigm of sexual definition and representation" (231) of the fat woman in contemporary culture. On the one hand "the fat female body is defined by a benign asexuality that is marked by a paucity of representation and exists in the unrepresentable" (232-3), whilst on the other "the fat female body is defined as a site of sexual masquerade – conveying both an excessive salaciousness and a hyperbolic derision of that prurience" (233). Applying this to Luce, we see that as a fat woman she does not signify as desirable and therefore should not be seeking sexual activity. However, her association with physical excess means that her corpulence contributes to a signification associated with sexual abundance.

Zuabi's staging offered a glimpse of a possible site of resistance to the play's humiliation of female corpulence through Felix Hayes's Dromio of Ephesus's enthusiastic response to Belcher's Luce. During scene changes the pair's animated flirtation was contrasted with moments of mistaken identity, when Luce chased Bruce Mackinnon's Dromio of Syracuse across the stage, mistaking him for her betrothed. Witnessing a positive response to Luce's sexual advances slightly mitigated her humiliation at the hands of Mackinnon's Dromio, as it hinted that fat women can be desired. However,

in her analysis of the performance, Carol Chillington Rutter felt that the characterisation of Hayes's foolish Dromio rendered the relationship grotesque and she mused "the joke being that he had the sexual instincts historically attributed to the idiot?" ("Shakespeare Performances 2012" 370). While Zuabi's production may have invested in the "aren't-fat-girls-funny" approach identified by Rutter, his staging demonstrated the possibility for resisting the inevitable humiliation of the play's female characters and the enjoyment of fat shaming: by depicting a healthy relationship between Luce and her fiancé, a production can imply that Dromio of Syracuse is the character with a problem rather than that problem being Luce's body.

Conclusion – rearticulation and resistance

The world of Ephesus in both of my *Errors* case studies was depicted as a sinister and brutal place, which suggested that the directors were keen to explore the play's more problematic areas. Yet it is unfortunate that neither production included the depiction of gender relations in the scope for exploration, opting instead for two-dimensional portrayals of the play's female characters and rendering the play's gender politics even more unsettling than necessary by including a bed-trick. There is evidence that Cooke attempted to gain sympathy for Adriana's powerless position, as she was clearly distressed when she learned of her husband's dalliance with the Courtesan. However, the engagement with Adriana's predicament was so superficial that for at least one reviewer, Adriana remained a risible and foolish character, who proceeded to "sweep off in high dudgeon" (Billington "*The Comedy of Errors*") upon learning that her husband had received "good cheer" from the Courtesan. Whilst this may simply be evidence of the chauvinism of reviews, the fact that the production presented this moment ambiguously, suggests that it was not a key part of its agenda to challenge it.

The depiction of one, fairly minor, character within the classical canon might seem incidental to a feminist agenda: an irritating portrayal, but

ultimately insignificant diversion within the struggle for gender equality. However, this is not an isolated issue: fat shaming intersects with racial and class oppression and contributes to an ideology in which women are encouraged to be ornamental rather than agents. Furthermore, as I have demonstrated, it interacts with the depiction of the other women in the play to police the performance of femininity. The way in which the embodied characteristics of an acting company interact in performance to construct gendered identity will also be the focus of the next chapter. Turning my attention to *The Taming of the Shrew*, I will consider how the characteristic of height has been used to foreground gender difference in one of Shakespeare's most problematic comedies.

Chapter Five - "Thou art a tall fellow": Height and infantilized femininity in *The Taming of the Shrew*

"Ascribing 'natural' physical superiority to the male is one of patriarchy's primary supports" (Schulze 70).

Introduction

Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* is a play uniquely concerned with the gender binary. Often billed as Shakespeare's "battle of the sexes" play (Schafer, *The Taming of the Shrew* 1), its taming plot appears to present male dominance and female submission as socially desirable. However, the play's apparent vindication of the gender hierarchy is the subject of much critical debate, so much so that Michael Hattaway argues that "there can be *no* authoritative reading" of the play (qtd. in Shapiro, "Framing" 143). This textual ambiguity and lack of scholarly consensus has led to a rich and controversial performance history, in which the taming process is used to speak to the gender politics of the time.

Scholarship on the play from the twentieth and twenty-first centuries can roughly be divided into three broad categories: the first views the play as a farce, the second views the play as a romantic comedy, and the third that views the play as a successful "taming", in which Katherina becomes a submissive wife.⁹⁵ Advocates of the play being a farce suggest that the taming plot should be read at face value, "Kate was at first an insufferable woman and [...] Petruchio dealt with her in sound fashion" (Heilman 147). Robert Heilman argues that "in farce, man [sic] retains all his energy yet never gets really hurt" (152) because characters are "not endowed with full human personalities" (154). He observes a trend in criticism in the mid twentieth century that saw Petruchio move "first from an animal tamer to a gentleman-lover who simply brings out the best in Kate, and then at last to a laughable victim of the superior spouse who dupes him" (151) and he

⁹⁵ John Bean also divides *Shrew* criticism into three schools of thought, but defines the two main categories as revisionists and anti-revisionists, alongside these approaches he positions his own belief: that the play is a romantic comedy and Katherina experiences a renewal or rebirth brought about by love ("Comic Structure").

suggests that this is anachronistic and at odds with the play's genre. Responding to Heilman, Peter Saccio also argues that *Shrew* is a farce in "A Shrewd and Kindly Farce", but suggests that Shakespeare scholars have a tendency to view farce in a reductive way, which overlooks its energy, playfulness, and resilience. He argues Katherina's "liberation from raging shrewishness, from compulsiveness and destructiveness, is marked by her growth in farcical range" adding that "Petruchio teaches her to play, as many critics have noted, but what she plays is the energetic, resilient, ingenious games of farce" (37).

The "many critics" referenced by Saccio tend to be in the romantic comedy group of scholars, who argue that Katherina "has not been bought or sold, but has given herself out of love" (Kahn 97). Kahn observes that Katherina changes over the course of the play, so that by Act 4, Scene 5, the tone of her wit "is playful and joyous, rather than bitter and angry as it was in the first three acts" (97). John Bean likewise argues that the play dramatises "Kate's discovery of her inward self through her discovery first of play and then of love" (74). The idea that the taming plot represents Katherina learning to play can also be found in Charles Brooks's "Shakespeare's Romantic Shrews" in which he argues that Katherina learns that "playing can be good sport, [and] that if she bends a little she and her husband can not only live harmoniously, but can also entertain themselves gloriously at the expense of others" (354). Brooks's sense of Katherina's development in the play is popular with scholars and Ann Thompson notes a tendency to see Petruchio as a teacher or a doctor, teaching or curing a self-destructive Katherina; Ruth Nevo, for example, describes Petruchio as "Stage-manager, chief actor, master of homeopathy" asserting that his treatment of Katherina is a form of therapy (47). Director Jonathan Miller shares this view, observing that in holding a mirror up to Katherina's behaviour, Petruchio adopts "a technique child therapists sometimes use today", concluding that the play is "about the teaching of a shrew, or the treatment of a shrew by allowing her to see her own image through someone who, quite clearly, adores her from the beginning" (qtd. in

Hallinan 140).⁹⁶ Miller's approach is a good example of the tendency in late twentieth century criticism and practice to offer psychologically realist readings of Shakespearean characters, facilitating a realist staging of the play.

This view of Petruchio as a doctor or teacher, and his "taming" of Katherina as a benevolent act has been challenged by feminist scholars who have contextualised Petruchio's behaviour in one of two ways: some seek to historicise it, situating Petruchio's "taming" methods within a context of legally sanctioned oppression of women in early modern England (Boose) while others locate it within a contemporary understanding of abusive behaviour, demonstrating the violence inherent in Petruchio's coercive behaviour (Detmer).

These critical approaches have their on-stage parallels, from the early twenty-first century stagings of the play that presented it as a rollicking farce, to Marowitz's brutal adaptation in 1973 and Bogdanov's seminal staging of the *Shrew* at the RSC in 1978, which emphasised the play's violence. Most commonly on the contemporary UK stage, directors opt for an approach somewhere between farce and romantic comedy. In order for this reading of the play to work, Katherina's behaviour must be rendered unacceptable and Petruchio's taming methods must be seen as saving her from herself. This chapter will explore the ways in which Lucy Bailey's RSC production and Toby Frow's staging at Shakespeare's Globe, both in 2012, contributed to this sense of the benevolent taming in order to render the play a romantic comedy. Its particular focus will be on the infantilization of Katherina and the embodiment of gender difference, demonstrating how casting was central to the productions' comic agenda.

Casting and Gender Difference

⁹⁶ Fiona Shaw, who played Katherina in Jonathan Miller's 1987 staging of the play, was unconvinced by Miller's reading, suggesting that his notion that Katherina was a "disturbed child was misconceived" (qtd. in Rutter, *Clamorous Voices* 6).

Katherina's final speech is an excellent example of the naturalising of gender difference through biological essentialism, when she asks:

Why are our bodies soft and weak and smooth,
Unapt to toil and trouble in the world,
But that our soft conditions and our hearts
Should well agree with our external parts? (5.2.171-174)⁹⁷

The project of gender is figured as being based on a stable biological reality, allowing an assertion and celebration of the gender hierarchy:

Thy husband is thy lord, thy life, thy keeper,
Thy head, thy sovereign; 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. (5.2.152-160)

The logic of Katherina's speech is this: women are physically inferior to men and therefore their subordination to men is natural and justified. Laurie Schulze argues that "Ascribing 'natural' physical superiority to the male is one of patriarchy's primary supports" (70) and in this speech the notion of physical difference is one of the lynchpins of gender difference.⁹⁸ Yet, in performance the ideology of the speech can be subverted or reinforced depending on how the roles of Katherina and Petruchio are embodied on stage.

Returning to Martin Esslin's idea that it is not simply "the attractiveness or magnetism of individual performers" that conveys meaning in performance, but "the *interaction* between several of them" (*The Field of Drama* 60) it is possible to see how casting actors whose

⁹⁷ All references are taken from Barbara Hodgdon's Arden edition of the play.

⁹⁸ Katherina's rationale for the gender hierarchy in *The Shrew* differs from that in the quarto text, *The Taming of A Shrew*, in which the final speech draws on religious ideology, linking female inferiority to Eve's original sin (see Ann Thompson 28-29).

respective physicalities appear to embody the traits of gender difference might contribute to a production's ideology. Esslin continues:

The balance of personalities in a dramatic performance itself is one of the principal determinants of its ultimate "meaning", one of the basic artistic decisions the director must make that will underlie his [sic] interpretation of the fiction and determine its impact and ultimate significance. (60)

Esslin's rather ambiguous and subjective categories of "personality and erotic magnetism" might productively be replaced with the category of the actor's embodied characteristics. Embodied characteristics contribute to the definition of an actor's "type" and play an important role in the signification of gender, as a key semiotic in the process of inducing "the body to become a cultural sign" (Butler, "Performative Acts" 522).

This chapter will explore how the specific embodied characteristic of height was used to generate meaning in the two most influential English stagings of *Shrew* in the last five years. The first is Lucy Bailey's production for the RSC in 2012, which after a brief run in Stratford-upon-Avon, then toured the UK.⁹⁹ The second is Toby Frow's staging at Shakespeare's Globe from the same year, which was filmed as part of the Globe on Screen initiative and is now available to buy. Ostensibly the productions were very different, with Bailey offering a 1950s inspired staging with an elaborate design set around a large bed, and Frow an early modern style staging at the reconstructed Globe. However, as my analysis will demonstrate, casting was central to the comic agenda shared by these two productions. I will argue that the height of the actors playing Katherina and Petruchio was central to the directors' agenda of staging a romantic comedy, contributing to the infantilization of Katherina and asserting gender difference through the embodied characteristics of the actors.

Learning to Laugh

⁹⁹ I watched Bailey's production live when it toured to the Richmond Theatre, London. I also saw Frow's staging live at the Globe. In addition I have consulted archive recordings of both productions.

The Induction of *Shrew* establishes many of the play's themes and I would like briefly to explore the way in which Bailey and Frow used the Induction to both frame and shape the gender politics of their staging of the taming plot. In Frow's production it was central to establishing the comic agenda for the production. Speaking at the Globe's *Shrew* study day in September 2012, Frow likened the induction to "a short before the feature", which helps to establish the themes of the drama ("Q&A with Toby Frow"). Frow updated the action, relocating it to contemporary London and casting Simon Paisley-Day, who also played Petruchio, as the drunken Sly. Staggering through the yard talking loudly on a mobile phone and swigging beer from a can, Day's Sly was dressed in a flat cap, a red England football shirt, blue sports trousers, and with England flags painted on his cheeks. The cultural context of the production, which ran through a summer of sport from the European Football Championships to the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, was a convincing backdrop for Sly's hooliganism and many audience members believed that the disorder they were witnessing was real; one reviewer stated the opening disruption was "done so realistically you may think a protester has invaded the stage" (Letts "*The Taming of the Shrew* Review"). Indeed, many of the audience did, with Frow and his company citing several instances in which audience members attempted to intervene in the action (Shakespeare's Globe "*Shrew* Study Day"). Writing of Frow's reworking of the induction, Michael Billington declared that "in Frow's noisily rumbustious production we know that the prefatory mayhem is only a joke" ("*The Taming of the Shrew* review"). Billington's response is indicative of the degrees of comprehension within the performance space, as those who realised that the disruption was staged laughed at the chaos, whilst those who believed in the reality of the action reacted with shock and in some cases attempted to leave the venue or even intervene in the action.¹⁰⁰

¹⁰⁰ The front of house report from the first performance on 23rd June observes that "Simon Paisley Day did such a good job as a drunk during the incoming that both a steward and security attempted to remove him" and reports from 6th July and 11th August also detail complaints from audience

The cultural prestige attached to Shakespeare meant that those who recognised the Induction as a fiction might consider themselves superior to those who did not, as more literate or culturally astute. Furthermore, those who took the disruption for reality not only suffered the indignity of having their lack of Shakespearean knowledge exposed, but also the faint humiliation of being gulled by an elaborate trick. By staging the Induction to render risible those who believed the fiction, laughter became associated with cultural prestige: those who got the “joke” were sophisticated, whereas those who failed to see that the Induction was a joke were gullible and earnest. In this way, the Induction taught the audience to laugh at the hijinks of the taming plot, or risk appearing foolish, or perhaps worse still, being associated with the loutish Sly who was unable to differentiate between reality and fiction.

The marketing of the production colluded in the joke by not listing the casting of the Induction in the programme or on the website, and by only using stills from the inner-play in its publicity which implied that the whole production utilised early modern dress and design. Its casting was decidedly gendered, for, while all but one of the acting company were in on the elaborate joke at the audience’s expense, its main agents were male. The company had only three female members, opposite 12 male performers and an additional two male supernumeraries. In the Induction Sarah MacRae, who also played Bianca, was positioned as a steward in the yard, while Helen Weir, who later played the Widow, took the role of the Stage Manager, Samantha Spiro, who played Katherina, did not appear in the Induction.¹⁰¹ Weir was the only female performer with a speaking role in the opening scene, informing the audience that the show would need to

members “that the drunk had gone on stage and ruined their experience” (Shakespeare’s Globe, “FoH Report”).

¹⁰¹ Frow originally intended Spiro to take the role of the Lord, instead of Donaghy. However, Spiro struggled with the role, stating “it didn’t really sit very happily with me” (Spiro “Tech”) and so she was taken out of the Induction completely and Pip Donaghy took the role.

be cancelled because of the disruption caused by the then unconscious Sly. When Pip Donaghy transformed into the Lord and began speaking the Shakespearean text, Weir's Stage Manager wryly told the company to "manage well the jest" (Ind. 1. 43) before leaving the stage. This was a world in which women were not agents in creating meaning, but rather wearily acquiesced to male attempts at bawdy, tiresome humour.

The gendered nature of the Induction and its relationship with the taming plot was further shaped by the historical distinction between the frame and the inner play, which was utilised not only for its comic potential, allowing the actors to be planted in the auditorium and so on, but also played an important role in the way the production generated nostalgia for the early modern setting of the inner-play. David Lowenthal notes that a "perpetual staple of nostalgic yearning is the search for a simple and stable past as a refuge from the turbulent and chaotic present" (21). In Frow's confusing, disruptive, and violent rendering of the Induction, the past of the inner-play became a comparative haven, in which the rules of theatrical engagement were much more clearly defined, with the actors clearly recognisable in their early modern costume and their use of Shakespearean dialogue. Furthermore, the historicised inner play, though fraught with anachronisms,¹⁰² interacted with the historicised space of the reconstructed Globe to ensure that the context of the production was forever shifting, ensuring that at no point did the horror of early modern misogyny overwhelm the farcical nature of the production, whilst at the same time ensuring that parallels between the play's troubling gender politics and our own historic moment were not easily drawn. Lynda E. Boose argues for a historicised reading of *Shrew* suggesting that it "locates both women's abjected position in the social order of early modern

¹⁰² Carol Chillington Rutter describes Petruchio's wedding outfit as a "stupendous mistake" ("Shakespearean Performances 2012" 376), as it was decidedly anachronistic, furthermore properties such as the enormous white-tiered wedding cake and Biondello's rendition of "Johnny B. Goode" on the lute, demonstrated that the production was not attempting to be fully faithful to its early modern aesthetic.

England and the costs exacted for resistance" ("Scolding Brides" 179). Yet, Frow's production used the early modern context to distance the modern audience from the play's problematic context. Simon Paisley Day stated in an interview that:

it was a relief to me when Toby [Frow] said he was setting it in Elizabethan times because if you set it post-feminism you have to solve it somehow because it's unpalatable to us. I think, as a period piece, I hope it will be less controversial" (Day "Pre-Rehearsals).

Playing Sly as a stereotype of loutish, contemporary masculinity contributed to rendering the taming plot less controversial. Day's uncouth Sly ghosted his performance as Petruchio, contrasting the undesirable contemporary figure with Petruchio's charismatic and well-spoken early modern gentleman. In this way the juxtaposition of historical contexts contributed directly to Frow's comic agenda.

While Frow's "short before the feature" approach to the Induction meant that the historicised taming plot quickly subsumed the contemporary Induction and Day morphed from a loutish Sly into a charming Petruchio, Bailey, on the other hand, kept Sly as a character on stage throughout the action. Critics often argue that keeping Sly present throughout can foreground the fact that the taming plot is entertainment for a drunken fool, where "Shrew-taming becomes the compensatory fantasy of a socially underprivileged male" (Marcus 178). Nick Holder's Sly was a physical manifestation of Bakhtin's material bodily lower stratum: eating, drinking, and seeking sexual contact with all the women he encountered. In a grubby vest and off-white knee-length long johns, this balding, bearded Sly was a belching, flatulent joke. Reviews of the production described him as a "lumbering, hog-like Christopher Sly" (Clapp "*The Taming*") who was "spectacularly obese, scarily tattooed and grotesquely comic" (Spencer "*The Taming*"). Sly's fat, flatulent body came to reflect his socio-economic identity, an embodiment that was particularly striking in its contrast with Adrian Lukis's tall, suave Lord. It also established the idea of an uncontrolled body, marked by excessive

consumption, something that offered a parallel with the depiction of Katherina.

Both Sly and Katherina were characters who indulged in excessive consumption, Sly in the form of eating and drinking and Katherina in the form alcohol and cigarettes. In Sly's case, the act of consumption represented a socio-economic crossing; transformed into a Lord he was able to consume fine food and drink to which he would not normally have access. For Katherina the consumption was gendered, as she imbibed items traditionally associated with male consumption such as whisky and cigarettes. The results of this ingestion were bodily emissions that undermined the polite social behaviour expected of the pair in terms of their class and gender roles. On the one hand Sly's belching and flatulence were represented as "natural", albeit grotesque, reflecting his low status and lack of sophistication. Katherina was also guilty of inappropriate bodily emissions when in the wooing scene she spat, vomited and urinated in various attempts to deter Petruchio from his wooing. Yet, unlike Sly's natural grotesqueness, Katherina's behaviour was depicted as a "performance" of bodily functions, used self-consciously to shock those present at her disregard for the conventions of respectable femininity.

Sly's presence on stage also influenced the way in which Bailey's erotically charged *Shrew* read. Bailey suggests that "the play works like foreplay" to "the best sex ever" (Bailey "Interview") and to facilitate this reading, she cast a Katherina and Petruchio whose bodies conformed to the expectations of heteronormative desire. The *to-be-looked-at-ness* of the lead actors contrasted with the "hog-like" Sly (Clapp, "*The Taming*"), whose "spectacularly obese" body was feminised, particularly when contrasted with Cave's tall, muscular Petruchio. Sly's untamed body was also sexually promiscuous and guilty of inappropriate arousal. When taking Hiran Abeysekera's Bartholomew for his wife, Holder's Sly became sexually aroused. When "she" successfully stalled his amorous advances, Sly put his hands down his grubby long johns, clearly trying to subdue his erection. He later drew pleasure from watching the tussle between Katherina and

Bianca, offering Bianca a pillow to hit Katherina with and moving in for a closer look while they were rolling on the floor, staring at them lecherously. This prompted Katherina to hit him with a pillow. With a physicality that located him outside desirable masculinity and a performance of both gender and class identity that rendered him risible, Sly's voyeurism appeared desperate and grotesque, contrasting with the charismatic masculinity of Caves's Petruchio.

The Induction in both productions established the notion of playing a social role, but perhaps more importantly it depicted a version of undesirable masculinity and rendered Sly a foil for the more desirable masculinity of Petruchio. In this way, the Induction laid the foundation for the gender politics of the taming plot, juxtaposing Sly's failed performance of masculinity with the charismatic Petruchio of the taming plot. It is to the taming plot that I will now turn my attention.

“Fuck the lot of you”: a shrew that needs taming

Both Bailey and Frow's productions of *Shrew* might be termed romantic comedies; their stagings invested in the emotional connection between Katherina and Petruchio and foregrounded a sense of mutual attraction between them. The Petruchios of Caves and Day were portrayed as benevolent mavericks who took on the teacher/doctor role so prevalent in scholarship on the play. In contrast, the Katherinas of Dillon and Spiro were angry and destructive, attacking the people of Padua in comically choreographed fight sequences. Speaking at an event run by Globe Education, Samantha Spiro observed that Katherina “needs taming”, stating that her lack of boundaries and “fuck the lot of you” attitude are destructive both for her and for her family (“To Kill a Wife With Kindness”). Likewise, Dillon observed:

There's no getting away from it, she's a nightmare. And whether that's a symptom of the way she's treated, or it's fuelled by her own will, but she is a nightmare and she behaves really badly and no one can exist like that long term. (Caves & Dillon)

In the eyes of both performers, and in the stagings of which they were part, Katherina needed to change and Petruchio was the person to bring about that change.

With both productions focusing on the self-destructive behaviour of Katherina, the taming process became a necessary, even benevolent process, which ultimately allowed Katherina to become a functioning member of society. In this way, Bailey and Frow both undertook an approach identified by scholar Emily Detmer, who argues that “To enjoy the comedy of the play, readers and viewers must work to see domestic violence from the point of view of an abuser”, adding that in order to do so, the use of violence must be seen to be justified (274). As well as justifying Petruchio’s actions, both productions sought to define them in terms of love; focusing on the instant attraction between the pair, both Bailey and Frow included double-takes from Petruchio when he first met Katherina hinting that Petruchio at least may have fallen in love at first sight. By emphasising the romantic aspect of the relationship the productions implied that Petruchio’s actions were motivated by care and love, rather than a sadistic desire for control. Frow’s production further emphasised this care by demonstrating Petruchio’s willingness to undergo sleep deprivation and hunger; suggesting a self-sacrificial approach to wife-taming which rendered it, in the eyes of the company at least, more acceptable (Karim-Cooper, “Re-creating Katherina” 307). Bailey depicted care in a “warts and all” way (Caves & Dillon), as Petruchio bore all that Katherina threw at him, be it spit, vomit, or urine: in this context, Petruchio’s attraction towards Katherina took on the quality of unconditional love, which again sought to mitigate the cruel and coercive behaviour he inflicts on his wife.

Casting was central to the comic agenda of both plays, as the doctor/teacher Petruchio required a patient/pupil Katherina on which to practise. An obvious way of foregrounding difference would be to cast a distinctly older Petruchio and younger Katherina. However, such an

approach could suggest that Petruchio is taking advantage of a younger and more vulnerable woman, inadvertently highlighting the abusive elements of the relationship. In Bailey and Frow's productions Katherina and Petruchio were very close in age and it was height that was used to signify a difference in seniority and status: the Petruchios of Caves and Day were more than a foot taller than the Katherinas of Dillon and Spiro. The height difference between the pair came to signify a range of binaries explored in the text including male/female, strong/weak, and mature/immature. With the petite Katherina looking up at her tall tamer she was inherently infantilized and the couple embodied the qualities of masculinity and femininity described in Katherina's final speech [see fig. 22 and 23].

In Bailey's *Shrew* Katherina was introduced as a penitent diminutive woman, dressed in black and paraded through Padua in a shrew's fiddle. The shaming ritual came to an end centre stage as Katherina kneeled in front of a man with a bandaged head, an injury that she had presumably caused. Released from the shrew's fiddle she immediately used it to hit the priest who had been overseeing her shame. There followed a slapstick routine in which Dillon's Katherina terrorised the men of Padua. The farcical set-piece generated humour from the contrast between the havoc caused and the appearance of the woman creating it. A similar effect was created in Frow's staging, as in the first scene an off-stage roar from Spiro's Katherina prompted the tradesmen of Padua to make a hurried exit from the stage. The power that Spiro's five-foot one Katherina wielded over the men of the city was exaggerated for comic effect as they scurried away from the petite woman in fear for their physical well-being.

Both Bailey and Frow cast the company so that Katherina was significantly outnumbered by men in the production: Bailey's company featured sixteen men and four women, while Frow's production featured twelve men and three women, plus two male supernumeraries. In both productions this had the effect of isolating Katherina, but it was also used for comic effect: that a petite Katherina could wield such physical power established a farcical mood for the opening moments of the taming plot, the

farce stemming from Katherina having a physical strength that appeared to be disproportionate to her diminutive stature. In Bailey's production Dillon's Katherina caused mayhem as she headbutted a man in his crotch, and hit a further two men on their backsides with the shrew's fiddle before finally being approached by four men who, in a set-piece reminiscent of a bull fight, encircled and finally subdued her. Frow's staging also emphasised the physical threat posed by Katherina, as the men of Padua did all they could to avoid an altercation, hurrying off stage as soon as they heard Katherina's off-stage roar. The action was heightened in such a way as to make it comic; this was the violence of Heilman's farce in which one "never gets really hurt" (152). As a diminutive woman wreaking comic violence on a stage dominated by men, Katherina's behaviour was rendered both funny and unlikely; it could exist only within a farcical world. In fearing this diminutive shrew, the men of Padua were emasculated: they outnumbered her significantly and she was the shortest person on stage, suggesting that she should easily have been controlled. Just as the early modern skimmington ritual ridiculed men who were dominated by their wives, so the opening scenes of *Shrew* presented female aggression and male fear as comic subversions of the natural order.

Sister Shrews

The only other performance of femininity shown in these scenes was by a hyper-feminine Bianca and, just as Petruchio was cast in opposition to Katherina, Bianca represented a foil for the shrew. In Bailey's production, Elizabeth Cadwallader played Bianca. Some ten years younger than Dillon and seven inches taller, Cadwallader embodied a prim, youthful femininity that contrasted Katherina's destructive ageing characterisation. Sarah MacRae, an actor in her mid twenties, played Bianca in Frow's production; six inches taller than Spiro, MacRae's blonde hair and pale features contrasted Spiro's dark hair and bronzed complexion. Opposite MacRae's willowy, youthful, and desirable Bianca Spiro's Katherina appeared ageing and troublesome. Casting these roles in such a way established a binary of difference, in which the sisters' appearance corresponded with their public performance of femininity, with Bianca's good looks reflecting her demure

desirability and Katherina's less conventionally attractive appearance a physical manifestation of her unwillingness to perform femininity.

In the staging of both productions Bianca hinted early on that she might not be the demure young woman that she appeared. In Frow's staging of Act 2, Scene 1, Katherina entered clutching a bullwhip and viciously struck the ground around her bound and blindfolded sister's feet. When Katherina agreed to Bianca's plea to "unbind [her] hands" (2.1.21) she head-butted her younger sister, which prompted Bianca to retaliate and the pair tussled until Baptista entered. Noticing her father's presence, Bianca sank to the floor weeping, leaving a bemused Katherina standing over her, her hands around her sister's neck. Throughout the scene Bianca tormented her elder sister, making faces at her behind Baptista's back and hitting Katherina when he was not looking. Unaware of Bianca's goading, Baptista responded angrily towards Katherina. Indeed, in previews he began removing his belt, implying that he would beat Katherina if she continued to disobey him. This action was cut before press-night, as was an interpolated piece of action in a scene change in which Bianca followed a servant onstage with a stick and playfully hit his back as he set the properties for the scene. This flirtatious sadism contributed to the depiction of a household in which violence and power-games were the norm, and helped to contextualise the behaviour of Katherina. The removal of these other moments of aggression in the Minola household rendered Katherina's behaviour more shocking, isolating her as the perpetrator of extreme behaviour.

Cadwallader's Bianca was likewise not all she appeared, though she was less calculating than MacRae's. In Act 2 Scene 1 Katherina entered from a door at the top of the stage, nonchalantly smoking a cigarette. Moments later Bianca appeared, hopping into the scene with her hands and ankles bound and a moustache drawn onto her upper lip. Unable to navigate the raked stage Bianca had to roll from the top of the giant "bed" to a flatter point in the middle of the stage, something that Katherina eyed

with amusement. Katherina then proceeded to slap her sister's backside and a few moments later tipped the contents of the bedpan over her. The two then began to fight, rolling around on the floor angrily. The fight was presented as comical, a scrap that did not leave bruises. Sly's lecherous response to the pair's tussle demonstrated the way in which female violence can be objectified and rendered erotic rather than a power struggle with consequences. In both productions female violence was rendered impotent. Spiro's Katherina rubbed her forehead in pain after she head-butted Bianca, and the swing that she took at an audience member when she ran through the yard in the wooing scene was, more often than not, met with bewildered amusement by the specific audience member, as opposed to there being any suggestion of actual pain. Thus whilst Katherina might have been capable of acts of physical dominance, essentially her femininity meant that the acts held little danger, save for the disruption to the social order that they represented. At the same time the unnaturalness of these violent acts demonstrated Katherina's need for taming and, the precedent for physical violence having been set by Katherina, legitimised laughter at the ensuing physical domination of Katherina by Petruchio.

The interpretation of Bianca offered a foil to Katherina, as both sisters demonstrated "shrewish" behaviour: Katherina was angry and loud with her controlling impulses, whereas Bianca was flirtatious and manipulative in order to get her own way. From the responses of her father and her suitors, Bianca's method was much more effective than Katherina's, and some might argue that the process of Katherina's taming educates her as to how a woman can get her own way in a patriarchal world. Whilst the depiction of Bianca in such a way might foreground women's powerlessness in the sixteenth century, her desire for power combined with the manipulation that she employs to gain it, could imply that all women are shrews and those who appear not to be are all the more dangerous for appearing innocent and, troublingly, desirable.

“I am rough and woo not like a babe”¹⁰³

The embodied difference of the actors cast to play Katherina and Petruchio had a direct impact on the physicality of the staging of the play. Both Bailey and Frow adopted a highly physical approach to the wooing scene and while both productions hinted that the pair fell in love at first sight, the action of the scene frequently bordered on violence. In Frow’s staging Petruchio’s momentary speechlessness at the sight of Katherina was quickly replaced with both verbal and physical sparring. The striking height difference between Spiro and Day was often used as a shorthand in this production for physical power and dominance, despite the fact that Day’s lanky figure might equally signify vulnerability as opposed to brute masculine power. Katherina’s early attempt to dominate Petruchio by striking him on the cheek, was met with a vicious retaliation from Petruchio who grabbed the back of her neck and fiercely whispered “I swear I’ll cuff you if you strike again” (2.1.222) [Fig. 22]. This action momentarily suspended the production’s comic impetus, as the threat of Petruchio’s violence seemed all too real. However, it was followed, almost immediately, by a power reversal, as Katherina threw Petruchio over her shoulder, leaving him on his back on the floor. Taking advantage of his prone position Katherina, in a move borrowed from professional wrestling, threw herself on to him several times.

¹⁰³ Petruchio makes this assertion to Baptista and the assembled suitors in Act 2, Scene 1, Line 136.



Figure 22 Samantha Spiro as Katherina and Simon Paisley Day as Petruchio *The Taming of the Shrew*. Shakespeare's Globe Theatre, 2012, Dir. Toby Frow. Photo by Geraint Lewis.

Petruchio's sudden violence brought an uneasy hush to the theatre, as the laughter from the earlier action momentarily subsided into quiet shock. The subsequent reversal of power was key to the production's comic agenda: Katherina's subsequent act of physical dominance of Petruchio not only restored the production's brio, but legitimised the increasingly punishing physicality inflicted on Katherina by Petruchio as the scene progressed. Day's Petruchio convincingly demonstrated that he was "rough and woos not like a babe" (2.1.136): throwing Katherina over his shoulder into a fireman's lift, tripping her up, and flinging her about so much that she appeared to hit her head with a sickening smack on one of the Globe's pillars. Thus the blocking of the scene restored hierarchical order, but the earlier moment of disruption helped to legitimise the use of force and rendered it comic.

While Frow's staging of the wooing scene was predominantly farcical, Bailey staged it as an erotically charged courtship. The struggle for physical dominance and farcical rolls, trips and tussles, all took on a

flirtatious edge. When Petruchio told Katherina to sit on him, he gestured to his crotch and in response she flicked back her skirts and crouched over his face, at which point he moved and caused them both to roll down the rake. The verbal sparring of the text was matched with a physical battle of flirtation; climbing on top of her, Petruchio stated “women are made to bear” (line 196), at which point Katherina rolled over and ground her buttocks into his crotch. Petruchio backed away, feigning shock and stating “Alas, good Kate, I will not burden thee” (198). The wooing scene became a game of one-up-man-ship, but for all the audacity of Dillon’s Katherina, Caves’s Petruchio was always in physical control. When she responded to his punning on tongues and tails by slapping him on the cheek, he clenched his fist and warned Katherina through gritted teeth that he would hit her if she struck again. A foot shorter than him, when she looked up at him and stated “so may you lose your arms” (215) her rebuttal sounded like that of a petulant child.

The infantilization of Katherina was not only figured through Petruchio’s ability to control her physically, but through her uninhibited, messy corporeality. She goaded Petruchio with a variety of bodily fluids in order to dissuade him from his courtship, but Petruchio, unlike the easily offended men of Padua, refused to be shocked by Katherina’s performance: when she spat on his face, he wiped it away with his hand and slowly licked his fingers, as if savouring a delicious taste. When, after swigging a large gulp from her hip-flask Katherina was sick on Petruchio, he laughed, removed his shirt and gesturing to his vest said “Come again sweet Kate” (220). Indeed, even carefully timed urination did not disconcert the enthusiastic wooer: Dillon’s Katherina responded to Petruchio’s assertion “I will marry you” (273) by urinating on the floor in front of him. Unfazed, Petruchio crossed to Katherina and crouched in front of her, and gesturing to the puddle on stage he asserted that he would bring her from “wild Kate to a Kate conformable” (265).¹⁰⁴ The prevalence of Katherina’s bodily

¹⁰⁴ Katherina’s assertion of her selfhood through corporeality was also manifest in the tattoo of “Katherina” on her arm. Throughout the play, men

fluids on the stage in the wooing scene reflect her attempt to resist patriarchy and the degree of powerlessness she experiences, but they also contribute to the depiction of a rather unsympathetic character: Katherina may be damaged and vulnerable, but she behaves unacceptably and needs to change.¹⁰⁵ Petruchio's acceptance of Katherina's rebellious bodily acts had a two-fold effect on his characterisation: on the one hand it demonstrated his unconditional love, or at least lust, for Katherina, regardless of her bad behaviour, whilst on the other it demonstrated the importance of his success in taming her. Once again this was a Katherina who needed to be tamed for her own sake.

The result of this interpretation was that the relationship between the pair took on a quality of eroticised paternalism, in which the bodily emissions of Katherina were accepted in the same way a parent might accept the need to clean up a baby's sick or change a toddler's nappy: it is something that they are willing to do out of paternal duty, but with a view of training the child out of such behaviour into a controlled adult body. The methods employed by Petruchio to tame his wife are decidedly physical, taking the form of starvation, sleep deprivation, and the denial of appropriate clothing and in this performance context they represented a battle over bodily control. The "cruel and upsetting" methods to change his wife were justified by one reviewer who suggested "that such shock therapy might be necessary to save Kate from the embittered mess she is making of her life" (Spencer "*The Taming of the Shrew*"). The goal of changing this shrew and saving her from herself, justified the cruel methods employed to do so.

refer to her without using her real name; known as a shrew, Hortensio and Gremio describe her as a "devil" (1.1.66) and "fiend of hell" (1.1.88), and Petruchio refuses to call her by her full name, referring to her only as "Kate". Petruchio arrived at the wedding with a new tattoo that said "Petruchio ♥ Kate" emphasising the corporeal nature of battle to define Katherina's identity.

¹⁰⁵ Nearly all the reviews remarked upon Katherina's on-stage urination, indicating that it was perhaps intended to shock the polite patrons of the RSC.

Thus the production drew on a number of different tropes of uncontrolled femininity in order to belittle and infantilize Katherina: in some ways she was akin to a baby whose bodily functions were accepted with grace and even humour by the paternal figure. She was also reminiscent of an unruly teenager: unable to find an eloquent expression of her frustration or disempowerment, she resorted to disruptive and violent behaviour. Lastly, she demonstrated the self-destructive tendencies associated with hysterical women, who are incapable of caring for themselves.



Figure 23 Lisa Dillon as Katherina and David Caves as Petruchio. *The Taming of the Shrew*. Dir. Lucy Bailey. Photo by Sheila Burnett. © RSC

Costuming the gendered body

Scholar Barbara Hodgdon has observed that “Among Shakespeare’s plays, *Shrew* makes a major investment in wardrobe” (72) and cites the dressing up of Sly and the dressing down of Petruchio as evidence that men “are the centre of *Shrew*’s fashion spectacle” (74). Despite Petruchio’s assertions that he has “bettered rather than decreased” (2.1.114) his father’s wealth, both Caves and Day’s Petruchio were depicted as of a significantly lower status than their Katherinas. Petruchio’s Verona home was, in both cases, dilapidated and attended to by grubby servants, but it was costume that was the key signifier of the couple’s socio-economic status and this in turn shaped their gender identity. Lynda E. Boose has argued that *Shrew* offers “the fantasy of a bourgeois (male) culture” as Petruchio moves from “a needy wanderer to the bed of a highborn wife” (“Good Husbandry” 216; 224) and I would argue that this fantasy is central to rendering the play a romantic comedy. In order to depict this fantasy on stage, the class difference between the pair must be clearly apparent and it can be foregrounded through their costuming.

In Bailey’s production her use of 1950s design and Italian setting established a chic Padua populated with sharp suits and designer labels. Dressed in a tailored black dress for the opening scene, Dillon’s Katherina later undid the top half of her dress and tied its arms around her waist, wearing her strappy white slip as a top. Katherina’s reworking of the costume of the demure, repentant female into a less constricting and more revealing outfit reflected her attempts to break out of the strictures of 1950s Italian femininity. For the wedding she appeared in a white, linen, fitted knee-length dress and large dark sunglasses, an effortlessly glamorous shrew. Petruchio, in contrast, appeared at his wedding wearing very little: topless and wearing short, grubby long johns with a grape codpiece swinging over his crotch. The costume emphasised Caves’s masculinity: topless, his muscly torso was evident, while his codpiece drew attention the phallus it covered. Furthermore, next to Simon Gregor’s shorter and less toned Grumio, who was similarly attired, and on stage

with Sly in his underwear, Caves's masculinity read as particularly dynamic and desirable.

Petruchio's dynamism in the scene contrasted with the stillness of Dillon's Katherina, who stood smoking a cigarette as she watched events unfold. Despite Petruchio's state of undress, it was Katherina who was objectified in the scene: dressed in white and positioned up stage centre, the blocking invested in her *to-be-looked-at-ness*. In contrast, Petruchio moved around, an agent in the action, resisting objectification. This blocking emphasised Petruchio's social privilege: as a man he is afforded the freedom to behave in an outlandish way, the shame is deflected from him and experienced instead by Katherina. Petruchio's behaviour made a spectacle of his wife.

A similar dynamic of *to-be-looked-at-ness* was created in Frow's *Shrew*. Spiro's Katherina was costumed in a series of elaborate early modern gowns, wearing a purple and gold silken gown in her first two scenes. Petruchio was dressed more humbly, in a brown leather jerkin, knee-high leather boots, and heavy cape. There was a disjuncture between Katherina's fine apparel and her behaviour, so much so that her appearance at her wedding in an elaborate, silk white gown, with white ruff and long trailing veil, elicited laughter from the audience.¹⁰⁶ Petruchio appeared in untied boots, a waistcoat covering his bare chest, trousers down to just below his knees, and a saucepan on his head. Rick Warden's Hortensio implored Petruchio to "put on clothes of mine" (3.2.112), prompting Petruchio to look down at his friend, put his hand at the top of Hortensio's hat and then raise it to the top of his own head, looking quizzical at how he was expected to fit into the clothes of a man some half a

¹⁰⁶ In "Bride-ing the Shrew" Barbara Hodgdon observes that Katherina's wedding dress would not have been white in Shakespeare's time, as it was a colour associated with mourning (75). The fact that Frow chose to use the white dress as a semiotic highlights the production's investment in Katherina's *to-be-looked-at-ness* in that scene.

foot shorter than him.¹⁰⁷ When the onstage company importuned him to change his attire before going into the church, Petruchio's response was to remove his waistcoat and rip off his trousers so that he was left wearing only a codpiece-thong that left his bare buttocks exposed. The horrified and revolted looks from the assembled cast onstage encouraged the audience to read the disrobing as comic and there was a great roar of laughter, mixed with groans of revulsion, when Day turned his back to the front section of the audience, exposing his buttocks to the majority of the audience for the first time.

Aoife Monks has observed that male nudity is often depicted as funny on stage, in contrast to female nudity, which is generally presented as erotic. She argues that the act of disrobing is weakening for a man because:

In order for the balance of power to be on the spectator's side the audience situates the performer's naked body as an object, rendering the performer a thing to be looked at [...] this power shift is necessary for establishing an erotic dimension to looking at female performers. This may be why the idea of naked men may not be so erotic – their drop in power, which is less usual in the traditions of representing men, might be viewed as disturbing rather than sexy. (*The Actor in Costume* 109)

Unlike Caves's toned torso, Day's body was not that of a muscly youth, but a thin and pale middle-aged body with visible ribs. The onstage company's response to Petruchio's nudity encouraged the audience to read his bare body as disturbing and, rather than objectifying it with an approving gaze, look away. With the gaze displaced, it was Katherina who became the object of the gaze. Katherina has been censured throughout the play for not behaving in a socially acceptable manner, and here Petruchio is actively undermining his status in respect of both masculinity and social rank; by circumventing social rules associated with gender and dress Petruchio's audacious act of disrobing became a demonstration of his power and status. As Lynda E. Boose has argued:

shame is already a gendered piece of cultural capital, [meaning] Petruchio can transgress norms of social custom and instigate the

¹⁰⁷ These lines are normally attributed to Tranio.

production of shame without it ever redounding upon him [...] what is being staged so uproariously here is what we might call the benevolent version of the shaming of a scold. (“Scolding Brides” 193)

Using nudity as part of Petruchio’s audacious costume in this scene located the operation of shame within the gendered body.

Both productions used male nudity to create a comic disjuncture between Petruchio’s assertion of patriarchal power and his performance of that status. Thus, one of the most problematic speeches of the play, “She is my goods, my chattels...” (3.2.228), was rendered comic by presenting the contradictory image of a man undermining his social status through nudity, whilst simultaneously asserting his power through his verbal declaration that he “will be master of what is [his] own” (line 230). This disjuncture could foreground the sinister nature of Petruchio’s socially sanctioned mastery, demonstrating that patriarchy is so powerful it transcends social conventions of dress and decorous behaviour, yet the audience’s response to the couple’s departure from the stage suggested that the troubling elements of the scene were rendered safe by the comic staging. In Bailey’s staging Petruchio bundled Katherina into a horsehide, before throwing her over his shoulder and carrying her off stage, ignoring her cries of protest.¹⁰⁸ Frow’s staging saw Day’s Petruchio lifting Spiro’s railing Katherina onto his “horse”, Grumio, and with a slap on Katherina’s backside he sent the pair riding into the yard. At the live performances that I attended, as well as on the archive recordings at the RSC and Shakespeare’s Globe, the couple’s wedding departure was met with spontaneous applause and laughter from the audience, a response that I believe was rendered possible, in part, because of the costuming of the scene: it was a parodic version of the groom carrying the bride over the

¹⁰⁸ This moment appears to be a nod to “A Merry Jest of a Shrewd and Curst Wife Lapped in Morel’s Skin, for Her Good Behaviour”, which is believed to have been one of Shakespeare’s sources for *Shrew*. In this ballad a recalcitrant wife is beaten by her husband, who then wraps her in the salted hide of a dead horse (see F.Dolan 254-288).

threshold and an enactment of charismatic masculinity's power over objectified femininity.

One reviewer remarked of Day's performance in this scene that "He makes parading his bottom seem not embarrassing or even brave, but simply natural" (Hitchings). I would argue that this is central to the use of nudity in both productions, as the bare male body was used to demonstrate the "naturalness" of masculinity, particularly in contrast to Katherina's objectifying white wedding dress. There was a sense that the sort of raw masculinity that Petruchio embodied (one that hears alarums in the field and will be master of what is his own) could not be contained by the niceties of clothing. Furthermore, the fact that his state of undress was accompanied by a flurry of on stage activity, as he paced from one side of the stage to the other, ensured that his body resisted attempts to objectify it. Likewise, given Petruchio's nudity occurred at a moment of his assertion of gendered dominance it appeared to situate male power within the body: in the scene the male body was powerful enough to resist objectification, it could physically control and dominate its female counterpart, and its actions were socially sanctioned, watched by the assembled wedding guests who made no attempt to intervene in the "kidnapping" of Katherina.

In contrast, the play produces female bodies as something to be looked at through costuming, as is evident when Petruchio tantalises Katherina with his description of how they will return to Baptista's house:

With silken coats and caps, and golden rings,
With ruffs and cuffs, and farthingales and things,
With scarves and fans, and double change of bravery,
With amber bracelets, beads and all this knavery. (4.3.56-60)

That Petruchio should describe costume as "knavery", glossed by Barbara Hodgdon as "tricks of dress" ("Bride-ing" 263), reflects Petruchio's general prizing of "honest, mean habiliments" (4.3.169). In contemporary performance this ideology, which represents similar sentiments in *The Book of Common Prayer*, often comes to reflect Petruchio's down-to-earth

nature and can be used to imply that his love for Katherina goes beyond the superficial accoutrements of nice society. In Monks's analysis of male nudity, she observes that on stage nudity can be linked with the natural, the truthful, and the real (100-102), and these associations are significant for the way unclothed male bodies were framed in Bailey and Frow's productions. As Hitching's review suggests, Petruchio's near nudity was presented as natural and uniquely contrasted with the performativity of femininity: femininity requires dresses and jewellery to be performed, whereas masculinity "just is" a bare torso and a codpiece.

Petruchio's raw masculinity was presented as desirable in both productions and Katherina clearly wanted to have sex with him. In Bailey's *Shrew*, Petruchio's assertion that they will "fast for company" (4.1.148) was said in a knowing and euphemistic manner, which saw Dillon's Katherina reaching for his flies. Petruchio immediately moved away, implying he was going to deny Katherina the sex that she desired. As Peter Kirwan suggested in his blog post about the production, this may have been included to reassure the audience that this Petruchio would not be taking advantage of Katherina in her state of hunger and exhaustion (Kirwan "*The Taming of the Shrew*"). Yet, the fact that the moment was rendered comic, suggests that it was an amusing reversal of gender roles for a woman to want sex and for a man to deny her. Katherina's sexual voracity combined with her anger and frustration led some reviewers to consider whether the production was suggesting that "all she [Katherina] really needed was a good shag" (Kirwan "*The Taming of the Shrew*").

While the focus of Frow's production was less overtly erotic than Bailey's "foreplay" *Shrew*, he also interpolated a moment that foregrounded Katherina's sexual desire and Petruchio's denial of it. When the couple arrived in Verona and Petruchio had denied Katherina food, he led her upstairs to the bridal chamber. As his servants came on stage to clean up the mess from the previous scene, Curtis lurked outside the bedchamber and gestured for hush so that the company could eavesdrop on the pair.

We then heard a repeated “yes” from Katherina, delivered in an enthusiastic and increasingly breathless voice, reaching a near climax before Petruchio interjected “no” in a deep, stern voice. Denial of sexual pleasure thus became part of the taming process: once Katherina behaves suitably Petruchio will reward her with the sex that she craves, and perhaps, it is implied, needs.

Final Scene

Katherina’s speech on wifely duty is often seen as the climax of the play and a reading of it is central to an understanding of a production’s gender politics. Within the context of two productions that staged the play as a romantic comedy, Katherina’s final speech represented her newfound happiness with her partner; it was delivered as an assertion of love by a woman who has discovered mutuality, rather than as an ironic or broken rendition of wifely obedience. Frow treated the moment as the climax of the play and its happy conclusion. Costuming Katherina in a new red silk dress, her sartorial change represented her transition from shrew to dutiful wife; as Barbara Hodgdon finds in a number of productions “theatre over-writes the narrative of her transformation from shrew to not-shrew by stitching her into a glamorous dress” (“Bride-ing the Shrew” 79). In Frow’s production, Katherina’s new dress not only symbolised her transition to “not-shrew” it was also used to contrast the fashioning of the “new shrews”, Bianca and the Widow. Bianca’s cream and gold patterned dress and the Widow’s sumptuous blue and silver gown were more embellished than Katherina’s plain red dress. Barbara Hodgdon charts the performance history of Katherina’s costume, noting the trend to dress Katherina in a red dress in her early scenes as “it is the colour which releases all the labels attached to her figure” (77). To costume her in a red dress for the final speech in some ways inverts the traditional sartorial demonstration of Katherina’s progression from shrew to “not-shrew”, but like its forerunners it made “a highly visible spectacle” (78) of Katherina and perhaps hinted that Petruchio’s taming had not crushed the spirit of Spiro’s Katherina. Furthermore, its striking colour and absence of pattern

strongly contrasted with the coldly shrewish and manipulative Bianca and Widow, she was down-to-earth and honest.

Just as male undress underscored the natural-ness of masculine power and its embodiment, so the bold colour and absence of print on Spiro's Katherina's gown contributed to the sense that this was a couple without artifice. This sense was compounded by the use of make-up, which was elaborate and clearly visible in the case of Bianca, but understated and "natural" in the case of Katherina. Margaret Kidnie has demonstrated that the play can seem to suggest that "One shrew is evidently tamed, only to have two more [...] spring up in her place" (146) and Frow's staging choices did seem to foreground what might be deemed shrewish behaviour from both Bianca and the Widow. In the previous scene, Baptista's angry response to the news of Bianca and Lucentio's marriage was met with distress by his youngest daughter and when Lucentio tried to comfort her, Bianca hit him across the face and ran off stage. The stunned Lucentio paused for a moment before bursting into hyperbolic tears. The reversal elicited laughter from the audience, as Lucentio was both emasculated and infantilized by the moment; a staging choice that helped to secure Petruchio's status as the most desirable man in the production.

Rick Warden's Hortensio was clearly dominated by his new, significantly older and much taller, wife and from the action in the previous scene, it appeared the love between Bianca and Lucentio was beginning to sour. Again, the casting of the respective couples contributed to the production's gender politics, as both Bianca and the Widow were taller than their husbands, physically embodying their dominating role in the marital hierarchy. Despite Katherina's advocacy of female submission, her enthusiastic delivery of her final speech suggested that she had not necessarily been brainwashed, relishing the act of addressing the audience directly for the first time, and enacting revenge upon her formerly saintly sister. Thus, despite the apparent "taming" of Katherina, it was the relationship of Katherina and Petruchio that demonstrated the most

playful collaboration, enabling this problematic couple to appear desirable. In many ways this ending implies that women should want to be tamed, as, though the taming process involves starvation, sleep deprivation and public humiliation, its rewards are that of social acceptance, costly apparel, and an attentive, desirably masculine husband. In contrast, Bianca and the Widow are ostracised by their social group for failing to perform their gender correctly, and this impacts on the depiction of the masculine identity of Lucentio and Hortensio, who are rendered less desirable for having been emasculated by their wives.

If the plain but striking red dress of Spiro's Katherina foregrounded the naturalness of her relationship with Petruchio, then Dillon's muddled wedding dress and big knitted socks took on a similar role. Again, she was presented in contrast to the other two women in the scene whose behaviour suggested a lack of mutuality with their partners: Bianca, getting drunk, slapped the backside of a male wedding guest, while the amorous Widow bit Hortensio's neck as she passionately kissed him. Katherina's speech of submission was clearly a performance. When summoned by Grumio she asked in a self-consciously "innocent", high-register voice "what is your will" (5.2.100). Having received instructions from Petruchio she walked off piously, her hands clasped in front of her. Wearing Petruchio's hat, she willingly stamped it underfoot and his request seemed less calculating and an aspect of playing rather than "a needless affront to her feelings...offered at the very moment when she is exhibiting a voluntary obedience" (Bond qtd. in Hodgdon 77). In a similar manner, Katherina demonstrated agency in her decision to deliver the submission speech, pausing after Petruchio made his demand, she took a moment think about it and, responding to the laughter of the Widow and male on-stage audience, she chose to acquiesce to Petruchio's command. The speech thus became an act of rebellion against the people of Padua who had derided her. She concluded by nonchalantly stubbing out her cigarette in Hortensio's champagne.

Moments later, Dillon's Katherina and Caves's Petruchio were dashing up stage, disrobing and kissing ardently as they went, clambering under the covers of the giant bed to consummate their marriage. The passion of the couple and the shocked response from the assembled Paduans rendered the moment comic and suggested a happy ending for the pair of social misfits. Frow's production also suggested a happy ending to the taming process, cutting Lucentio's destabilising assertion "'Tis a wonder, by your leave, she will be tamed so" (line 189), and finishing instead with Petruchio's "God give you goodnight" (187), which Day delivered centre stage, holding Katherina's hand as the pair bowed and curtsied to the audience.¹⁰⁹

Conclusion: Justifying Cruelty

Bailey and Frow's decision to cast actors whose embodied characteristics conformed to stereotypes of gender difference inherently shaped the gender politics of their stagings. Depicting masculinity as tall and strong and contrasting it with short and weak femininity established a binary of physical difference that played alongside the socially constructed binary of difference laid out in the text. Furthermore, coupling Katherina's short stature with destructive, infantile behaviour, rendered Petruchio's taming both necessary and benevolent. In this respect the age of both Dillon and Spiro was significant as, older than the majority of Shakespeare's romantic heroines in contemporary performance, their immature behaviour appeared particularly disagreeable.

The biological and social difference of masculinity and femininity depicted in these productions naturalised male superiority and, for some, even rendered it desirable: Toby Frow stated that it was common to see couples in the yard share a kiss during Katherina's final speech ("Q&A with

¹⁰⁹ In previews Hortensio and Lucentio's lines were used, but the audience's response to Petruchio and Katherina's departure from the stage was so uproarious and the applause too hard to quell, so the lines were cut and the couple stayed on stage.

Toby Frow”).¹¹⁰ That Petruchio’s taming of Katherina can be viewed as desirable is evident in an oft-quoted passage from Germaine Greer’s *The Female Eunuch*, in which she states “Kate’s speech at the close of the play is the greatest defence of Christian monogamy ever written. It rests upon the role of a husband as protector and friend, and it is valid because Kate has a man who is capable of being both, for Petruchio is both gentle and strong” (81). Greer adds that Petruchio is desirable because he “is man enough to know what he wants and how to get it” (81). Both productions invested in this logic: the Petruchios of Caves and Day were only able to teach their Katherinas to be women because they were “real men”. This celebration of masculinity was invested in biology, but it also stemmed from Petruchio’s ability to perform his masculinity well: for his dynamic and charismatic performance of his masculine identity he was rewarded with a beautiful and rich wife.

These two productions from 2012 used casting to foreground the notion of biological difference, but how might a staging in which all the performers were the same gender impact on the depiction of the taming plot? Might a male Katherina or female Petruchio render visible the performativity of gender, as opposed to investing in a biological notion of difference? In the next chapter I explore two single-sex productions of *The Taming of the Shrew*, examining how gender was constructed in an all-male and all-female production of the play from 2013.

¹¹⁰ This was a phenomenon that I witnessed firsthand.

Chapter Six – Disrupting Difference: single-sex Shakespeare and the gender binary

“the theatre can open up gender, character, text, and author to new and transformational meanings...” (Klett, *Cross-Gender Shakespeare* 19).

Introduction

The mimetic casting practices considered thus far are founded on the notion of gendered difference and female *to-be-looked-at-ness*. Female characters are described in relation to men and either presented as attractive and desirable or rendered other and required to conform to gendered expectations or face ridicule. The ideology inscribed in this means of representation is inherently masculinist: positioning men as agents and women as objects, it reinforces the gender binary by depicting gender difference as natural. In this chapter I want to explore some of the ways in which mimetic casting practices in Shakespeare are being challenged and subverted by major professional productions of Shakespeare’s plays in England. Cross-gender casting disrupts the straightforward association between signifier and sign, and theorists have argued that in some cases it can alienate gender (Butler “Performative Acts”; Klett *Cross-Gender Casting*). The specific focus of this chapter will be on the work of single-sex companies and the way in which their gendered approach to casting impacts on the depiction of femininity.

The impetus for experimental casting in Shakespeare can be seen to come from two directions: on the one hand, the influence of the reconstructed Globe has seen a resurgence in interest in original practices, including all-male casting, over the last twenty years, while on the other, identity politics and those calling for an end to discrimination based on age, race, and gender, have contributed to the opening up of the canon to non-traditional casting practices. Continuing to focus on *The Taming of the Shrew* with its playful metatheatricity and its troubling gender politics, this chapter will consider two single-sex stagings of the play: Edward Hall’s 2013 revival of Propeller’s all-male touring production, and Joe Murphy’s all-female staging mounted by Shakespeare’s Globe in the same year.

All-Male Casting

Before the late 1990s all-male productions of Shakespeare were relatively rare, with just two major professional productions in England in the second half of the twentieth century: Clifford Williams's staging of *As You Like It* for the National Theatre at the Old Vic in 1967 and Declan Donnellan's *Cheek by Jowl* production of the same play in 1991 (which was subsequently revived in 1994). Donnellan's staging marked the beginning of a resurgence in interest in the practice: it was a critical success, receiving rave reviews from around the world and attracting a great deal of scholarly attention, a lot of which had a tendency to historicise Donnellan's approach, situating discussions of the production's gender politics alongside an analysis of the Shakespearean all-male company (Solomon *Re-Dressing*; Bulman "Bringing"). By locating all-male stagings of the play on a continuum beginning with the Shakespearean original, all-male productions are ascribed unique access to the staging of "authentically Shakespearean meanings" that William B. Worthen describes as central to contemporary Shakespearean performance (*Shakespeare and the Authority of Performance* 3).

The relationship between all-male casting and Shakespearean authority was further strengthened by the advent of Shakespeare's Globe Theatre: in its opening season in 1997 Richard Olivier directed *Henry V* with an all-male cast under the auspices of the "original practices" experiment.¹¹¹ It was one of eight all-male "original practices" productions under Mark Rylance's directorship, while a further two were staged in 2012 under Dominic Dromgoole's tenure. The logic behind "original practices" was that the theatre itself had been built according to early modern craftsmanship and the stagings at the venue should reflect that endeavour. However, the vastly different performance context meant that

¹¹¹ Initially the "original practices" programme was called the Authentic Practices, but this later changed and I apply the term "original practices" retrospectively to all productions utilising the approach.

“the Globe cherry-picked particular “original practices” elements to explore on stage, while rejecting others” (Tiramani 58). There were many concessions to twenty-first century performance practice, including rehearsal periods of several weeks, the use of full scripts rather than individual parts, the fact that each production had a “Master of Play”, who to all intents and purposes was the production’s director. Casting was an aspect of production that was included in the “original practices” project, but the approach varied: eight of the “original practices” productions were all-male, five were mixed gender, and a further three were all-female.¹¹² Including casting as an element of some “original practices” productions provoked particular debate, as the ideology of contemporary representation became imbricated with that of the early modern stage. For example, despite the division of casting along gendered lines in the name of historical accuracy, “original practices” productions operated a colourblind casting policy, suggesting, in Michael Dobson’s words, that “sexual discrimination can be permitted in the name of historical authenticity, but not racial” (“Shakespeare Performances 2002” 258).¹¹³ Dobson also took issue with the age of the performers playing female roles, observing that only Viola was played by a younger male performer, Eddie Redmayne who at the time was an undergraduate at Cambridge, while he suggested that Paul Chahidi’s Maria was “more like a nineteenth century pantomime Dame than either an Elizabethan or a modern Maria” (259). Yet, while scholars expressed doubts over the legitimacy of “original practices”, the approach captured the imagination of audiences and critics alike. *Twelfth Night* was a particular success and this seems, in part, to be linked to notions of authenticity with reviews suggesting that the production “treats

¹¹² It is notable that in *Shakespeare’s Globe: A Theatrical Experiment* “original practices” is defined as all-male, with OPMG (Original Practices mixed gender) and OPF (Original Practices female cast) are variants on the all-male practice (Carson & Karim-Cooper).

¹¹³ It is worth noting that colourblind casting in the production was decidedly tokenistic, with just one actor of colour (Terence Maynard) in the *Twelfth Night* company in its Middle Temple Hall incarnation, and who was replaced by a white actor, Liam Brennan when the production transferred to the Globe later that year.

the spectator to an authentic Elizabethan experience” (Cavendish “Dizzy Heights”) and that it was “a monument to authenticity” (Koenig).

The “extraordinary critical and popular success” (Elam, “Collective Affinities” 7) of Carroll’s *Twelfth Night* in 2002 reflects the cultural appetite for the brand of authenticity that was cultivated by Shakespeare’s Globe, but also more generally for the Shakespearean authority that performances drawing on New Historicism were able to invoke. In the same year as Richard Olivier staged his all-male *Henry V* at Shakespeare’s Globe, director Edward Hall also mounted an all-male production of the same play with new theatre company, Propeller. Stemming from Hall’s desire to combine “being true to the text, but also giving it our contemporary response”, Hall suggests that working with an all-male company enabled him to unlock “the level of metaphor” that poetic works like Shakespeare’s demand (qtd. in Ravenhill). Beginning life at the Watermill Theatre in Newbury, Propeller has become an internationally renowned touring company, mounting annual productions of Shakespeare’s plays and touring both nationally and internationally. As well as their full-scale productions with a cast of around fourteen, since 2010 they have also toured with “pocket” versions of Shakespeare’s plays, aimed at school audiences and with a small company of just six actors. Whilst their website cites an eclectic range of influences, queer theory is not one of them; Propeller was not established to interrogate gender, but rather to “find a more engaging way of expressing Shakespeare and to more completely explore the relationship between text and performance” (Propeller, “About”).

As Abigail Rokison observes, while “original practices” at Shakespeare’s Globe used historical scholarship to recreate an approximation of early modern performance, “it is the ‘spirit’ of the original staging that Propeller seek to capture” (“Authenticity” 73). This difference has an impact on the way that gender is performed by the two all-male companies, with “original practices” productions adopting a carefully researched historicised performance of identity, including “the

social rules governing bowing and the etiquette governing hats” (82); in contrast, the meaning of the semiotic of Propeller’s costuming and staging are more readily interpreted by contemporary audiences (83). However, despite the different approaches to representation, both of these companies use their all-male casting as a link to Shakespearean authority. Rokison observes that “their use of an all-male cast [is] in line with Renaissance theatre practice” (74) and while she goes on to explore the nuances of early modern single-sex casting, her statement is indicative of the often reductive depiction of all-male single-sex casting found in reviews of Propeller’s productions.¹¹⁴

Recourse to notions of authenticity and the Shakespearean authority with which it is associated often marks all-male productions as politically conservative, a view I share with Melissa D. Aaron (151). Yet some scholars have argued that all-male Shakespeare can have a radical agenda. James C. Bulman suggests that “calling the use of an all-male cast an ‘original practice’” is “a tactical ruse by which Rylance coaxes audiences to divest themselves of essentialised notions of gender and sexuality and [...]to entertain queer thoughts” (“Unsex me here” 233). Yet, Bulman observes that scholarship on the reconstructed Globe has tended to overlook the twenty-first century significance of “cross-dressing and homosexuality in play” and instead focussed on the way in which “all-male casting might help them to recover the Elizabethan cultural moment” (“Bringing” 80).

Mark Ravenhill acknowledged the queer potential of all-male Shakespeare in an interview with Edward Hall, in which he speculated “whether there is a gay aspect to these plays that gets brought out by all-male productions”. Like Rylance, Hall defined his casting practice in terms of Shakespearean authority, suggesting that all-male casting facilitated

¹¹⁴ For example, a review in *The Courier* enthusiastically stated that “the company were reverting back to the traditional style of performing the play with an all male cast” (Priddle).

“really being true to the text” (qtd. in Ravenhill). He also invoked the heterosexuality of his company twice in the short interview, first noting that it is female audience members who are attracted to the cross-dressed actors and shortly after observing “Most of us are married men” (qtd. in Ravenhill).¹¹⁵ The undercurrent of anxiety about both gender and sexual identity in Hall’s response suggests that the queer potential of all-male casting may be contained within a conservative approach to identity politics.

Furthermore, even queer analyses of all-male productions can rely on gender essentialism in their arguments. For example, offering an analysis of Carroll’s *Twelfth Night* James C. Bulman highlights a number of occasions when the layering of gendered identity disrupted conventional heterosexuality. However, his assertion that the all-male casting was used “to challenge spectators’ belief in a stable system of gender” (“Unsex me here” 234) is somewhat undermined by his sustained attention on “the male actor beneath the dress” (“Unsex me here” 239); he does not acknowledge that all-male casting *relies* on a “belief in a stable system of gender”. In this way, all-male casting can promote gender essentialism rather than subverting it, suggesting that the assumed gender is put on top of the “real” gender beneath the clothing. For example, Bulman’s analysis of Rylance’s Cleopatra, in which he argues that the actor’s “biological maleness” helped him to “foreground the fundamental performativity of his queen” (“Unsex me here” 232) falls into this trap.

That Bulman should be making the case for a queer reading of male to female crossing while positioning male qualities as biological and female qualities as performative is particularly problematic. As Alisa Solomon has demonstrated “as the presumed universal, maleness is more invisible in its artificiality” (“It’s Never too Late” 145) and thus, when men adopt feminine signifiers they may reassert the fictive dichotomy of masculine neutrality

¹¹⁵ The interview took place in 2005, some eight years before same sex marriage was legalised in the UK.

and feminine performativity. In practice the connotations of cross-gender casting will vary depending on the type of crossing, which might be anywhere between passing and drag. As I explored in Chapter One, passing, when it is observed by the viewer, can foreground gender performativity because it highlights that gender is not a biological fact. In contrast, drag is a form of parody, which has the potential to destabilise gender, but can also reiterate negative gender stereotypes. Some feminist scholars have criticised drag's parody of femininity, stating that it risks "promulgating misogynistic images of women" (Ferris 9). Jill Dolan argues that in drag "woman-as-myth, as a cultural, ideological object, is constructed in an agreed upon exchange between the male performer and the usually male spectator" ("Gender Impersonation" 8) and thus risks foregrounding female performativity while reiterating the "naturalness" of masculinity.

The erasure of female subjectivity that takes place in all-male productions is also troubling and Carol Chillington Rutter has warned of the ideological implications of a veneration of so-called authenticity:

Let us, for one thing, be under no illusion that arguing 'authenticity' is harmless antiquarianism. Rather, it's a tactic of legitimation whose end is political, for it leaves Shakespeare to the sole possession of white, male actors, gay or straight, Shakespeare's only "authentic" players. (*Enter the Body* 88-89)

Within an androcentric culture that privileges male experience, the all-male company represents a further disempowerment of women, as they are excluded from their own representation and from the prestigious classical stage.

All-Female Shakespeare

The other type of Shakespearean company that I will explore in this chapter is the all-female company. Writing in 1998, Elizabeth Schafer observed that:

Playing Shakespeare with an all-female cast might actually seem like an important gesture of appropriation in relation to plays which

premiered with all-male casts and which, when cast according to the designated sex of the characters, will always provide far more employment opportunities for male performers than female. However, while modern all-male productions of Shakespeare have a certain kudos – because they have historical credibility even though they resurrect the sexism of the early modern playhouse – professional all-female productions [...] are primarily seen as curiosity pieces. (*Ms Directing* 223)

While all-female productions are more common in 2016 than at the turn of the millennium, Schafer's statement helpfully articulates one of the major differences between all-male and all-female companies: the former are imbued with Shakespearean authority, while the latter are linked with equal opportunities and amateur performance contexts.

There is not the same theatrical tradition of all-female casting as all-male; Melissa D. Aaron identifies a number of established international all-female companies such as all-female Japanese company Takarazuka founded in 1914 and the Los Angeles Women's Shakespeare Company founded in 1993 but observes that it is in the amateur performance contexts of schools and prisons with which all-female Shakespeare is particularly associated (152). However, while all-female professional Shakespearean troupes are a relatively recent phenomenon in England, selective cross-gender casting has an extensive history, reaching back hundreds of years. Marjorie B. Garber observes that "Sarah Siddons was an early Hamlet, and Sarah Bernhardt a famous one" noting that "In the nineteenth century alone some fifty professional actresses played the part" (37).¹¹⁶ This performance history is often overlooked, a critical myopia that Terri Power describes as inherently political, as it keeps Shakespeare in male control (3).

Without a privileged performance history on which to draw, contemporary female-to-male castings have a tendency to allude to notions

¹¹⁶ Hamlet has specifically been associated with female performers, as Tony Howard's *Women as Hamlet* explores: the first Hamlet on screen was played by Sarah Bernhardt and it is likely that the first Hamlet on radio was played by Eve Donne.

of equal opportunities. For example, writing of Helena Kaut-Howson's production of *King Lear*, in which Kathryn Hunter played the title role, Aoife Monks observes that Kaut-Howson invoked equal rights when she stated: "we cast Kathryn Hunter because I believe the part is about old age and not about gender. It should be available to women and men" (qtd. in "Predicting the Past" 90). Linking Kaut-Howson's approach to colourblind casting, which also focuses on the idea of "the best person for the job", Monks suggests that there is a danger that female-to-male crossings are reduced to "an equal rights issue that erases the question of gender and does not work to critique the status of the text or to disrupt the image of history" (Monks 90).

The early experimentations with all-female casting at the reconstructed Globe were framed using Shakespearean authority. In publicity for the 2003 season, Mark Rylance stated that:

Shakespeare and his fellow actors [...] were not limited by the gender of the parts they played. They enjoyed a theatre of the imagination, where commoner played king, man played woman, and, within the plays, woman man. [...] It is in the spirit of those first performances, if not the material fact, that this season's company of women is conceived. (qtd. in "Unsex me here")

Many reviewers of the production were unconvinced by this recourse to Shakespearean authority, however, as in 2003 the concept of an all-female *Shrew* appeared to at least one critic as "a trendy post-feminist wheeze of the silliest kind" (Coveney "Shakespeare's sisters") and with no forerunner some "feared a dour, stridently feminist staging" (Spencer "Gender Bending").

It is possible that these traditionally conservative papers – Coveney was writing for *The Daily Mail* and Spencer was writing in *The Telegraph* – were particularly troubled by the notion of an all-female company tackling *Shrew* because of its radical potential. Elizabeth Klett observes that female to male casting in contemporary productions of Shakespeare's plays might be considered subversive for three key reasons:

First they disrupt mimetic theatrical production by rejecting the concept of theatre as a mirror that reflects reality. Instead, they reveal the theatre to be a laboratory where gender can be interrogated and dismantled. Second, they perform this disruption through the use of cross-gender casting, by placing a woman's body at the center of representation [...] Third, the actresses intervene in the play's performance traditions, and challenge conventional male-centred interpretations. (*Cross-Gender Shakespeare* 4-5)

To these three reasons I would add a fourth, or perhaps a subcategory of the first, which is arguably the most important, and that is rendering visible the performativity of masculinity. As I have discussed, femininity is often viewed as performed, but masculinity is seen as natural, as Judith Halberstam describes it: "masculinity "just is" whereas femininity reeks of the artificial" (234). Thus, a female-to-male crossing may render visible the fact that masculinity is performed. As Elizabeth Drorbaugh explores:

When seeing a man cross-dress we may read the construction of "woman". When we see a woman cross-dress as a man, the "real" in our culture, what do we see? We may read power. But if we read (a construction of) a man, that which is supposedly not constructed, faith in the real may begin to break down. (120)

Phyllida Lloyd's 2003 all-female *Shrew* at Shakespeare's Globe is an excellent example of how masculine performativity can be rendered visible through cross-gender performance, as a production in which "all the male characters were played with an edge of parody of typically male behaviours" (Gay, "Changing Shakespeare" 316). That *Shrew* should have been chosen for one of the first all-female productions at Shakespeare's Globe reflects the fact that as a play it is particularly ripe for this kind of gender exploration.

Single Sex *Shrews*

Michael Shapiro has argued that the gender politics of *Shrew* must be interpreted through the lens of the material conditions of its first performance and makes a convincing argument for how the all-male performance context could be seen to construct femininity within the play. He argues that:

the text itself, as originally performed by an all-male cast, generated deconstructive power of its own by creating a metatheatrical frame. Beginning with the Induction, the play flaunted its theatricality, principally by underscoring the use of male actors in female roles, and Shakespeare sustained that effect even after the Induction framework itself disappeared from view. (“Framing the Taming” 144)

Shapiro’s reading suggests that the all-male company may have playfully subverted the construction of femininity in the play, interacting with early modern gender ideology as constructed through, on the one hand, rituals such as the skimmington in which “young men impersonated wives believed guilty of adultery, scolding, and disobeying or beating their husbands” (144), and on the other, the female stereotypes depicted in male authored conduct books and marriage manuals. He concludes that, by presenting female stereotypes, the play exploits “the audience’s realization that these familiar cultural constructs or roles were theatrical illusions created by male performers” (166).

Speaking of his original staging of *Shrew* for Propeller in 2007, Hall presented a not dissimilar argument, claiming that his homosocial casting practice helped to foreground the fantasy of male supremacy:

When a man playing a woman comments on how a man or woman should behave, which they do constantly, you just get a different ironic tang to it. If, as I believe, the writer was using an accepted code of behaviour and taking it to its logical conclusion in order to make a point about how we shouldn’t treat our women in this appalling fashion, somehow I become more alive to that when a man is telling that story. (qtd. in Rees)

Hall’s statement makes it very clear that this all-male staging was being created with a male audience in mind, for whom there was a handy take-home moral: “we shouldn’t treat our women in this appalling fashion”.¹¹⁷ It

¹¹⁷ Hall’s recourse to authorial intention is problematic given that critical consensus tends to suggest, as observed above, that “there can be *no* authoritative reading” (Hattaway qtd. in Shapiro, “Framing” 143) of the play. Furthermore, the idea that Shakespeare takes “an accepted code of behaviour” to its “logical extreme” seems to be at odds with the play’s comic genre, and the way in which Shakespeare utilises his source

is unclear where female subjectivity fits into Hall's vision and, while it would be erroneous to place too much weight on the response to a question in one newspaper article, Hall's statement does reveal something about the ideology of his interpretation; this production did not aim to disrupt the gender hierarchy, but instead aimed to encourage men to be benign dictators rather than tyrants.

In comparison with Hall's rather conservative agenda for his production, Murphy's approach was more engaged with the play's potential to speak to contemporary gender politics. Speaking to journalist Michael Crawley, Murphy suggested that "the most powerful argument against its misogyny is just to show its misogyny" and went on to foreground how his single-sex casting contributed to his vision: "It's very obvious that these eight intelligent, empowered women on stage are not condoning it [misogyny]" (qtd. in Crawley).¹¹⁸ Murphy's all-female casting was considered decidedly less provocative in this production than in Lloyd's staging, and, whereas in 2003 an all-female *Shrew* might have led *The Telegraph's* reviewer to fear "a dour, stridently feminist staging", by 2013 the same paper hailed the casting device as an "intriguing and enjoyable twist" (Cavendish "*The Taming*").¹¹⁹ With the all-female *Shrew* at the Globe in 2003 leading the way, a new point of reference for this type of non-traditional casting practice was created. This is evident in the marketing for the 2013 touring production which stated that "*The Taming of the Shrew* will be performed with an all-female cast, as it was in the play's inaugural performance at the Globe in 2003" ("Shakespeare's Globe

material, electing to portray coercive rather than physically violent behaviour.

¹¹⁸ In the Globe's Adopt an Actor project both Lamb and Whitaker refer to a moving moment in rehearsals when, after working on the final scene for the first time, the company spontaneously joined together in a huddle, comforting each other after the difficulty of the speech (see Shakespeare's Globe).

¹¹⁹ It could be argued that all-female casting headed by a male director is less threatening, though it is worth noting that Lloyd's *Shrew* was programmed by Rylance and initially directed by Barry Kyle before Lloyd stepped in mid-rehearsals.

Presents”). Linking the all-female casting practice with the play’s inaugural staging at the reconstructed Globe in 2003 located Murphy’s staging within an established professional theatrical tradition and demonstrates the way in which non-traditional casting can be accepted relatively quickly.

Murphy’s production was a different type of performance from its Globe forerunners as it was part of the Globe’s touring programme, which, as I demonstrated in Chapter Two, tends to have a smaller company, a short run at the Globe itself, and a minimalist design. Furthermore, touring productions do not have a press night at the Globe and therefore receive significantly less media coverage than shows in the main season.¹²⁰ While these elements in some ways afford touring productions a lower status than main Globe productions, Murphy’s *Shrew* toured both nationally and internationally, playing to venues across Europe and Asia, where its casting practice may have been received through the legitimising authority of the reconstructed Globe.

Like the majority of the Globe’s touring productions, Murphy’s staging was dominated by actors in their twenties. There is, perhaps, an irony in this casting choice, given the first all-female *Shrew* at the reconstructed Globe was dogged by comparisons with school productions (Spencer “Gender Bending”; Koenig). However, the youthful energy of the production and the degree of age-blind casting suited Murphy’s playful approach to staging: the majority of roles were doubled and the production’s aesthetic conjured up the sense of a band of travelling players who first emerged from their onstage circus-style tent to perform a song before the start of the play. The design of the production was eclectic, with costuming adopting a range of styles from the 1930s up until the present day. Murphy stated this was a conscious choice as had he chosen to set it in a particular historical context “would have made it too easy to write the play off: ‘Oh, this is the Elizabethan Age, we’re in a time of oppressive,

¹²⁰ Murphy’s *Shrew* was only reviewed in one national newspaper: *The Telegraph*.

backwater behaviour' or 'Oh, this is set in the 1960s, when women were having trouble asserting their rights'. The issues of the play are universal. It still happens today" (qtd. in Fitzpatrick).

Hall's *Shrew* likewise utilised an eclectic design that reflected the centrality of the Sly framing device to his interpretation of the play. The set was comprised of a series of abstract wardrobes and chests, designed to evoke "a sort of stylised grand aristocratic room" (Pavelka 37) in which the inner play would be staged. Designer Michael Pavelka states that the design for the inner play came from the "concept of the wild retro clothes coming from a Lord's dressing up box" (37) and that the styles "came from references to pop icons of the 1970s and 1980s – this era suited the then largely male-dominated society: a time when women were struggling for genuine equality in both the home and the workplace" (38). The bold colours and somewhat caricatured costumes for characters in the inner play were used to differentiate the exaggerated world of the taming plot with the Sly framing device.

The Induction

For both Murphy and Hall, the Induction contributed to their reading of the play. Murphy asserted that:

You then look at the fact that it's a play within a play. He's [Shakespeare] obviously calling it a fiction from the beginning, that this drunken peasant, who thinks he's a lord, is watching. It's really all about: watch, this is a play; it's roles within roles; everything isn't as it seems. That's what the whole preamble seems to be about. (qtd. in Fitzpatrick)

Murphy's creative use of doubling emphasised the sense of roles within roles, so that the Induction was able to set up the themes of the taming plot. In what Carol Chillington Rutter dubbed "a neat subverting of casting cliché" ("Shakespeare Performances 2013" 406) Kate Lamb doubled as Sly and Katherina. Margaret Kidnie has observed that the roles of Sly and Katherina might both be defined as "disempowered shape-shifters" (159) and doubling the roles foregrounded the abuse inherent in hierarchical

social structures. In this scenario, Kidnie argues that the Lord and Petruchio are parallel characters, as empowered patriarchs abusing those beneath them in the social hierarchy. However, Murphy opted not to double the Lord with Petruchio, but rather with Baptista. Played by the eldest member of the company, Kathryn Hunt, this choice of doubling highlighted the privilege of wealth, gender, and age embodied by the two patriarchal figures.

As the well-spoken Lord, sporting red hunting jacket and wielding a riding crop, Hunter's discussion with the First Huntsman about which of his dogs is the best and that he "would not lose the dog for twenty pound" (Ind. 1. 17) foreshadowed the later wager in Act 5, Scene 2, a parallel emphasised by the doubling of Leah Whitaker's First Huntsman with Petruchio. In another example of Murphy's conceptual doubling, Whitaker also played Bartholomew, the Lord's Page. Thus, Murphy essentially inverted the casting of the shrew-taming plot as Sly and Katherina and Bartholomew/Sly's Wife and Petruchio were doubled. This conceptual doubling emphasised the performativity of gendered identity.

The Lord's detailed description of how Bartholomew should play Sly's wife can be seen to foreground gender's performativity. Michael Shapiro emphasises that the "Lord's instructions [to Bartholomew] sketch a model of upper-class femininity", adding that "its constructedness is readily apparent" ("Framing" 152). The all-male Shakespearean performance context is central to Shapiro's argument, but an equivalent, though different, effect was produced in Murphy's all-female company. When spoken by a woman playing a man, the Lord's description of idealised femininity was somewhat subverted. This subversion was particularly heightened by Hunt's embodied characteristics: with a tall, broad frame and deep mature voice, her physicality rendered the constructed nature of the Lord's description of desirable femininity uniquely evident.

The embodiment of Bartholomew's femininity further emphasised its construction, as Whitaker donned a platinum blonde wig, styled in a fashion reminiscent of Marilyn Monroe, and spoke huskily and off-voice, following the Lord's instruction to speak in a "soft low tongue" (Ind. 1.113). The rehearsal report suggests that Bartholomew also donned fake breasts to play Sly's wife, though this was not foregrounded in performance (Shakespeare's Globe "*The Taming of the Shrew* Show Report 2013"). That prosthesis should be utilised to portray gender successfully, even when that gender matches the gender of the performer, foregrounds the conventions of desirability and its constructedness. Furthermore, it plays with what is thought of as the stable body of the actor, suggesting that a "female" body might not be feminine enough. There was an equal sense of the complexity of masculine performativity in the staging: when Sly punned on his "wife's" use of the word "stand", stating "Ay, it stands so that I may hardly tarry so long" (Ind. 2.122), he emphasised the wordplay by gesturing towards his crotch. Peter Stallybrass has foregrounded the significance of the absent breast on the all-male stage and in this all-female production the absent phallus similarly drew attention to the gendered body beneath the clothing. As a result, Lamb's female body rendered Sly's male sexuality impotent.

The depiction of Sly's sexuality was linked to a failed performance of his gender, which in turn was linked to his class status. Speaking with a Geordie accent, dressed in a stained shirt, and drinking from a bottle, his class identity marked him out as different from the well-spoken Lord and his servants. When Becci Gemmell's Hostess confronted him, Sly's first response was to hit her over the head with his bottle. The unexpected and rather extreme action was rendered comic by the Hostess's quick recovery and by Sly's bemused response to finding himself in an alien context. That his character should be introduced by immediate gendered violence is nonetheless significant, as it established male violence as the impotent, but destructive, response to a situation of powerlessness, a theme to which the production would return.

Sly's interaction with his "wife" further emphasised his failed performance of masculinity. Foreshadowing the final scene of the taming plot, Whitaker's Bartholomew stood centre stage to tell her "husband" of her wifely duty, before kneeling at the drunkard's feet and offering out her hand, demonstrating that she was his "wife in all obedience" (Ind. 2.104). Sly looked at the proffered hand and after a brief pause he rested his feet on it, apparently misreading the act of wifely duty as the offer of a footstool. While this move corresponded with Sly's failed performance of his new social status, it also demonstrated a failed performance of his gendered identity, as he failed to treat his "wife" with the care and respect required by her gender and social status.

Murphy's Induction was extremely sophisticated in the way in which it established the themes of the play through its staging choices and doubling. He also used his non-traditional casting to subvert the Lord's attempt to create a performance of gendered verisimilitude. The single-sex casting also allowed for a unique approach to conceptual doubling, using the "recycled body and persona of the actor" (Carlson, *The Haunted Stage* 53) to draw out the parallels between the framing device and inner play.

Hall likewise used doubling with the Induction and the taming plot to make a conceptual point. Opting for what has become a rather conventional form of conceptual doubling, Hall cast the same actor as both Sly and Petruchio. Margaret Kidnie draws on Coppélia Kahn to suggest that both characters share "a childish dream of omnipotence" and argues that doubling the roles can foreground the delusion of male supremacy (159). However, Hall's production went one step further, as it was not simply that Vince Leigh played both characters, but rather that Sly played Petruchio; setting the Induction at a wedding at which Sly was the reluctant, drunken bridegroom who passed out at the altar, in Hall's production, Sly was invited to join the players on stage as Petruchio, reading his first few lines from the script. Beginning with a dysfunctional heterosexual relationship

at its heart, Hall's production established the taming plot as the fantasy of a drunken oaf.

With its relocation to a wedding and its focus very much on Sly, the Induction was edited to focus on his transformation and the instigator of the duping of Sly was not the Lord, but the father of the bride. The printed text of the Propeller production notes that the father of the bride should be doubled with Baptista (Hall & Warren 23), which, like Murphy's production, drew a parallel between the patriarchal figures of the play through conceptual doubling.¹²¹ The edited text distils the Lord's instructions to Bartholomew to just five lines:

Sirrah, dress you in all suits like a lady,
And call him "husband".
I know you will well usurp the grace,
Voice, gait and action of a gentlewoman.
See this dispatched with all the haste you can.
(Hall & Warren 24)

Given the Lord's instructions to Bartholomew foreground single-sex casting as well as gender's performativity it is noteworthy that it should be so heavily cut and perhaps reflects Hall's reading of the play as "men discovering how they treat women" (Hall & Warren 12), rather than any kind of attempt to deconstruct of gender.

Christopher Sly was the locus of Hall's reading and his performance of the role of Petruchio was a significant interpretative element of the production. In an interview, Vince Leigh, who played Sly/Petruchio, explained that this doubling was central to the production's conceit as the production dramatises the "'taming' of him [Sly] as much as a taming of the shrew. It's teaching him a massive lesson" (32). In Hall's staging, Sly's alpha-male Petruchio came to life on stage when Sly read aloud Petruchio's first line. Receiving a round of applause from his on-stage audience, Sly continued as Petruchio, losing the script as the frame melted into the action

¹²¹ The text notes that the bride in the order of service should be called Katherine Minola and the groom Christopher Sly (23).

of the inner play. Leigh asserted that the metatheatricality of Sly playing Petruchio “give[s] you a licence to be not quite naturalistic, to be slightly over the top and cartoony, because it is a ‘character’ as opposed to a person” (32). Yet, as Emma Poltrack observed in her insightful review of the production for *Shakespeare Bulletin*:

Petruchio lacked any echoes of his portrayal of the Sly seen in the opening moments: echoes that might have connected the framing device with the taming plot by reminding the audience whose fantasy they were watching. (540)

As a result, the production was never quite able to reconcile the “cartoony” style of the inner play, with the idea that *Shrew* is a lesson in “how we shouldn’t treat our women in this way” (Hall qtd. in Rees). Furthermore, the “not quite naturalistic” approach appears to have been at odds with the actors’ views of their characters, which had roots in a psychologically realist approach. For example, in the production’s Education Pack, Dan Wheeler, who played Katherine, suggested that she is “almost a victim of Stockholm syndrome, which is where a captive falls in love with her kidnapper, and that this is just an example of what happens in a world where women have to do what they’re told” (28). Leigh also explored his character’s psychology and offered a remarkable justification of Petruchio’s behaviour in an interview in the Education Pack:

In the way that I’m viewing the production Petruchio is right and just and honest and faithful and will be loving. The way I see it they will go on to have a very wonderful marriage, a fantastic thirty years together. He’s very aware, in this cartoony world, that only one person can be the boss. If you’ve got two people vying all the time for top spot then you’ll always have rows. If you look at any animal pack there’s always an ‘alpha’ and that alpha’s job is to protect all of the troupe. He’s there to take on any contenders. I firmly believe that’s what Petruchio is. He will go [sic] to be that lonely alpha male, but he will have a devoted wife who he will look after and do everything that Katherine says at the end. In my head Petruchio is a hero. Yes. Even though it seems quite cruel I’ve justified every single moment of it. (32)¹²²

¹²² That an abusive husband should be hailed a hero in educational material aimed at GCSE and A-Level students, who are generally aged 15-18, is extremely ill-judged.

He concludes “I think it’s a happy ending [...] I quite like Petruchio” (32). Leigh’s justification of Petruchio’s actions is clearly incongruous with Hall’s intention to demonstrate that “we shouldn’t treat our women in this appalling fashion” and the tension between the “cartoony” approach to the inner play, along with Hall’s reading of the play as a critique of aggressive male behaviour, led to a somewhat inconsistent approach to the staging of the taming plot.

Embodying Gender Difference on the Non-Illusory Stage

The depiction of the main couple was central to Hall’s interpretation of the play as a parable of male behaviour. As so often is the case in contemporary productions of this play, Katherina was presented as an outsider who needed to change. Described by reviewers as an “angry punkish Katherina” (J.Shilling) Wheeler’s eponymous shrew was dressed in a black skater dress with maroon tights and bleached blonde hair. “She (quite literally) doesn’t pull her punches” (Jupp) and in the first scene, stormed about, kicking the on-looking Sly off the stage, hitting Gremio, and poking Hortensio in the eye. As the play progressed her assault on her fellow Paduans continued as she slammed Bianca’s face in a door and broke the lute over Hortensio’s head. Just as the violent, self-destructive behaviour of Dillon and Spiro’s Katherinas described in the previous chapter served to justify Petruchio’s taming methods, so Wheeler’s Katherina was depicted as in need of taming. A reviewer in *The Stage* interpreted her behaviour as suggesting that Petruchio’s “task is the brutal, *necessary* disciplining of Dan Wheeler’s punk, ball-breaking blonde Katherine” (Coveney “*The Taming of the Shrew*” – emphasis added). This view is reminiscent of responses to the original production in 2006 which stated “What this Kate demonstrably needs is the tough love meted out to her by Petruchio” and suggested that “Petruchio [is] determined to break Kate down so that, presumably, he can build her up again” (M. Wolf “*The Taming of the Shrew*”).

That Petruchio’s overtly abusive behaviour might be read as an act of benevolent patriarchy arguably stems from the depiction of Katherina’s

actions as extreme and unpleasant, as well as juvenile. In an interview with Wheeler in the Education Pack, the question of age was seen to be central to the interpretation of the play: “she seems to have her emotions very close to the surface; she’s got a very short temper; she’s very quick to be angry, quick to be upset. So that all works very well for playing her as an older teenager” (27). Age and gender were seen as intertwined in the approach to Katherina; in the play text, Edward Hall and Roger Warren mused that “Perhaps part of the shrew-taming is a growing-up process” (12), a view which suggests that, while they might not condone the methods Petruchio uses to facilitate Katherina’s “growing up”, ultimately her immature behaviour needs to change.

Abigail Rokison has noted that Propeller productions “have not made a point of using younger or physically slight actors to play the female roles in their productions or made any attempt to disguise the fact that the women are being played by grown men” (“Authenticity” 75). Indeed, when Simon Scardifield first played Katherina in 2006-07 the reviews almost universally commented on his chest hair, which was exposed by his low-cut dress. Wheeler’s physical attributes did not include such a blatant masculine signifier and, while the height difference between Wheeler and Leigh was barely perceptible, Wheeler’s slim build and bleached blonde hair served to signify femininity in contrast with Leigh’s muscly bare arms and facial hair. Furthermore, whilst Rokison states that younger actors are not selected to play female characters, in this instance the age-gap of nearly ten years between Leigh and Wheeler added to Katherina’s sense of vulnerability.

A contributing factor to this interpretation of brutal, but ultimately benevolent, disciplining was perhaps the simultaneous depiction of Petruchio as at once a “bullish” (Mountford) and “obnoxious oaf” (Coveney “*The Taming*”), but also a “charismatic [...] good-looking charmer” (J.Shilling) who was “played with swaggering charm” (Jupp). In an unconventional outfit of red trousers, cowboy boots, a dirty white vest and

sleeveless, tasseled suede jacket which exposed his muscly arms, this Petruchio was a non-conformist whose hyper-masculinity was seen by many commentators as attractive, and though dangerous, ultimately desirable.

Leah Whitaker's Petruchio, on the other hand, was presented as a somewhat vulnerable character. Whitaker's wiry frame suggested a physical vulnerability that Petruchio overcame with masculine bluster and self-consciously performative acts that contributed to his masculine identity. For example, when he shook hands with his male counterparts they recoiled in pain at the strength of his handshake. In Act 1, Scene 2, his recollection of past triumphs, "Have I not in my time heard lions roar?" (line 194), delivered with a great sense of bravado, sounded decidedly fanciful; Petruchio gave the impression that he felt the need to assert his masculine prowess through the recitation of former (or perhaps invented) actions. The idea of anxious masculinity was further emphasised in the costuming of the character: dressed as a 1930s explorer, with jodhpurs, knee-high leather boots and a hat with flying goggles, Whitaker's Petruchio was self-consciously fashioning himself as a swaggering adventurer.

A number of reviewers found Whitaker's vulnerable Petruchio intriguing: Dominic Cavendish suggested that "we see the swaggering machismo of Leah Whitaker's ravishing Petruchio as a form of put-on identity – masking a sense of palpable vulnerability" (*The Taming of the Shrew*). I would argue that Cavendish's appreciation of Petruchio's "ravishing" quality stemmed from the cross-gender casting, as the femininity of the performer's gendered body was read alongside the character's empowered behaviour. This idea links back to Alisa Solomon's assertion that "it's sexy for women to take on a little power" (*It's Never Too Late to Switch* 155). Whitaker's slight Petruchio had a physical vulnerability not often seen in the casting of the character and this physicality suggested that Petruchio's need to subordinate his wife stemmed from anxiety about his performance of masculinity, rather than

being a straightforward manifestation of male physical superiority, as was the case in Leigh's tall, muscly Petruchio. Research in the social sciences has found that masculine gender role stress is often associated with male violence towards female partners (Umberson et al), as aggression is seen as an "effective means of restoring manhood" (Bosson & Vandello 82). In light of this research into masculinities, Emily Detmer's assertion that *Shrew* depicts domestic abuse could be explored by portraying Petruchio's controlling behaviour as stemming from gender role stress rather than male physical superiority.

The disjuncture between Whitaker's slight physicality and this show of hyper-masculinity foregrounded gender's performativity. Ostensibly, it may be that the performativity of masculinity was rendered visible through the cross-gender casting, but I would argue that it was Leigh's embodied characteristics rather than her gender that alienated Petruchio's masculinity. Petruchio's brand of shrew-taming represents a form of hyper-masculinity that, in current casting conventions, tends to have a physical manifestation: male power resides in physical superiority. When played by a short, slight actor of any gender, the performativity of Petruchio's hyper-masculinity can be revealed, as it demonstrates that Petruchio's power is not innate or natural, but socially sanctioned through patriarchy. There is a danger, of course, that a female performer portraying Petruchio's vulnerability reinforces stereotypical gender characteristics, as vulnerability becomes gendered as a feminine quality. This is one of the limitations of cross-gender casting, as the subversive potential of revealing masculinity's performativity risks being contained within the stable gender identity implied by the single-sex casting convention.¹²³

¹²³ It is worth noting that in Lloyd's 2003 production, McTeer's Petruchio corresponded to the more traditional casting of the role as embodying physical strength and dynamism, as she was nearly a foot taller than Kathryn Hunter's Katherina. It is important, therefore, to acknowledge that a body gendered as female does not inevitably equate to physical weakness.

A male desire to shape and define gendered identity was also foregrounded in the production's depiction of Katherina. Lamb acknowledged in an interview that "my Kate isn't quite as angry and feisty and sort of wantonly violent as perhaps other Kates have been" and acknowledging that at times she felt under pressure to provide a more traditionally shrewish rendering of the character ("Adopt an Actor"). However, by portraying Katherina in this way the production demonstrated the power of the rumours and insults generated by men to define Katherina's personality. One blogger noted with frustration that "Unfortunately the director has chosen to portray Kate as a mildly unpleasant character and, as such, her subsequent treatment seems both cruel and unnecessary" (Tapper), but perhaps this is the point. As I demonstrated in the previous chapter, Katherina's bad behaviour has all too frequently been used to justify Petruchio's coercive taming process. When this is taken away "As an audience, we wonder what is so bad about her behaviour and general demeanour" (Tapper). Thus, the production was able to create a critical distance between Katherina's behaviour and the male characters' interpretation of that behaviour, inviting the audience to question the taming process to which Katherina is subjected.

Comedy and Tragedy in the Taming Process

With two vulnerable characters at its heart, it is probably unsurprising that Murphy's production trod a careful line between comedy and tragedy. Initially the relationship between Katherina and Petruchio looked as if it might offer these two outsiders hope: the wooing scene was presented primarily as a battle of wits, with very little of the physical clowning that is so popular in stagings of this scene. Circling each other as they sparred verbally, when Petruchio was unable to keep up with Katherina's wit, "should be, should [pause] buzz?" (2.1.202), he resorted to bawdy banter, swaggering over to Katherina to deliver the line "What, with my tongue in your tail? Ha!" (line 112). When Katherina hit him, Whitaker's Petruchio was momentarily silent, before half-heartedly threatening "I swear I'll cuff

you if you strike again" (222). This pause provided an opportunity for Lamb's Katherina to restart the wordplay that she so clearly relished, but the tone of the exchange had altered and Petruchio soon shut down the conversation in favour of physically controlling Katherina, grabbing her arm and forcing her to listen to him. Played in this manner, Petruchio's resort to physical control appeared to stem from his frustration at being unable to keep up with Katherina's wordplay, coupled with an anxiety about how his masculine identity was being perceived. Katherina appeared to be disconcerted by this moment of physical control, but it was Petruchio's suggestion that she was "slow in speech" that produced the biggest reaction from her, as she looked at him with a mixture of offended outrage and mild amusement, hinting that this was an acknowledgement from Petruchio that she had won the battle of wits. Played in this manner, Lamb's intelligent Katherina had met a man who acknowledged her intellectual superiority and this hinted at a hopeful outcome for the pair.

When Petruchio demanded "kiss me Kate" (313) at the end of the scene in front of the assembled crowd, Katherina approached him and to his surprise gave him a lingering kiss on the lips. This apparent act of obedience was playfully rebellious, as a public affront to the men who had labelled her unmarriageable. Lamb's Katherina acknowledged the delighted whoops of the audience and the stunned response of the men on stage with a wry smile and exited the stage before anyone could comment. The act was in keeping with the reinterpretation of Katherina's behaviour, subverting the expectation that this "wildcat" was in need of taming.

Katherina's clear interest in Petruchio rendered his failure to arrive on time for their wedding particularly humiliating for Katherina. The stage was set for the nuptials, with Hortensio playing the cello and the company singing "lully-lullay", as Katherina was led downstage by her father. The traditionalism of Katherina's white dress and the sentimentality of the close harmony singing was disrupted when it reached an end and there was still no sight of Petruchio. The company began the rendition again and

was forced to repeat it a third time in Petruchio's absence. When Whitaker's Petruchio appeared he was not fashioned in the extreme garb often worn in this scene, but in a 70s-looking pale blue suit, with a blue ruffled cravat and white bowtie and trailing balloons and beer cans like the traditional honeymoon car, eccentric but not show-stealing.

Katherina spoke through gritted teeth when she said "Now if you love me, STAY"(3.2.194), emphasising the final word to such an extent that it was reminiscent of a command to a dog. Petruchio responded by invoking his God-ordained and socially sanctioned authority over his wife. Standing at a distance from Katherina, whom he had whisked upstage, Petruchio repeatedly pointed at his wife, in a somewhat desperate-looking attempt to reassert his dominance after Katherina's challenge to his authority. *Female Arts* blogger Marilyn Moore observed that:

The testosterone driven tirade in Act III, Scene 2, during which Petruchio struts around, spitting out a list of beasts and household objects to which he compares his wife as he stamps his ownership on Katherina is never easy listening, but when played by a woman, it doubly highlights the ridiculousness of his attitude.

It was not simply the fact that Petruchio was played by a woman, but that the physicality of that woman did not conform to the hyper-masculinity that is associated with masculine dominance. By separating male dominance from its association with the "natural" order of male physical superiority, Murphy's casting helped to denaturalise male supremacy.

The all-female casting contributed to a critique of misogyny in a number of ways. As one reviewer noted, with an all-female cast "The double-entendres feel that bit more sleazy without any effort to make them so and Tranio's laddish winking at and flirting with the audience, makes the male characters' cockiness that much sillier" (Moore).¹²⁴ Moore's assertion seems to support Drorbaugh's suggestion that women playing

¹²⁴ It is worth noting that perhaps Moore's insights into the gender politics of highlighting performative masculinity reflect the fact that she was writing for *Female Arts*, a blog which has a particular focus on women's issues.

men highlights the performativity of masculinity, and more specifically in this case, might critique the destructive laddish masculinity which turns women into objects. Petruchio's anxiety about his masculinity manifested itself in abusive behaviour, as his performance became more desperate and restrictive, until by the final scene his behaviour was a disturbing, unfunny parody of the idea of male supremacy.

An aggressive reassertion of male dominance also took place in Hall's production. Katherina emphasised her unwillingness to leave Padua by hitting Petruchio with her wedding bouquet, a moment that was gleefully snapped by a wedding photographer. This female assault on Petruchio's masculine pride prompted his speech on male superiority in which the verbal claim of masculine authority was accompanied by physical dominance, as he dragged Katherina around the stage by her hair.¹²⁵ The assault on Wheeler's Katherina continued after the interval, as the chaos of Petruchio's household management was underscored by violence, as he enthusiastically wielded a riding crop throughout the scene. While he never actually hit Katherina, his aggressive coercive behaviour hinted that he could. In this way, his behaviour was abusive towards Katherina because his "repeated use of violence against subordinates [...] contributes to a state in which she fears for her life" (Detmer 287).

Unlike a lot of productions of *Shrew* which depict Petruchio's Veronese home as a shabby and crumbling farmhouse, in Hall's staging it was represented by a long banqueting table, with crisp white table cloth, and gothic-looking silverwear. The house was staffed by a host of servants in smart black tuxedos, who lined up to feed Petruchio and Katherina from

¹²⁵ Beginning the interval on this harrowing note, Hall quickly undermined the tragic impetus of his staging choice by sending the company (including Leigh) out into the foyer to sing up-beat songs, collecting money for what *The Stage* termed a "wittily chosen charity partner, Target Ovarian Cancer" (Coveney "*The Taming*"). Given Hall's self confessed agenda of forcing men to confront their attitudes towards women, this juxtaposition of domestic abuse with feel-good fundraising was jarring and undermined the serious issue that Hall claimed he wanted to raise.

big, silver serving platter. By foregrounding Petruchio's wealth in this way, Hall lent Petruchio's behaviour a degree of social acceptability; as Carol Chillington Rutter pointed out "Petruchio here was no psychopath. He was a pillar of the (culturally enabled misogynist) community" ("Shakespeare Performances 2013" 408). Furthermore, by ensuring that Katherina, in her torn and muddy wedding dress, was out of place in the sumptuous surroundings, Leigh's Petruchio not only isolated her, but rendered her other, within the opulent world. Rendered other by both her gender and appearance, Katherina was increasingly objectified by the men of Padua: in the tailor scene she was passed from man to man, forced to wear the new dress and then torn out of it, as she became an objectified "substitute tailor's dummy" (Rutter, "Shakespeare Performance 2013" 409). As Petruchio's behaviour became ever more threatening and unpredictable, Katherina's movements became increasingly nervous and timid, though she attempted to maintain an independence, remaining silent when Petruchio waited for thanks for preparing her food. With her abuse socially sanctioned and her isolation compounded by both her gender and appearance, Wheeler's Katherina was left isolated and afraid, but still defiant.

In contrast, Lamb's Katherina had a choice. In the sun and the moon scene Katherina appeared to be aware of Petruchio's game playing. Clearly wearied by Petruchio's attempts at dominance, Lamb's Katherina paused before greeting Vincentio, looking sceptically at Petruchio before deciding to play along. At the end of the scene, as the male characters departed, Katherina was left alone. Looking after the departed Hortensio she began to exit in the opposite direction, until, reaching the steps into the yard, she paused, looked up at the sun, then at her wedding ring and turned to follow the others off stage. For a number of commentators, this moment was troubling, it seemed unlikely that Katherina would stay when she had the opportunity to leave (Schafer "Comedy, Tragedy or Farce"). Yet, by looking at Emily Detmer's description of the Stockholm Syndrome it is possible to

contextualise Katherina's decision to stay within a pattern of abusive relationships. Detmer describes the syndrome as constituting four aspects:

1) a person threatens another's survival and is perceived by the other as able and willing to carry out his/her threat; 2) the threatening person shows the other kindness; 3) the victim is unable to escape from the threatening person; and 4) the victim is isolated from outsiders. (284)

In Hall's production it was the threatening element that dominated, but in Murphy's it was kindness. The moments of connection between Lamb's Katherina and Whitaker's Petruchio suggested that there might be hope for the couple and, trapped within the institution of marriage and isolated from friends and family, Katherina opted to stay with Petruchio despite his controlling and threatening behaviour. Lamb's Katherina was an active witness of her own disempowerment and her quiet, critical spectatorship contributed to Katherina's subjectivity; Lamb imbued Katherina's silences with meaning and reflection.

Katherina's Final Speech

Michael Shapiro observes that the original single-sex casting of the early modern stage underpins one of the great ironies of Katherina's final speech, noting that "the declaration of women's weaker physical traits is made by a female impersonator" ("Framing the Taming" 164). In Propeller's staging it appeared that Hall would underscore the irony by foregrounding gender performativity at this moment, as Wheeler's Katherina crossed the stage to address the Widow on the line "why are our bodies soft and weak and smooth?" (5.2.171). The Widow, played by Christopher Heyward, was over six foot tall, costumed in a sleeveless dress that displayed Heyward's toned biceps, and wearing kitten heels and a hat that further accentuated Heyward's height. Thus, the Widow's physicality did not signify the physical inferiority identified in Katherina's speech. Delivering this specific line to a female character whose body was not "soft and weak and smooth" could have playfully subverted the gender essentialism of the speech, highlighting the gap between the feminine ideal of the text and its embodied reality. Yet, the casting of the role ensured

that not only was the threat of gender subversion contained but it was replaced with an essentialised notion of the gender binary.

In part, this was the result of casting an actor whose embodied characteristics appeared stereotypically masculine in the role of a female character who, in the logic of the text, gives a failed performance of her femininity. Whilst Hall has asserted that he is not influenced by an actor's physicality in the casting process (qtd. in Rees), in the staging he used Heyward's embodied characteristics to comic effect, having him tower over Jack Tarleton's Hortensio and dominate him physically. In this way, the Widow's attempts at control were rendered both risible and unnatural: a woman who successfully dominates her husband is inherently unfeminine, a social aberration, and a physical joke.¹²⁶ If the production had committed to problematising male supremacy, the Widow's successful challenge of her husband's attempt to dominate her might have been presented as a positive form of resistance, but it is evidence of the production's investment in the gender binary and androcentrism that the Widow was depicted as comic and "unnatural". The casting of a petite and youthful Katherina and the characterisation of Wilson's elegant Bianca further compounded the Widow's failed performance of gender, as Heyward's tall, broad Widow was an anomaly alongside the other female characters. Indeed, Petruchio used verbal inverted commas to refer to Hortensio's "wife", foregrounding his own wife's femininity in the face of Hortensio's monstrous partner. Delivered to a character who was presented as an outsider, the line "why are our bodies soft and weak and smooth" took on a different resonance, either suggesting that Katherina is so indoctrinated that she does not see that the Widow's body is none of those things, or that she is using her new-found femininity to police the femininity of others, humiliating the Widow with the public implication that she is unfeminine.

¹²⁶ It is possible to view Heyward's Widow as a contemporary version of the cross-dressed man in the skimmington ritual, designed to shame a woman for unfeminine behaviour.

While these resonances were possible because of the embodied characteristics of the individual actor, I would argue that they were subsumed by the actor's gender identity and logic of Propeller's single-sex casting policy. Reviews often favourably remark on the company's "characteristic male brawn, muscle and sweat" (Bowie-Sell), and the complexity of signifiers in performance – dresses and lipstick alongside chest-hair and muscle – help to foreground the inherent masculinity of the company, suggesting that its raw machismo cannot be contained by traditionally female signifiers. The company markets itself as an all-male Shakespeare company and its artistic output asserts this just as vociferously. By not attempting to pass male actors off as female characters, Propeller proudly asserts its masculine credentials and in doing so precludes any sustained engagement with the fluidity of gender. So whilst Heyward's embodied characteristics could have subverted the moment of gender essentialism, his gender and its centrality to the company's artistic and marketplace identity made such a challenge impossible: of course Heyward's *Widow* was butch, she was played by a man and men have "brawn, muscle and sweat".

Propeller's physical style has become synonymous with its all-male casting and in particular, Hall's tragic and brutal rendering of the Katherina-Petruchio relationship was seen as having a direct relationship with the gender of the cast. This view can be traced back to Hall's item in the programme for the original Propeller *Shrew* in 2006 in which he asserts that the all-male casting means "the actors can be physically more robust with each other than they might be otherwise" (9). A similar sentiment is articulated in reviews, "the abject crushing of Katherine [...] might be distractingly brutal with a female in the role' (J.Shilling); in interviews with the company, "you wouldn't be able to treat a female actor in that way" (Leigh 33); and in academic criticism, "The male performers could throw each other around a lot more than would be usual had women played the female parts" (Karim-Cooper, "Re-Creating Katherina" 305). Yet, despite its pervasiveness, this idea is extremely problematic.

If, as I argued in the previous chapter, the view of female physical inferiority is a cornerstone of patriarchy then any assertions that normalise female weakness are ideologically marked. Hall and Karim-Cooper do not offer a reason for why the all-male company enables a more robust physicality, but Leigh suggests it is because of rehearsal room etiquette, asserting: "I would always naturally have a restraint on me, which you don't have with another male. You'd always be slightly nervous of offending or hurting the other actor – which you don't have with an all-male cast" (33). While interpersonal relationships within the company are important in generating on-stage meaning, it would be reckless of a director to allow an actor, of any gender, to behave in a way that was unsafe and fight scenes are carefully choreographed to make sure that they are safe. Furthermore, the performance history of *Shrew* is replete with productions in which Petruchio's coercive behaviour manifests itself in a violent way, suggesting that not all actors share Leigh's paternalism. Jane Shilling, in contrast, suggests that the staging might be "distractingly brutal" with a female Katherina. Shilling's statement suggests that the issue lies with audience perception and that onstage violence might contribute to an alienation effect, "distracting" the audience from investing fully in the drama. Again, this response to female representation is ideologically loaded. It might suggest that female performers are seen as inherently weaker than their male colleagues, or it might equally hint at a desire to look the other way when patriarchal violence is presented with verisimilitude. If it is the former, this might suggest something about the types of female bodies that are regularly seen on stage and the way in which they are presented: perhaps it is less that actresses are physically weak and more that audiences associate femininity with frailty in its onstage representation. If it is the latter, then perhaps indulging the desire to look the other way risks perpetuating the problem.

Certainly, the final scene was played with unrelenting cruelty. Wheeler's delivery of Katherina's famous final speech on wifely duty was

spoken with resignation by a broken woman. The signification of the final scene, with Katherina still in her muddied wedding dress and on the verge of collapse, presented her as physically frail and vulnerable, a state brought about by Petruchio but perhaps facilitated by the frailty of her gender. The speech was depicted as a triumph of Petruchio's power as he forced his wife to speak against her will: Katherina looked ready to finish her speech at the line "in no sense is meet or amiable", but prompted by a cough and warning look from Petruchio was forced to continue "A woman moved is like a fountain troubled..." (5.2.141-2). By the end of the speech Katherina was on her knees, head bowed and hand stretched out to receive Petruchio's foot. He eyed it, enjoying his power, and circled the stage before returning to his kneeling wife and pointedly crushing her outstretched fingers with his heel. At this point of Petruchio's final triumph the world of Padua dissolved and the "actors" of the frame returned. When Sly boasted that he would return to his wife and put his shrew-taming skills into practice, Dan Wheeler, now playing Bartholomew rather than Katherina, responded "Are you drunken still? This was but a play" (Hall & Warren, *The Taming of the Shrew* 94).

It is symptomatic of Hall's androcentric approach that this rendering of the central relationship unrelentingly focussed on male actions and behaviour, offering no possibility for female resistance or gender subversion. Katherina's resistance to Petruchio's cruelty was futile and the fact that the final line was given to the male actor playing her suggested that only men are in a position to critique male violence. There may, however, be feminist potential in opting for all-male casting in this play: Sue-Ellen Case has explored the idea that "any representation of 'woman' is tainted by the encoding of that sign within a patriarchal culture" (*Feminism* 121). The tendency to romanticise and eroticise the taming of Katherina in mixed-sex companies is evident in the case studies in my previous chapter, and it is possible that Hall's tragic agenda for *Shrew* was facilitated by its casting: the all-male company foregrounded the hierarchical nature of the heterosexual union. However, the logic underpinning Hall's exclusion of

women from his company is profoundly sexist: Hall has asserted that “What’s interesting about men playing women is that the audience stops being interested in the sexual chemistry between the actors and starts listening afresh to the words” (qtd. in Sierz).¹²⁷ Placing this view alongside Hall’s earlier assertion that female performers would inhibit the physical dynamism of the production, the motivation for opting for an all-male company seems decidedly antifeminist, implying that actresses bring *to-be-looked-at-ness* to performance, whereas men bring drama.

Conclusion

It is clear that single-sex productions of *Shrew* offer new perspectives on this problematic play and it is interesting that both companies opted for a tragic interpretation of the central relationship, despite a performance tradition which favours comedy. Perhaps the single-sex casting creates a greater critical distance than casting practices that aim at verisimilitude, and therefore creates a space to explore the damaging effect of a binary and hierarchical definition of gender. Yet, a tragic rendering of the play is by no means an inevitable result of single sex casting. As was hinted at in Hayward’s butch Widow and the hyperbolic laddish behaviour of Remy Beasley’s Tranio, cross-gender casting can provide great potential for playfully subverting gender, highlighting its performativity and offering a new space in which the binaries of the final speech can be dismantled and a new definition of gender conceived. There have been a handful of recent productions of *Shrew* that have been entirely cross-cast, with men playing female characters and women playing male characters, and it is possible that such explorations might help to break down the gender binary in more complex ways than in single-sex productions. The danger with such stagings, however, is that they might inadvertently essentialise gender, as the performed gender is seen as distinct from the “real” gender of the actor. Just as the subversive potential of all-male companies is curtailed by their

¹²⁷ The audience response to onstage same-sex kisses, acknowledged by Hall in his interview in the *Independent*, seems to refute the idea that the notion of sexual chemistry becomes unimportant in single-sex productions.

links with culturally privileged practice, the definition of a casting practice on gender lines potentially locates any exploration of gender within the “real” world of the actor’s “natural” gender, thereby diminishing any potential deconstruction of the category of gender. As Elizabeth Drorbaugh asserts, crossing is “contextualized by the binary: one must recognize the binary and risk accepting it in order to comprehend what it means to cross. Boundaries therefore are kept in place” (126). This is something that I wish to explore in the next chapter, considering how it might be possible to define a queer casting practice, based not only on the gender of the performers, but other aspects of identity politics such as the physicality, race, and age of the performers.

Chapter Seven – Towards a queer casting methodology

“Theater itself may be understood as the drama’s unruly body, its material other, a site where the performer’s and the spectator’s desire may resignify elements of a constrictive social script. Theater may also be understood as a symptomatic cultural site that ruthlessly maps out normative spectatorial positions by occluding its own means of production. And yet – any set of seemingly rigid positions is available for revision.” (Diamond, *Unmaking Mimesis* iii)

Introduction

Contemporary casting practices are founded on the notion of a stable, biological gender, known as natural difference (see Connell 30). As I demonstrated in Chapter Two, the process of casting is inherently gendered, with recruitment determined along gender lines despite performance officially being “an unsegregated occupation” (Dean, “Age” 7). Furthermore, as my three case studies of mimetic casting indicate, contemporary Shakespearean performance perpetuates the myth of natural difference by recruiting performers based on embodied characteristics that come to define gendered identity. In this way assumptions about gender and notions of desire contribute to casting practices which naturalise the gender binary, objectify female protagonists, and all too often depict women as weak, incidental characters in performance. Even single-sex companies engage in this conservative approach to gender, with their recruitment practice predicated on the gender binary and their onstage representation often relying on gender stereotypes that do little to deconstruct the category of gender itself. In this way contemporary sexism, in which only young and “desirable” women are considered worthy of representation, combines with the strict delineation of gender roles in early modern drama, a hierarchical view in which femininity is subordinate to masculinity, to erase meaningful female experience from the classical stage. This approach to gendered representation does not only do a disservice to female performers, theatre-makers, and audiences, but also to the dramatic texts themselves, whose potential to engage with contemporary issues cannot be fully realised in these material conditions.

This chapter will outline a casting practice that subverts hegemonic notions of gender and desire, laying the foundations for a queer approach to the depiction of gender in Shakespeare. Focusing specifically on the way in which femininity is constructed through the casting of romantic leads, it will begin by exploring the ways in which female-to-male castings might help to splinter the monolithic category of “femininity” into a broader notion of femininities. Going on to consider the relationship between cross-gender casting and realism, I argue that any casting model that seeks to subvert hegemonic notions of gender needs to engage with the ideology inscribed in realist conventions. Renaissance drama represents a particular challenge in this respect because, as a predominantly non-scopic medium (Solomon, *Redressing* 40), its frequent iteration of female characters’ beauty often leads to casting choices that reflect contemporary constructions of desirable femininity. Providing examples from recent stagings of *The Taming of the Shrew* I demonstrate how the embodied characteristics of actors have been used to offer new readings of the character of Katherina. Then, drawing on Brecht’s notion of *Verfremdungseffekt*, I argue for casting’s power to alienate, or make strange, the conventions of gender and desire, taking fat as an example of how embodied characteristics might be used to challenge a biologically essentialist understanding of gender.

Crossing for Parity

The performativity of femininity is often used as a misogynistic trope in early modern literature, as the duplicitous nature of cosmetics and vanity of fine clothing associated with female identity is critiqued in opposition to the presumed “naturalness” of masculinity.¹²⁸ As a result, men playing women in Shakespeare can amplify the misogyny inherent in both the text, and society more generally, which suggests that “masculinity “just is” whereas femininity reeks of the artificial” (Halberstam 234). To

¹²⁸ While it is somewhat anachronistic to apply notions of gender performativity to an early modern view of femininity, I would argue the idea of the performed qualities of femininity contrast with the naturalness of masculinity in a misogynist way.

some extent, using female-to-male cross-gender casting in Shakespeare has helped to foreground the performativity of masculinity but, as I demonstrated in the previous chapter, its subversive potential is offset by a casting practice predicated on gender. Thus, when moments of disruption or queering take place, they occur in a form that is defined by a binary understanding of gender and the disruption is contained within a culturally sanctioned practice, founded on a biological definition of sex-difference. Jill Dolan has foregrounded some of the issues with a feminist practice which simply reassigns gender roles. Writing about the allocation of gender roles within feminist pornography she states that:

The representation of bodies is always ideologically marked; it always connotes gender, which carries with it the meanings inscribed by the dominant culture. Simply switching gender roles, and gender values, continues to bind representation to the system of sexual difference that gives it shape. (*The Feminist Spectator* 64)

As I demonstrated in the previous chapter, the critical response to single-sex productions tends to focus on how the biological gender of the company contributed to the staging, often making uncritical assertions about male and female physicality.

These culturally determined notions of gender and desire are so powerful that even queer analyses of single-sex productions can fall into the trap of both investing in and perpetuating gender norms. James C. Bulman's analysis of Paul Chahidi's performance in Tim Carroll's 2002 *Twelfth Night* is a case in point. Bulman asserts: "Chahidi, drew much of the humor of his performance from drag. A stocky man whose Maria was middle-aged and matronly" ("Unsex me here" 238). Certainly, Chahidi's performance parodied femininity and exploited the gap between the gender of the actor and the character. Yet, analysing this performance of gender, Bulman articulated a conception of desire that is not only hegemonic but also polices the embodiment of femininity. Writing of the events of Act 1, Scene 5, Bulman notes Viola's confusion when mistaking Chahidi's Maria for Olivia, asking rhetorically "How could such a heavy, squat figure be the object of Orsino's sexual desire?" ("Unsex me here"

239). The logic of this assertion is tied to the idea that women must conform to specific beauty standards in order for men to desire them, suggesting that fat women give a failed performance of their gender and are therefore undesirable. That a scholar of queer theory such as Bulman could so readily articulate the logic of heterodesire without any critique demonstrates how even a non-mimetic casting practice such as cross-gender casting can police femininity. Furthermore, it hints at the ideology governing the casting of Shakespeare's romantic heroines, suggesting that a male actor in a dress might make a suitable love-object, but a fat performer would not.

Despite these potential limitations, cross-gender casting has an important role to play in interrogating gender in contemporary stagings of Shakespeare. Elizabeth Klett has argued that selective cross-gender casting contributes to a more radical destabilisation of gender than that of single-sex companies; seeing the cross-gendered body alongside the "naturally" gendered bodies of other members of the company causes slippages in the reading of gender identity ("Re-dressing the Balance" 168). Even the less ontologically challenging casting practice of regendering roles can contribute to a feminist agenda, as casting women in roles written as male can afford agency to women represented on stage that is often lacking in the virgin-mother-whore trichotomy so prevalent in early modern drama. As Alisa Solomon has argued "Male characters rarely exist on traditional stages for their gender alone – they are statesmen, soldiers, salesmen, not merely men." ("It's Never too Late" 145), thus selectively regendering male roles ensures that female performers appear in roles that are not simply defined by their gender.

A good example of this practice is Nicholas Hytner's regendering of a number of characters in his 2012 World Shakespeare production of *Timon of Athens* at the National Theatre. *Timon* occupies a unique place in the Shakespeare canon, with just 0.67% of its lines spoken by female characters (Freestone). Hytner adopted cross-gender casting for a number

of roles, casting five women in the production, most notably regendering the role of Flavius, who became Flavia, played by Deborah Findlay. By regendering the role, not only was a part made available for an award-winning female sexagenarian, it also gave a female character status and agency within the drama.

Regendering is not the only approach to casting female performers in male roles: cross-gender casting might foreground some of the existing gender-play in Shakespeare's work. Muriel Bradbrook observes that in Jacobean disguised-heroine plays, the final act revelation of the female page was so common that in the drama of the period "any theatrical page might be assumed to be a woman in disguise" ("Shakespeare and the Use of Disguise" 167). Thus, a female Tranio or Biondello in a production that is otherwise cast along traditional gender lines, might hint at the convention of the disguised-heroine, playing with expectations whilst simultaneously providing more employment opportunities for female performers. Penny Gay suggests that "In almost all dramatic situations, class and/or profession is a more important marker of function than gender is" and advocates the use of selective cross-gender casting to lead audiences "into fresh fields rather than pandering to their expectations of traditional classical theatre" ("Changing Shakespeare" 319; 324).

Major venues are already experimenting with selective cross-gender casting and, in a performance context dominated by realism, regendering is a particularly popular approach at major institutions such as the RSC and National Theatre. As well as Flavia in *Timon*, some other major examples of the approach in performance include Pippa Nixon's performance as the Bastard in Maria Aberg's RSC production of *King John* (2012) and Kirsty Bushell's Kent in Joe Hill-Gibbins's staging of Marlowe's *Edward II* (2013), all three of these regendered performances were in realist stagings of early modern drama. More recently, in 2014, Maria Aberg regendered the role of Flamineo in her production of *The White Devil* at the RSC to "analyse how a female character might have taken on that oppressive system and

internalised it”, suggesting that “it’s a really dangerous trap that faces women today of trying to play the man’s game and thinking that is going to change things” (qtd. in Love). Aberg’s approach demonstrates the role that casting can play in offering new perspectives both on the events of a play and also on contemporary gender politics.

Significantly, all these instances of casting operate within a realist frame and this is arguably why regendering roles is a particularly popular approach to redressing the gender balance in performances of Shakespeare: when a role is regendered the gender of the signifier and signified still agree, meaning that it is an approach that can operate within a realist context. So dominant is the convention of realism in contemporary stagings of Shakespeare that on occasion even single-sex casting practices, such as Phyllida Lloyd’s all-female *Julius Caesar* (2012), and *Henry IV* (2014), are framed within a realist context.¹²⁹ These contemporary approaches to gender and casting help to address the under-representation of women on the classical stage. Furthermore, allocating roles with agency and power to female performers might also help to address the misrepresentation of women in this performance context. However, while the positive qualities of regendering should be celebrated, realism is a convention that is ideologically problematic and a holistic approach to the depiction of gender is required if its conventions are to be queered.

Realist Shakespeare

Feminist scholar Elin Diamond critiques realism, suggesting that “by copying the surface details of the world [realism] offers the illusion of lived experience, even as it marks off only one version of that experience” (*Unmaking Mimesis* 50). In a society dominated by white, economically privileged, able-bodied, cis-gender men, the dominant narrative

¹²⁹ In Lloyd’s Donmar staging the action of the play was framed as a staging in a women’s prison, with guards patrolling the rig and the auditorium reconfigured so that the majority of spectators were sitting on plastic chairs.

represented in realism is skewed in favour of this perspective; as Jill Dolan argues, realism “reifies the dominant culture’s inscription of traditional power relations between genders and classes” (*The Feminist Spectator* 84). Therefore, as feminist scholars have argued, realism tends to present male experience as universal, marginalising female characters and reducing them to what they can tell us about the hero in performance (J.Dolan; Mulvey; Case).

Despite these limitations, realism is frequently heralded as the most accessible and theatrically powerful form of drama: a mimetic form of communication in which signifiers accurately reflect that which they signify. Yet, as Parker and Pollock observe:

Art is not a mirror. It mediates and re-presents social relations in a schema of signs which require a receptive and preconditioned reader in order to be meaningful. And it is at the level of what those signs connote, often unconsciously, that patriarchal ideology is reproduced. (119)

A key aim of a queer agenda with Shakespeare must be to resist the hegemony of realism, which constructs a universal viewing position as both heterosexual and male. Only by rendering this position visible or subverting it, or both, can the queer potential of Shakespeare be realised.

Yet realism remains a popular approach in performance, not least because of its presumed accessibility and associations with populist films. Interviewed for *The Daily Telegraph* and responding to Phyllida Lloyd’s assertion that the RSC should be required to employ 50-50 male and female performers, Michael Dobson recognised the role that realism plays in an audience’s perception of the theatrical event, suggesting that “casting more women to play men could make it incoherent to a mainstream audience [...] People going to see a Shakespeare play expect realism and expect men [in male roles.] This should be about realism” (qtd. in Peacock). Dobson was speaking specifically about mandatory quotas and his response perhaps reflects the idea that these might be imposed upon a

director rather than stemming from the director's creative vision for a specific play. Yet even so, it seems to do a disservice to the ingenuity of theatre practitioners to suggest that they would be unable to render such a challenge theatrically coherent. The ensemble nature of casting at the RSC means that individual directors do not have complete control over who is cast in their production as it is, meaning that the ability to adapt to casting that you might not have chosen is already a skill required of directors working at the institution. Furthermore, Dobson's assertion about potential audience confusion does not give audiences the credit they deserve. Given Shakespeare's prevalence in school curricula it is more than likely that even audiences new to the RSC will have seen cross-cast and colourblind Shakespeare in school or amateur performance contexts, which are known for a pragmatic approach to casting (Schechner 5). Indeed, as my analysis of casts at the RSC and Globe indicates, it is the touring and young people's productions at these venues that tend to adopt the most non-traditional casting practices, indicating that while realism may dominate mainstream theatre practice it is by no means the only performance style comprehensible to a mainstream audience.

In his interview in *The Telegraph* Dobson acknowledges the important work done by single-sex Shakespearean companies, but argues that the RSC is not the place for such experimentation (qtd. in Peacock). Yet surely audience expectations are shaped by the material context of their theatre-going experience and their horizon of expectations can be moulded by the artistic policy of major institutions to create the "receptive and preconditioned reader" identified by Parker and Pollock above. Daniel Banks's "*The Welcome Table: Casting for an Integrated Society*" argues that "an audience's expectations can shift over a short period of time" (9) and, just as colourblind casting practices have allowed a greater number of BAME actors to perform in Shakespeare, so cross-gender casting might afford similar opportunities to female performers. Colourblind casting provides a useful model in this respect: viewers who once found the RSC's casting of a black actor in the role of King Henry IV "a distracting irritation

throughout” (qtd. in Berry, “Shakespeare and integrated casting” 35) seem an anachronism some fifteen years later. Indeed, while colourblind casting has its critics, the practice is so commonplace that it is rarely remarked upon in reviews, as critics and theatregoers have adapted to become more sophisticated readers of theatrical signification. Colourblind casting has now extended its reach far outside the Shakespearean canon, with most productions of classical theatre, musicals, and even realist contemporary dramas adopting the approach.¹³⁰

One limitation of colourblind casting might also be applied to cross-gender casting and that is that being “blind” to race or gender risks maintaining a theatre practice in which the methods of representation are obfuscated. In “Race Free, Gender Free, Body-Type Free, Age Free Casting” Richard Schechner advocates a three-pronged approach to reading representation in performance: “times when perceiving the race, gender, etc., of performers matters; times when spectators perceive the categories but it doesn’t matter; and times when it should not even be perceived [...] because spectators have been trained to be race, gender, age, and body-type ‘blind’” (9). Schechner’s analysis makes the case for “the development of performing arts whose codes of representation are overt and therefore susceptible to critical analysis through practice, training, performance, and scholarship” (6). Using identity politics to subvert type-casting renders not only the codes of theatrical representation visible, but also foregrounds the social construction of gender and desire; this approach has a unique potential for staging plays written for the non-illusory stage.

Stage Beauty Then and Now

Farah Karim-Cooper has noted that “the beauty of women was a common preoccupation of early modern playwrights” (“Performing Beauty” 97) and this manifests itself in numerous allusions to female

¹³⁰ Colourblind casting remains relatively rare in stagings of realist contemporary writing, but things are beginning to change. For example, director David Mercatali adopted a colourblind approach to casting for his staging of Alice Birch’s *Little Light* at the Orange Tree Theatre in 2015.

appearance and desirability in the plays of the period. As I demonstrated in my analysis of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, in their original performance context, references to beauty would have served a complex agenda: on the one hand they would have shaped the spectator's interpretation of the semiotic of the cross-dressed performer, informing the viewer that within the world of the play the character is considered beautiful. On the other hand, the textual foregrounding of the boy player's beauty would have contributed to a performance context in which the cross-dressed body was rendered a suitable object of desire, objectified and feminised.

Martin Esslin argues that references to beauty in early modern texts can have a performative function in contemporary performance, when he observes that:

the spectator, for example, may well notice that the actress – and the stage figure – that represents Juliet is not outstandingly beautiful or attractive; yet in his imagination he will, having understood that she is *supposed* to be outstandingly beautiful, complete the picture, and “read” the action as though he was seeing an outstandingly beautiful girl. (*The Field of Drama* 58)

It seems appropriate that in Esslin's analysis the audience is gendered male, given the long history of collapsing the multiplicity of spectators' perspectives into a unified viewing subject, generally constructed as white, heterosexual, and male (see Mulvey). In this scenario, the object of the gaze is described in terms that imply that beauty is a definitive and stable category. Perhaps most significantly, Esslin's analysis implies that it is not enough for the spectator to believe that Romeo finds Juliet beautiful; the spectator, Esslin suggests, must work to read the stage picture “as though he [the spectator] was seeing an outstandingly beautiful girl”. In asserting that Juliet is *supposed* to be beautiful in an objective, definitive way, even if the actor playing her is not, Esslin foregrounds how contemporary theatre practice's emphasis on identification with the hero contributes to the objectification of female characters.

The casting practice that results from this overemphasis on identification with the hero is profoundly sexist and, while it might be possible that some of the embodied attributes of the actor playing Juliet may require the kind of signposting identified by Esslin, it is extremely unlikely that she would not, at least in a general sense, conform to at least some of the conventions of desirable femininity.¹³¹ Realism's contribution to casting practice has created a performance style in which the female character and performer are conflated, meaning that both signifier and signified are required to reflect contemporary definitions of beauty. As Sue-Ellen Case has noted:

Juliet, in *Romeo and Juliet*, usually conforms to certain standards of beauty found in the present-day culture. These standards control her costuming and make-up in foregrounding her beauty for the audience. Since Shakespeare wrote the play with a boy actor in mind, the common casting of Juliet does not proceed from the text; rather, it is determined by the cultural encoding inscribed in the image of the female love object. (*Feminism and Theatre* 117)

Thus realism's emphasis on verisimilitude requires the beauty of the character in the text to correspond to a semiotic of beauty on the stage. There are many theatrical signifying shorthands for beauty and, as my case studies demonstrated, the costuming and blocking of the performance contribute to the construction of female *to-be-looked-at-ness*. However, as Jane Gaines has asserted, "costume assimilates bodily signifiers into character, but body as a whole engulfs the dress" (193) and for this reason the body of the actor playing a female romantic heroine tends to conform to the petite, docile body of desirable femininity.

Where an actor's body does not conform to the gendered expectations of their character this can create unanticipated meaning in performance. As Jill Dolan notes: "Spectators' expectations of a character's appearance must correlate with the performer's appearance, or other inferences are drawn based on culturally dictated readings of the body they see in space"

¹³¹ As earlier chapters have shown, these might include a youthful, petite body, fashioned to emphasise its *to-be-looked-at-ness*.

(31). As a result, it is generally only women who conform to the beauty standards perpetuated in western mainstream media who play Shakespeare's female love interests and these beauty standards are inherently racist, ageist, ableist, and "lookist".¹³² Yet there is a creative potential in casting against expectations, to foreground "culturally dictated readings of the body".

The creative potential of casting against expectations is already being explored. In May 2016 BBC4 broadcast *Redefining Juliet* a documentary that aimed to explore the potential for non-traditional casting of the role. The performers represented a variety of marginalised identities including disabled actors, actors of colour, and plus size actors. Featuring interviews with the performers, alongside extracts from their performance, the documentary highlighted the ideology inscribed in the casting of romantic heroines and sought to open up the role of Juliet to a greater range of performers. The project was limited by its format, in which the non-traditional actresses were paired with the same, conventionally attractive Romeo, and, while it might have attempted to broaden the definition of beauty, it did little to subvert or destabilise the category more comprehensively. Nonetheless, the project demonstrated the creative potential in exploring non-traditional approaches to casting the female love interest. Beauty and desirability are always constructs and reflect the gendered and racialised ideology of any given period. I would argue therefore, that using non-traditional casting to foreground the subjectivity of desire has an exciting potential: a disjuncture in the relationship between expectation and appearance may offer a playful space in which the heterosexual matrix can be dismantled.¹³³

Conceptual Casting and Identity Politics

¹³² "Lookism," defined as discrimination based on appearance, is currently not the subject of legislation.

¹³³ Butler defines the heterosexual matrix as "that grid of cultural intelligibility through which bodies, genders, and desires are naturalized" (*Gender Trouble* 151).

In order to re-think gender in Shakespearean performance, I propose that two approaches to casting need to be adopted. The first is to cross-cast more roles: those roles for which the gender of the character is incidental (what we might term a gender-blind approach) or for which a regendered approach might prove illuminating (gender-conscious). The second is to engage with the process of representation through embodied characteristics, such as height and weight, to destabilise the category of desirable femininity. Already productions are starting to experiment with this former approach: Sarah Frankcom's *Hamlet*, performed at the Royal Exchange Manchester in 2014 and starring Maxine Peake, regendered Polonius to Polonia and the Player King, Rosencrantz, and the Grave Diggers were all played as women, by women. In addition to this regendering of roles, the central role was imagined as gender nonconforming, meaning that the text's masculine pronouns were maintained, but the character's gender appeared somewhat fluid. The practical outcome of these casting decisions was gender parity in the acting company.¹³⁴ The artistic outcome was a thought-provoking production which raised questions about the way in which misogyny operates in contemporary society and women's relationship with structures of power. Whilst not every review of the production was positive, even Quentin Letts, who has stated on a number of occasions that he does not like non-traditional casting, remarked that the play's "gender-bending" is "is an interesting take and works well in places" ("A Nifty Idea").

By regendering roles, directors take the first step towards increasing the range of femininities depicted in performance. In some ways this is a basic case of numbers: by having seven women in the company, instead of the usual two, Frankcom's *Hamlet* inevitably challenged the virgin-mother dichotomy represented by Ophelia and Gertrude. The age range and, to a

¹³⁴ This is excluding the children in the company. It is also worth noting that the cast was more racially diverse than many Shakespearean productions, with four BAME actors in the company (nearly 30% of the adult company).

limited extent, the racial identity of the women portrayed was more varied than had only the actresses playing Getrude and Ophelia been cast. Casting white, youthful, petite actresses in the majority of Shakespeare's female roles reiterates a patriarchal ideology: one which objectifies female performers and uses them as props for what they can tell us about male characters. Regendering roles can improve the depiction of female agency, whilst casting more diversely helps to challenge the narrow definition of femininity constructed both in Shakespeare's play texts and in the mainstream media.

While regendering can help to address the under-representation of women on the classical stage, no major destabilisation of gender can occur without considering the representation of female love interests. Having explored how the role of Katherina has been portrayed in mixed-sex and single-sex productions, I will now consider the ways in which identity politics has been used to illuminate the role and in doing so, make the case for a casting practice that draws on identity politics to explore new aspects of the text and to destabilise fixed notions of gender and desire.

Katherina's race and ethnicity can have a profound effect on the way the role is depicted. In Theatre Wallay's 2012 Globe to Globe production of *Shrew*, directed by Haissam Hussain, the Pakistani company played with Western assumptions about women's roles in Pakistani society, creating a depiction of Katherina (renamed Kiran) who was challenging cultural assumptions on several levels. The warmth of the relationship between Nadia Jamil's Kiran and her Petruchio (renamed Rustam, played by Omair Rana) contributed to a dynamic which celebrated love and equality, with Katherina's final speech of submission played as a comic double act. The production aimed to explore "the role of educated and strong women in a patriarchal society" and used "the opportunity to address stereotypical views of Pakistan" (Theatre Wallay qtd. in Schafer, "A Shrew Full of Laughter" 257). Whilst these aims were achieved through the revision of the text as much as the casting, the fact that Jamil is a celebrity figure in

Pakistan ghosted her performance and contributed to the impression of Katherina as a woman who would not accept bullying at the hands of her husband.

While Hussain's production relocated the action of *Shrew* to Pakistan, other cultural relocations and the casting that they facilitated have contributed to a redefinition of the role of Katherina. Robin Norton-Hale's 2011 production at the Southwark Playhouse in 2011, black British actor Elexi Walker played Katherina. Relocated so that Padua became Brixton and Verona became Sloane Square, the production explored both class and racial politics casting white, well-spoken British actor Simon Darwen as Petruchio. The production used this new cultural context to explore how contemporary social and racial privilege might relate to the play's gender politics. Depicting Katherina as a streetwise, dungaree wearing Londoner, Walker's Katherina initially left Darwen's Petruchio a stuttering wreck. The tables soon turned however, and Petruchio's "She is my goods" speech in Act 3, Scene 2 was rendered particularly troubling, as it semiotically evoked not only the historical abuse of women, but also the horrors of slavery, as the silent Katherina was objectified by her wealthy white husband. The semiotic of slavery may not have been intended by director Norton-Hale, but the fact that she had chosen to cast in a colour-conscious fashion and to locate the action in Brixton, known for having a large African-Caribbean community, contributed to an awareness of race in the performance. Reviewers commented on the production's "echoes of colonialism and Bullingdon bluster" (Trueman "Review"), yet the uncritical use of slapstick in the staging in some ways undermined the political comment that the cross-cultural nature of the staging might have made.

In 1993 director Jude Kelly explored the question of disability in the depiction of Katherina in her West Yorkshire Playhouse production of *Shrew*. Inspired by Petruchio's line "Why does the world report that Kate doth limp?" (2.1.247), Kelly explored the implications of taking this line literally:

in Kate you have somebody who is perceived to be ugly or disabled, and ‘the shrew’ is a real description of a bitter person who thinks she is going to be a spinster all her life. (qtd. in Schafer, *Ms Directing* 63)

Thus the play became about Katherina learning to love herself, something facilitated by the fact that Petruchio fell “in love with her very, very early and that his problem was that she didn’t fall in love with him” (Kelly qtd. in Schafer, *Ms Directing* 65). Elizabeth Schafer notes that this decision “generated a strong sense of her [Katherina’s] vulnerability and took away some of the traditional farce slapstick” (63). Nicola McAuliff, who played Katherina in Kelly’s production did not have a disability herself and it was created using a surgical boot (Schafer 63). Actress Nadia Albina commented in *The Guardian* that as a disabled woman she is used to feeling “isolated, not belonging, an alien in your surroundings” (qtd. in L. Gardner “My Disability”), something which she drew on in her depiction of Blanche Du Bois in Sean Holmes’ production of *A Streetcar Named Desire* at the Lyric Hammersmith in 2014; casting a disabled actor in the role of Katherina might similarly illuminate the character’s outsider status and offer new insights into the experience of disabled people in contemporary society.

I can find no evidence of trans or gender nonconforming actors playing Katherina in England, but given the play’s focus on the policing of gendered performance, such a casting could explore the construction of gender and the way in which male characters attempt to define Katherina’s identity. As well as illuminating the play in new ways, such a casting would be important politically, as trans actors are uniquely underrepresented in the theatre.¹³⁵ Katherina’s sexuality could also be explored through casting, as the consequences of her being played by a lesbian, bisexual, or queer actor could expose the ways in which female sexuality is trivialised in contemporary society as well as the homophobia faced by women whose

¹³⁵ Trans actors also face discrimination in film and television, though as Kate Lyon observes in an article for *The Guardian*, recorded media have been slightly better at representing trans people (Lyon, “Harrison Knights”).

sexuality is seen as an affront to patriarchy. Casting an openly gay actress as Katherina would ghost the role and again would again represent an important step forward in raising the profile of minority actors.

Katherina could also be interestingly explored through a consideration of body-image. Returning to Orbach's idea that getting fat can be considered a direct "challenge to sex-role stereotyping and culturally defined experience of womanhood" (6), a fat Katherina is very obviously refusing to conform to society's expectations of her as a woman and the abuse she receives from Gremio and Hortensio could be seen to parallel the use of fat-shaming to control women in contemporary society. Furthermore, if Katherina has more physical parity with Petruchio his coercive practices take on a different resonance. It has the potential to allow a more playful engagement between the two, affording greater autonomy for a Katherina who cannot easily be physically dominated by her spouse. Elizabeth Schafer observes that Sue Rider's 1994 production of *Shrew* "subverted the gender stereotypes of masculine strength and feminine weakness" by casting actor Deborah Mailman in the role of Katherina. Mailman's "formidable physical presence" helped to destabilise the notion of female biological inferiority (Schafer, "Introduction" 45). Rider used the physical parity of Katherina and Petruchio for comic effect, but casting a fat actress in the role of Katherina could equally help to explore the coercive aspects of Petruchio's behaviour, as his denial of food, sleep, and appropriate clothing can be foregrounded as abusive when not shrouded in either comic clowning or outright violence.

Casting a fat actress as Katherina also queers her final speech of submission, as her references to the "soft and weak and smooth" (5.2.165) bodies of women is rendered ironic by being spoken by a woman who takes up space. In many ways this parallels the subversive effect of the final speech: on the one hand it is a dutiful wife's submission to the will of her husband, whilst simultaneously it is a shrewish act of public speaking and an assertion of female presence. The casting decision would allow for

a reimagining of a range of aspects of the text including Katherina's reference to her weight in the wooing scene, and Petruchio denying Katherina food. By engaging with questions of identity, casting can open the text up to new readings and engage with contemporary identity politics, as well as alienating conventional constructions of gender and sexuality.

Brechtian Casting

The fissure between the expectations of character and the manner in which it is embodied could constitute a form of alienation, akin to the *Verfremdungseffekt* theorised by Brecht. As Elin Diamond has noted, *Verfremdungseffekt*:

challenges the mimetic property of acting that semioticians call iconicity, or the conventional resemblance between the performer's body and the object, or character, to which it refers. This is why gender critique at the theatre can be so powerful. (*Unmaking Mimesis* 45)

Thus, rendering the constructed nature of theatrical performance visible might in turn render the socially constructed performance of gender visible. Within realism "When spectators 'see' gender they are seeing (and reproducing) the cultural signs of gender, and by implication, the gender ideology of a culture" (Diamond, *Unmaking Mimesis* 45-6). In this way, type-casting contributes to the cultural construction of gender ideology, shaping what is acceptable and expected from its gendered subjects. Indeed, the practice of type-casting is clearly instrumental in the cultural policing of gender, as certain bodies or certain types of undesirable masculine and feminine identity are either not afforded visibility within a particular culture, or, when they are, are ridiculed or vilified in order to render their challenge to convention safe.

Brecht famously critiqued the ideology inscribed in type-casting, stating:

As though all cooks were fat, all peasants phlegmatic, all statesmen stately. As though all who love and are loved were beautiful. As

though all good orators had fine voices [...] It is very dangerous to cast a major part on the strength of a single characteristic. (106-7)

Foregrounding the conventions of realism, Brecht asserted that casting should “Avoid theatrical convention wherever it contradicts reality” (230). In this respect Brecht highlights the constructed nature of realism and I would argue realism’s danger lies in its power to *create* reality. As Elin Diamond observes: “Realism is more than an interpretation of reality passing as reality; it *produces* ‘reality’ by positioning its spectator to recognise and verify its truths” (*Unmaking Mimesis* 4). In this way, realist casting might be seen to contribute directly to the heterosexual matrix, naturalising the relationship between gender, sexuality, and desire.

Using embodied characteristics to cast against type has the potential to alienate the conventions of realism and to depict a broader spectrum of gendered identity on stage. Furthermore, it might expose the ideology of gender as proposed by Diamond in *Unmaking Mimesis*:

by alienating (not simply rejecting) iconicity, by foregrounding the expectation of resemblance, the ideology of gender is exposed and thrown back to the spectator. (46)

Diamond cites Caryl Churchill’s *Cloud 9* as an example of casting as Brechtian A-effect, observing that “crossdressing that is not quite perfect, in which the male body can be detected in feminine clothes, provides broad A-effects for a gender critique of familial and sexual norms in Victorian and present-day society” (46). As I have already argued, cross-gender casting may have the potential to alienate gender for brief moments during a performance, but the notion of a stable gendered body beneath the costume can contain the subversive power of cross-gendered performance. As Judith Butler argues, in the case of theatrical cross-dressing:

In the theatre, one can say, ‘this is just an act,’ and de-realize the act, make acting into something quite distinct from what is real. Because of this distinction, one can maintain one’s sense of reality in the face of this temporary challenge to our existing ontological assumptions about gender arrangements; the various conventions which announce that ‘this is only a play’ allows [sic] strict lines to be drawn between the performance and life. (“Performative Acts” 527)

To counter this recourse to “the real”, a more successful method of alienation might use the embodied characteristics that constitute gender identity, such as height, muscularity, and body size, in ways that destabilise a biological notion of gender: the gender of the actor and the character may align, but the signifiers that are used to connote gender on stage may be subverted or destabilised, thereby alienating the iconicity of gender, but not rejecting it altogether.

Directors of all-male productions frequently play with the embodied characteristics that tend to connote femininity. As explored in the previous chapter, Edward Hall tends not to cast shorter or younger actors in female roles and in her article “Colorblind Casting in Single-Sex Shakespeare” Sujata Iyengar cites an interesting example from the rehearsal room of Cheek by Jowl’s all-male *As You Like It*. Iyengar quotes an exchange between Declan Donnellan and Adrian Lester in which Lester was apparently concerned that he was too tall to play Rosalind. Donnellan retorted that “there are 6ft. strapping women; what do you do about it? So the shoulder slips and the knees dunk” (qtd. Iyengar, “Colorblind” 56). The exchange seems to reflect the tension between realism and reality: in realism actors who are 6ft tall do not play romantic heroines, but in reality plenty of 6ft tall women love and are loved.¹³⁶ That it should be his height rather than gender that concerned Lester reflects the fact that, as with Chahidi’s rotund Maria, embodied characteristics are central to the signification of character in performance. As the case studies of chapters 3-6 have shown, these embodied characteristics are inherently gendered and realist casting tends to recruit performers based, at least in part, on their ability to perform their gender as well as the character.

¹³⁶ Janet McTeer may appear the obvious exception to the casting of Shakespearean heroines, but even she describes herself as a “character actor” rather than a romantic lead (qtd. in Clark “Janet McTeer”).

Just as Quinn argues that the celebrity figure can drive a “conceptual wedge” (155) between signifier and signified, so the non-normative embodied characteristics of the gendered body might similarly alienate the performance. Quinn argues that the alienation achieved by celebrity casting can help to serve a feminist agenda, as its specificity helps to deconstruct a single subject position and “encourage the construction of figures for a variety of subject positions, including a variety of gazes” (159). Embodied characteristics might go a step further in their alienation effect, contributing not only to the alienation of the onstage performance, but to the social construction of gender more generally. Utilising embodied characteristics to alienate the onstage performance of gender can intervene in the wider cultural construction of gender, creating a playful gap between signifier and signified that can be used to render visible the performativity of gender.

The Queer Power of Fat

Expanding the definition of femininity through casting could contribute to a subversion of heteronormative desire in performance. Elizabeth Grosz argues that “any account of embodiment is also always an account of sexuality” (viii) and given casting is a very literal “fleshing out” of characters through the medium of actor’s bodies, it is clear that desire operates within this process. Considering the operation of desire, Jackie Wykes notes that “even the most cursory analysis of contemporary Western media culture reveals that only slender bodies are presented as legitimate objects of heterosexual desire” adding that “compulsory heterosexuality and compulsory thinness are mutually constitutive” (1). On the classical stage, desire manifests itself to the exclusion of female bodies that might be considered non-normative.

Wykes posits that “desire is central to the apparatus of neoliberal capitalism” arguing that “the ‘threat’ posed by fatness is the threat of exclusion from heterodesire and the dominant order” (7). In this respect, casting has a reciprocal relationship with the operation of capitalist desire:

on the one hand it is a process which responds to the manifestation of desire within our culture, reflecting it back at us, whilst on the other creating it through the policing of which types of bodies are employed in prestigious performance contexts. As evidenced in Chapter Two, actors often fashion themselves to the dominant culture's definition of the desirable in order to render themselves castable. The highly gendered nature of the self-fashioning of the body is evident in research undertaken in UK drama schools by Roanna Mitchell, who observed that:

Those students who experience their body as a product within a marketplace may consider changes to their physical appearance, with the purpose of transforming it into the type of 'product' in demand within their desired field of employment. For the most part it is the female students who are reported to diminish in size through diets, while male students are more likely to embark on intensive fitness regimes with the aim of building muscle... (65)

The effect of these diets is often counter-intuitive, with Mitchell reporting examples of students too weak from a regime of diet and exercise to be able to participate fully in class. Accepting that some performers go to such extremes to submit their bodies to normative ideals calls into question the ethics of casting. One Head of Acting interviewed by Mitchell observed that:

Students don't talk about their bodies [in class]. Students do things to their bodies. Students observe employed bodies, and register consciously and subconsciously what an employed body looks like. And orientate their own physical trajectory to that point I think.
(Head of Acting, School A qtd. in R. Mitchell 66)

The notion of an "employed body" is an interesting one, because it implies that there is, or at least appears to be, a physical aesthetic which is particularly likely to gain work. Thus the theatre industry can be seen to participate in and perpetuate the body-fascism of Western media. Yet, what if directors were to challenge this ideology through their casting practices? How might a broader and more subjective depiction of desire contribute to the depiction of gender in performance?

As discussed in earlier chapters, the ideal female body is a "manifestation of misogynist norms flowing from a culture where women

are devalued and disempowered” and women are required to prove their bodily docility by “producing smaller, quieter, more ornamental versions of male bodies” (C. Hartley 62,63). Gender itself is the way in which the body is induced:

to become a cultural sign, to materialize oneself in obedience to an historical delimited possibility, and to do this as a sustained and repeated corporeal project. (Butler “Performative Acts” 522)

Within a visual medium like theatre, the way in which gender is defined through the casting of particular body types is more of a straitjacket to interpretation than the binary category gender itself. It is more common and, one might argue, more acceptable to see a man perform the role of a Shakespearean heroine than it is to see a fat woman in the same role.

Jester argues further that women are used exclusively in reference to others on stage or in sexualised ways to cater to male fantasy (250). Yet, what if the bodies in these roles resisted the objectification of the medium? Casting actresses who are fatter, taller or older than might be expected of certain roles, particularly in an ensemble in which these characteristics are identifiable (i.e. in a company of diverse ages, weights and heights) can help to begin to deconstruct the essentialised depiction of gender on our stages. In the case of the signification of fat, as Cecilia Hartley has argued: “The fat woman demonstrates by her very presence that she has not submitted to the rules that society has established for feminine behaviour” (66). Thus it is possible to argue that:

getting fat can [...] be understood as a definite and purposeful act; it is a directed, conscious or unconscious, challenge to sex-role stereotyping and culturally defined experience of womanhood (Orbach 6)

Within the patriarchal world of early modern drama, the physical presence of fat could make a powerful statement about female agency. Furthermore, within the image-conscious world of twenty-first century capitalism and the gender policing associated with the investment in a gendered image, this too is a potentially radical intervention: reframing femininity and allowing foregrounding the diversity in desire. Petra Kuppers has argued

that “the possibilities that lie in her [the actor’s] fatness can be revalued, wrested back from patriarchal discourse, and made into a trope for female empowerment” (280) and this in turn can contribute to the subversion of gender.

Queer Casting Conclusion

It is my contention that, drawing on the work of Jackie Wykes, “non-normative bodies challenge and disrupt – that is to say, queer – the disciplinary power of normative categories” (6). In this respect, casting a fat actress as Juliet is far more radical than casting a male actor in the role. Through the operation of theatrical convention the male actor’s challenge to heteronormativity is contained within the supposedly “authentic” practice of male transvestism in Shakespearean performance. Furthermore, the fact that cross-gender casting operates outside the realms of realism allows the audience to experience the male performance of female desirability as a performance and to suspend disbelief accordingly. There is no similar framework through which the fat female performer could be viewed. Like colourblind casting, body-blind casting (or body-conscious for that matter) casts an actor in a role with which one aspect of their appearance might not be associated; thus the practice can be utilised in realism, but presents a disjuncture between the body and expectation which renders the idea of a fat woman as Juliet ludicrous.¹³⁷

Rethinking desire and casting accordingly can help to resist the straitjacket of contemporary beauty ideas and the way in which they fashion femininity, uncovering new possibilities for interpreting old texts. In doing so, theatre can take up the work of gender subversion begun by feminists and queer theorists. Casting fat needs to begin as a “body-conscious” type of casting, exploring what hitherto unseen aspects of gender and sexuality can be brought to the fore through fat. However, as a

¹³⁷ *Daily Mail* reviewer Quentin Letts provides an excellent example of this “common sense” approach to casting Shakespeare’s love interest. In a review he mused “Can we imagine chunky Dawn French playing Shakespeare’s Juliet?” and concluded “Of course not” (“Sorry”).

greater variety of femininities are seen on stage it seems reasonable to anticipate that, before long, the fat or average sized actress will become common enough that her size is only particularly visible if it is rendered significant to the staging. Where body-conscious casting can illuminate the text it should be used, but as practitioners we should also have the notion of body-blind casting in our sights, meaning that a fat actress in a leading role should not inevitably be remarkable. As fat, tall, old, BAME, disabled, and LGBTQ women populate the stage the oppressively monolithic category of desirable femininity is splintered and a broader spectrum of gender and desire becomes available.

Conclusion

“Our challenge was to get our colleagues to recognize that the conventions which guide their choices (or nonchoices) are adopted attitudes, not artistic imperatives.” (Newman 24)

In an entry on the popular *Casting Call Woe* website, a blog that documents particularly ill-judged, troubling, and often sexist casting calls, one director requests “We need women comfortable with dressing in revealing clothes, for the scenery” (*Casting Call Woe*).¹³⁸ This direct quotation from a casting call is brazen in its willingness to objectify its female employees, but it neatly encapsulates the practices, along with the attitudes underpinning them, that I have been exploring in this thesis. Despite all the achievements of the feminist movement and the destabilisation of the gender binary by queer theorists and LGBTQ+ activists, sexism remains entrenched in contemporary modes of representation, from film to theatre, from fringe theatre to commercial stages, from student film to multimillion-pound blockbusters.

This thesis has shown that classical theatre is inextricably linked with a contemporary performance context in which female performers are marginalised and objectified. With fewer parts and reduced career longevity, classical actresses face far greater challenges than their male colleagues, and these challenges increase significantly for female performers of colour. Furthermore, the material conditions of contemporary theatrical production combine with the content of early modern plays – in which female characters have fewer lines, fewer roles, and, apart from a few major exceptions, less agency, than their male counterparts – to create a performance context in which female performers are underrepresented and misrepresented.

¹³⁸ *Casting Call Woe* details genuine casting calls from across a range of media, though most calls come from student and low-budget films.

My analysis of casting at the Royal Shakespeare Company and Shakespeare's Globe Theatre indicates that while over the last fifteen years the number of women on their stages has increased slightly, women remain significantly underrepresented and where they are featured, tend to be embodied by young, white performers. Populating Shakespeare's female roles with young, white performers who, judging from my case studies, appear to conform to the conventions of desirable femininity binds female representation to a narrow definition of femininity that is founded on passivity and objectification.

Marvin Carlson highlights the important work done by feminist semioticians who, by revealing the way in which the female sign is naturalised, "provided the first step toward the development of alternative practices" (*Semiotics* 21). It is my hope that this study will go some way towards laying the foundation for a materialist feminist approach to casting which promotes an engagement with the issue of gendered representation amongst spectators and practitioners alike. The theatrical landscape is ever-changing and there have been significant developments over the course of this study. From general castings for deaf and disabled actors at the RSC and National Theatre in January 2014 to the creative case for diversity in theatre funding, change is happening.

There is, however, a danger of complacency. The Cultural White Paper, issued in March 2016, observed: "Achieving greater diversity has been a problem for many years. While progress has arguably been made on addressing gender balance and LGBT representation within the cultural sectors, there remains some way to go; and the overall figures on diversity do not reflect national averages" (DCMS 26). It is troubling that the notion of progress is invoked without any recourse to data or evidence. Furthermore, the paper's specific focus on race and disability risks implying that, given progress has been made, gender is no longer a significant issue in arts equality. There remain ingrained attitudes towards gender that impact both on women's employment and on their

representation. In April 2016, *The Stage* newspaper reported that, according to a YouGov poll, “Half of Brits don’t want a female Hamlet” (Hutchinson “Half of Brits”). One fifth of over 2,000 respondents were also resistant to seeing a black actor in this iconic role.

Despite this resistance to non-traditional casting, it is becoming more common. In an article in *The Independent* Holly Williams mused whether the recent flurry of cross-gender castings represents a “sellable gimmick rather than a genuine paradigm shift” (Williams “Gender-blind”). Yet, as Williams herself points out, the fact that cross-gender casting offers marketing potential demonstrates that there is an appetite for better representation of women on the classical stage.

Since my study began, both the RSC and Shakespeare’s Globe have appointed women in leading artistic roles – Erica Whyman is now Associate Director at the RSC and Emma Rice is Artistic Director at Shakespeare’s Globe – and both women have made a commitment to greater gender parity at their institutions. Indeed, Emma Rice has already faced a backlash in the conservative press because she is “aiming to get a much greater proportion of women on the stage” (qtd. in M.Brown “The Globe’s Emma Rice”). Writing in *The Telegraph* Michael Henderson urged directors to have humility in the face of Shakespeare before suggesting that Rice makes up for her lack of Shakespearean credentials with “a Master’s degree in Ballsology” (“To Modernise or not to Modernise?”). Henderson’s ire foregrounds Shakespeare’s political potency in the twenty-first century and the battle to control the meaning of his plays is inherently tied up with notions of identity. Casting is a fundamental aspect of interpreting Shakespeare’s plays in performance and reflects the values, anxieties, and preoccupations of our society: it will play a central role in defining twenty-first century Shakespeare, offering new insights and interpretative possibilities for these 400-year-old texts.

Postscript

In my conclusion I observe that the field of casting is ever-changing; the speed of this change is evidenced by the number of major developments that have taken place between the submission of this thesis and its examination. Some of these changes represent steps forward in the quest for gender parity in performance. For example, Equity's recently launched Play Fair Campaign will "challenge the industry on under-representation of diversity and discriminatory practices in the casting process" (Equity "Play Fair"). However, other changes appear to represent a set-back to the cause of equal representation. The recent news that Emma Rice is to stand down as Artistic Director of Shakespeare's Globe at the end of 2017 appears a particular blow given her vocal commitment to gender parity in her casting (Ellis). There will, no doubt, continue to be rapid changes to the casting landscape and, in this context of change, it is my hope that this thesis will offer a snapshot of how things were, a provocation to explore how things are, and a prompt to envisage the types of representation we would like to see.

Appendix A: Productions Analysed

The tables below detail which productions are included in the data set analysed in Chapter Two.

RSC 2000					
Play Title	First Preview	Closing Night	Theatre	Director	Notes
<i>The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe</i>	11th November 1999	5th March 2000	RST	Adrian Noble	
<i>The Taming of the Shrew</i>	2nd December 1999	15th January 2000	Swan	Lindsay Posner	
<i>The Servant of Two Masters</i>	8th December 1999	22nd January 2000	TOP	Tim Supple	
<i>The Seagull</i>	26th January	Tour	Swan	Adrian Noble	Initial Stratford run followed by tour.
<i>As You Like It</i>	15th March	5th October	RST	Gregory Doran	
<i>Richard II</i>	20th March	5th October	TOP	Steven Pimlott	
<i>The Rivals</i>	30th March	7th October	Swan	Lindsay Posner	Press night date listed.
<i>Henry IV, Pt 1</i>	10th April	7th October	Swan	Michael Attenborough	
<i>The Comedy of Errors</i>	11th April	6th October	RST	Lynne Parker	
<i>Romeo and Juliet</i>	23rd June	7th October	RST	Michael Boyd	
<i>La Lupa</i>	22nd June	7th October	TOP	Simona Gonella	
<i>Back to Methuselah</i>	24th August	7th October	TOP	David Fielding	
<i>Henry V</i>	24th August	7th October	RST	Edward Hall	
<i>Henry VI Parts 1,2 &3</i>	23rd November 2000	10th February 2001	Swan	Michael Boyd	
<i>The Tempest</i>	30th November	6th January	TOP	James Macdonald	

	2000	2001		
SGT 2000				
Play Title	First Preview	Closing Night	Theatre	Director
<i>The Tempest</i>	1st May	10th September	SGT	Lenka Udovicki
<i>Hamlet</i>	28th May	24th September	SGT	Giles Block
<i>The Two Noble Kinsmen</i>	29th July	23rd September	SGT	Tim Carroll
<i>Antipodes</i>	12th August	22nd September	SGT	Gerald Freedman
Notes				

RSC 2001				
Play Title	First Preview	Closing Night	Theatre	Director
<i>The Duchess of Malji</i>	6th February	3rd March	RST	Gale Edwards
<i>King John</i>	21st March	13th October	Swan	Gregory Doran
<i>The Russian in the Woods</i>	21st March	10th October	TOP	Robert Delamere
<i>Hamlet</i>	31st March	13th October	RST	Steven Pimlott
<i>The Lieutenant of Inishmore</i>	11th April	12th October	TOP	Wilson Milam
<i>Love in a Wood</i>	12th April	12th October	Swan	Tim Supple
<i>Twelfth Night</i>	13th April	12th October	RST	Lindsay Posner
<i>The Prisoner's Dilemma</i>	11th July	13th October	TOP	Michael Attenborough
<i>Jubilee</i>	12th July	13th October	Swan	Gregory Doran
<i>Julius Caesar</i>	13th July	13th October	RST	Edward Hall
<i>Alice in Wonderland</i>	30th November	9th March	RST	Rachel Kavanagh
<i>The Merchant of Venice</i>	28th November	1st January 2002	Swan	Loveday Ingram
SGT 2001				
Play Title	First Preview	Closing Night	Theatre	Director
<i>King Lear</i>	12th May	21st September	SGT	Barry Kyle
<i>Macbeth</i>	27th May	22nd September	SGT	Tim Carroll
Notes				

<i>Gymbeline</i>	30th June	23rd September	SGT	Mike Alfreds	
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RSC 2002

Play Title	First Preview	Closing Night	Theatre	Director	Notes
<i>The Prince of Homburg</i>	24th January	16th February	Swan	Neil Bartlett	
<i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i>	1st February	23rd March	RST	Richard Jones	
<i>Antony & Cleopatra</i>	11th April	13th July	RST	Michael Attenborough	
<i>Edward III</i>	17th April	14th September	Swan	Edward Hall	
<i>Eastward Ho</i>	17th April	14th September	Swan	Lucy Pitman-Wallace	
<i>Much Ado About Nothing</i>	30th April	13th July	RST	Gregory Doran	
<i>The Roman Actor</i>	22nd May	13th September	Swan	Sean Holmes	
<i>The Island Princess</i>	26th June	14th September	Swan	Gregory Doran	
<i>The Hollow Crown</i>	16th July	20th July	RST	John Barton	
<i>The Winter's Tale</i>	31st July	2nd November	RST	Matthew Warchus	
<i>Pericles</i>	12th August	2nd November	RST	Adrian Noble	
<i>The Tempest</i>	7th September	1st November	RST	Michael Boyd	
<i>The Lion, The Witch & the Wardrobe</i>	21st November	9th January 2003	RST	Adrian Noble	
<i>The Merry Wives of Windsor</i>	23rd October	25th January 2003	Swan	Rachel Kavanaugh	
<i>Coriolanus</i>	14th November	2003	Swan	David Farr	

SGT 2002

Play Title	First Preview	Closing Night	Theatre	Director	Notes
<i>Twelfth Night</i>	6th May	28th September	SGT	Tim Carroll	All-Male
<i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i>	26th May	27th September	SGT	Mike Alfreds	

<i>The Golden Ass</i>	3rd August	29th September	SGT	Tim Carroll	
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RSC 2003

Play Title	First Preview	Closing Night	Theatre	Director	Notes
<i>As You Like It</i>	13th March	8th November	Swan	Gregory Thompson	
<i>The Taming of the Shrew</i>	31st March	8th November	RST	Gregory Doran	Played with <i>The Tamer</i> 6th March - 8th November (same company).
<i>Brand</i>	18th April	24th May	Swan	Adrian Noble	
<i>Measure for Measure</i>	24th April	4th November	RST	Sean Holmes	
<i>Gymbeline</i>	30th July	7th November	Swan	Dominic Cooke	
<i>Richard III</i>	11th July	8th November	RST	Sean Holmes	
<i>Titus Andronicus</i>	12th September	7th November	RST	Bill Alexander	
<i>Beauty and the Beast</i>	29th November	22nd February 2004	RST	Laurence Boswell	
<i>All's Well That Ends Well</i>	3rd December	7th February 2004	Swan	Gregory Doran	
SGT 2003					
Play Title	First Preview	Closing Night	Theatre	Director	Notes
<i>Richard II</i>	8th May	27th September	SGT	Tim Carroll	All-Male
<i>Richard III</i>	25th May	27th September	SGT	Barry Kyle	All-Female
<i>Dido, Queen of Carthage</i>	6th June	18th August	SGT	Tim Carroll	
<i>Edward II</i>	20th July	26th September	SGT	Timothy Walker	All-Male
<i>The Taming of the Shrew</i>	10th August	28th September	SGT	Phyllida Lloyd	All-Female
<i>Twelfth Night</i>	2nd October	12th October	SGT	Tim Carroll	Revival All-Male

RSC 2004

Play Title	First Preview	Closing Night	Theatre	Director	Notes
<i>Macheth</i>	6th March	9th October	RST	Dominic Cooke	
<i>Romeo and Juliet</i>	25th March	8th October	RST	Peter Gill	
<i>The Dog in the Manger</i>	14th April	2nd October	Swan	Laurence Boswell	
<i>Tamar's Revenge</i>	28th April	2nd October	Swan	Simon Usher	
<i>King Lear</i>	17th June	14th October	RST	Bill Alexander	
<i>House of Desires</i>	30th June	1st October	Swan	Nancy Meckler	
<i>Hamlet</i>	8th July	16th October	RST	Michael Boyd	
<i>Pedro, The Great Pretender</i>	1st September	30th September	Swan	Mike Alfreds	
<i>Julius Caesar</i>	18th November	26th February 2005	Swan	David Farr	
<i>The Two Gentlemen of Verona</i>	23rd November	26th February 2005	Swan	Fiona Buffini	

SGT 2004

Play Title	First Preview	Closing Night	Theatre	Director	Notes
<i>Romeo and Juliet</i>	7th May	26th September	SGT	Tim Carroll	
<i>Measure for Measure</i>	18th May	23rd September	SGT	John Dove	
<i>Much Ado About Nothing</i>	23rd May	26th September	SGT	Tamara Harvey	All-Female

RSC 2005

Play Title	First Preview	Closing Night	Theatre	Director	Notes
<i>The Hollow Crown</i>	3rd March	19th March	RST	John Barton	
<i>Sir Thomas More</i>	9th March	3rd November	Swan	Robert Delamere	
<i>A New Way to Please You</i>	16th March	3rd November	Swan	Sean Holmes	
<i>Solstice</i>	30th March	9th July	TOP	Zinnie Harris	

<i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i>	31st March	18th October	RST	Gregory Doran	
<i>Twelfth Night</i>	22nd April	21st October	RST	Michael Boyd	
<i>The American Pilot</i>	27th April	9th July	TOP	Ramin Gray	
<i>Believe What You Will</i>	18th May	4th November	Swan	Josie Rourke	
<i>The Comedy of Errors</i>	15th July	29th October	RST	Nancy Meckler	
<i>Sejanus: His Fall</i>	20th July	5th November	Swan	Gregory Doran	
<i>As You Like It</i>	5th August	29th October	RST	Dominic Cooke	
<i>Speaking Like Magpies</i>	21st September	5th November	Swan	Rupert Gould	
<i>The Taming of the Shrew YPS</i>	10th October	21st October	School Tour	Sarah Esdaille	
<i>Canterbury Tales</i>	16th November	4th February 2006	Swan	Gregory Doran	
<i>Great Expectations</i>	25th November	4th February 2006	RST	Declan Donnellan	
SGT 2005					
Play Title	First Preview	Closing Night	Theatre	Director	Notes
<i>The Tempest</i>	6th May	2nd October	SGT	Tim Carroll	All-Male 3 person cast
<i>Pericles</i>	20th May	1st October	SGT	Kathryn Hunter	
<i>The Winter's Tale</i>	4th June	1st October	SGT	John Dove	
<i>The Storm</i>	30th July	30th September	SGT	Tim Carroll	
<i>Measure for Measure</i>	6th October	16th October	SGT	John Dove	All-Male
<i>Persephone</i>	15th August	28th September	SGT		One company performed <i>Troilus and Cressida</i> and <i>Man Falling Down</i>

RSC 2006						
Play Title	First Preview	Closing Night	Theatre	Director	Notes	
<i>Women Beware Women</i>	16th February	1st April	Swan	Laurence Boswell		
<i>The Crucible</i>	16th February	18th March	RST	Dominic Cooke		
<i>Romeo and Juliet</i>	6th April	14th October	RST	Nancy Meckler		
<i>Antony and Cleopatra</i>	12th April	14th October	Swan	Gregory Doran		
<i>Julius Caesar</i>	6th May	10th October	RST	Sean Holmes		
<i>Much Ado</i>	11th May	12th October	Swan	Marianne Elliott		
<i>Henry VI Parts 1,2 &3</i>	7th July	21st October	Courtyard	Michael Boyd		
<i>The Tempest</i>	28th July	12th October	RST	Rupert Goold		
<i>King John</i>	27th July	10th October	Swan	Josie Rourke		
<i>The Winter's Tale</i>	26th Oct	6th January 2007	Swan	Dominic Cooke		
<i>Pericles</i>	2nd Nov	6th January 2007	Swan	Dominic Cooke		
<i>The Indian Boy</i>	7th November	11th November	The Cube	Rebecca Gatward		
<i>The Merry Wives of Windsor</i>	2nd Dec	10th February	RST	Gregory Doran	Musical adaptation.	
<i>Fantastic Mr Fox</i>	19th December	4th January 2007	Civic Hall	Steve Tiplady	Little Angel Co. Pro.	
SGT 2006						
Play Title	First Preview	Closing Night	Theatre	Director	Notes	
<i>Coriolanus</i>	5th May	13th July	SGT	Dominic Dromgoole		
<i>Titus Andronicus</i>	20th May	6th October	SGT	Lucy Bailey		
<i>Antony and Cleopatra</i>	25th June	8th October	SGT	Dominic Dromgoole		
<i>Under the Black Flag</i>	9th July	12th August	SGT	Roxana Silbert		
<i>The Comedy of Errors</i>	22nd July	7th October	SGT	Chris Luscombe		
<i>In Extremis</i>	27th August	7th October	SGT	John Dove		

RSC 2007						
Play Title	First Preview	Closing Night	Theatre	Director	Notes	
<i>Days of Significance</i>	10th January	20th January	Swan	Maria Aberg		
<i>Richard III</i>	11th January	17th February	Courtyard	Michael Boyd		
<i>Coriolanus</i>	22nd February	31st March	RST	Gregory Doran		
<i>Venus & Adonis</i>	15th March	17th March	Swan	Gregory Doran		
<i>Nothing Like the Sun</i>	24th February	25th February	Courtyard	Gavin Bryars (Curator)		
<i>King Lear</i>	24th March	21st June	Courtyard	Trevor Nunn		
<i>Macbeth</i>	11th April	21st July	Swan	Connall Morrison		
<i>The Seagull</i>	17th April	23rd June	Courtyard	Trevor Nunn		
<i>Macbeth</i>	25th May	21st July	Swan	Silviu Purcarete		
<i>Richard II</i>	7th July	13th March 2008	Courtyard	Michael Boyd		
<i>Henry IV Part I & II</i>	17th July	14th March 2008	Courtyard	Michael Boyd		
<i>The Penelopiad</i>	27th July	18th August	Swan	Josette Bushell-Mingo	All-Female	
<i>Twelfth Night</i>	30th August	6th October	Courtyard	Neil Bartlett		
<i>Henry V</i>	25th October	14th March 2008	Courtyard	Michael Boyd		
<i>Noughts & Crosses</i>	29th November	2nd Feb 2008	Civic Hall	Dominic Cooke		
SGT 2007						
Play Title	First Preview	Closing Night	Theatre	Director	Notes	
<i>Much Ado About Nothing</i>	5th March	8th March	SGT	Joanne Howarth	PSWDB	
<i>Othello</i>	4th May	19th August	SGT	Wilson Milam		
<i>In Extremis</i>	15th May	26th May	SGT	John Dove	Revival	
<i>The Merchant of Venice</i>	2nd June	6th October	SGT	Rebecca Gatwad		
<i>Romeo and Juliet</i>	17 June	2nd September	SGT/Tour	Edward Dick	Touring Production	

<i>Love's Labour's Lost</i>	1st July	7th October	SGT	Dominic Dromgoole	
<i>Holding Fire</i>	28th July	5th October	SGT	Mark Rosenblatt	
<i>We the People</i>	2nd September	6th October	SGT	Charlotte Westenra	

RSC 2008

Play Title	First Preview	Closing Night	Theatre	Director	Notes
<i>Henry VI Parts 1-3</i>	6th Feb	15th March	Courtyard	Michael Boyd	Unable to verify cast - individual programme not available. Not included.
<i>The Merchant of Venice</i>	3rd April	27th September	Courtyard	Tim Carroll	
<i>The Taming of the Shrew</i>	24th April	25th September	Courtyard	Connell Morrison	
<i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i>	9th May	13th November	Courtyard	Gregory Doran	
<i>Hamlet</i>	24th July	15th November	Courtyard	Gregory Doran	
<i>Love's Labour's Lost</i>	2nd October	15th November	Courtyard	Gregory Doran	
<i>Romeo & Juliet</i>	27th November	24th January 2009	Courtyard	Neil Bartlett	
<i>Don John</i>	12th December	10th January 2009	Courtyard	Emma Rice	Kneehigh Co. Pro.

SGT 2008

Play Title	First Preview	Closing Night	Theatre	Director	Notes
<i>Much Ado About Nothing</i>	Spring	Spring	SGT	Joanne Howarth	PSWDB
<i>Romeo and Juliet</i>	May	August	SGT /Tour	Elizabeth Freestone	Touring Production
<i>The Winter's Tale</i>	June	August	SGT /Tour	John Dove	Touring Production
<i>King Lear</i>	23rd April	17th August	SGT	Dominic Dromgoole	
<i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i>	10th May	4th October	SGT	Jonathan Mumby	
<i>The Merry Wives of Windsor</i>	8th June	5th October	SGT	Chris Luscombe	
<i>The Frontline</i>	6th July	17th August	SGT	Matthew Dunster	

<i>Timon of Athens</i>	26th July	3rd October	SGT	Lucy Bailey	
<i>Liberty</i>	31st August	4th October	SGT	Guy Retailack	

RSC 2009

Play Title	First Preview	Closing Night	Theatre	Director	Notes
<i>The Tempest</i>	14th February	14th March	Courtyard	Janice Honeyman	Baxter Theatre Co. Pro.
					A young people's production to accompany Honeyman's main staging.
<i>The Tempest</i> (YPS)	10th March	Plus tour of schools	Courtyard	Janice Honeyman	
<i>The Comedy of Errors</i> (YPS)	25th June	15th August	Courtyard	Paul Hunter	YPS
<i>The Winter's Tale</i>	31st March	3rd October	Courtyard	David Farr	
<i>As You Like It</i>	18th April	3rd October	Courtyard	Michael Boyd	
<i>Julius Caesar</i>	15th May	2nd October	Courtyard	Lucy Bailey	
<i>The Drunks</i>	21st August	1st October	Courtyard	Anthony Neilson	
<i>The Grain Store</i>	10th September	1st October	Courtyard	Michael Boyd	
<i>Twelfth Night</i>	15th October 2009	21st November	Courtyard	Gregory Doran	
<i>Arabian Nights</i>	5th December 2009	30th January 2010	Courtyard	Dominic Cooke	

SGT 2009

Play Title	First Preview	Closing Night	Theatre	Director	Notes
<i>Romeo and Juliet</i>	Spring	Spring	SGT	Bill Buckhurst	PSWDB
<i>The Frontline</i>	5th May	23rd May	SGT	Matthew Dunster	Revival
<i>The Comedy of Errors</i>	26th May	29th May	SGT/Tour	Rebecca Gatward	Touring Production
<i>As You Like It</i>	1st June	10th October	SGT	Thea Sharrock	

<i>Romeo and Juliet</i>	2nd June	23rd August	SGT	Dominic Dromgoole	
<i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i>	8th July	11th July	SGT/Tour	Raz Shaw	Touring Production
<i>Troilus and Cressida</i>	12th July	20th September	SGT	Matthew Dunster	
<i>Helen</i>	2nd August	23rd August	SGT	Deborah Bruce	
<i>New World</i>	29th August	9th October	SGT	Dominic Dromgoole	
<i>Love's Labour's Lost</i>	25th September	10th October	SGT	Dominic Dromgoole	

RSC 2010

Play Title	First Preview	Closing Night	Theatre	Director	Notes
<i>King Lear</i>	18th Feb	26th August	Courtyard	David Farr	
<i>Romeo and Juliet</i>	12th March	27th August	Courtyard	Rupert Goold	
<i>Antony and Cleopatra</i>	10th April	28th August	Courtyard	Michael Boyd	
<i>Hamlet YPS</i>	1st May	11th September	Courtyard	Beijan Sheibani	
<i>Morte D'Arthur</i>	11th June	28th August	Courtyard	Gregory Doran	
<i>The Winter's Tale</i>	14th July	2nd September	Courtyard	David Farr	
<i>As You Like It</i>	21st July	4th September	Courtyard	Michael Boyd	
<i>Julius Caesar</i>	28th July	4th September	Courtyard	Lucy Bailey	
<i>The Comedy of Errors</i>	7th August	11th September	Courtyard	Paul Hunter	YPS
SGT 2010					
Play Title	First Preview	Closing Night	Theatre	Director	Notes
<i>Macbeth</i>	Spring	Spring	SGT	Bill Buckhurst	PSWDB
<i>Macbeth</i>	23rd April	27th June	SGT	Lucy Bailey	
<i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i>	3rd May-14th May	1st-2nd July	SGT/Tour	Raz Shaw	Touring Production
<i>Henry VIII</i>	15th May	21st August	SGT	Mark Rosenblatt	
<i>Henry IV Parts 1 and 2</i>	6th June	3rd October	SGT	Dominic Dromgoole	
<i>Anne Boleyn</i>	24th July	21st August	SGT	John Dove	

<i>The Merry Wives of Windsor</i>	14th August	2nd October	SGT/Tour	Christopher Luscombe	Touring Production
<i>Bedlam</i>	5th September	1st October	SGT	Jessica Swale	
<i>The Comedy Of Errors</i>	19th August	4th September	SGT/Tour	Rebecca Gatward	Touring Production

RSC 2011

Play Title	First Preview	Closing Night	Theatre	Director	Notes
<i>Hamlet YPS</i>	24th February	25th March	Swan	Tarell Alvin McCraney	
<i>King Lear</i>	23rd February	2nd April	RST	David Farr	
<i>Romeo and Juliet</i>	3rd March	2nd April	RST	Rupert Goold	
<i>Antony and Cleopatra</i>	3rd March	23rd March	Swan	Michael Boyd	
<i>The Tempest</i>	11th March	26th March	Swan	Peter Glanville	Little Angel Co. Pro
<i>The Comedy of Errors YPS</i>	26th March	2nd April	Swan	Paul Hunter	Collaboration with Told by an Idiot
<i>Cardenio</i>	14th April	6th October	Swan	Gregory Doran	
<i>Macbeth</i>	16th April	6th October	RST	Michael Boyd	
<i>The City Madam</i>	5th May	4th October	Swan	Dominic Hill	
<i>The Merchant of Venice</i>	13th May	4th October	RST	Rupert Goold	
<i>Dunsinane</i>	15th June	2nd July	Swan	Roxana Silbert	
<i>The Homecoming</i>	28th July	15th October	Swan	David Farr	
<i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i>	29th July	5th November	RST	Nancy Meckler	
<i>The Taming of the Shrew YPS</i>	24th September	15th October	Swan	Tim Crouch	
<i>Marat/Sade</i>	14th October	5th November	RST	Anthony Neilson	
<i>Written on the Heart</i>	14th October	5th November	Swan	Gregory Doran	
<i>Measure for Measure</i>	17th November	10th March 2012	Swan	Roxana Silbert	
<i>The Heart of Robin Hood</i>	18th November	7th January 2012	RST	Gisli Orn Gardarsson	

SGT 2011

Play Title	First Preview	Closing Night	Theatre	Director	Notes
<i>Macbeth</i>	Spring	Spring	SGT	Bill Buckhurst	PSWDB
<i>Hamlet</i>	23rd April	9th July*	SGT/Tour	Dominic Dromgoole	Tour April - July. (No perf @ Globe in June)
<i>All's Well that Ends Well</i>	27th April	21st August	SGT	John Dove	
<i>As You Like It</i>	17th May	26th August	SGT/Tour	James Dacre	
<i>Much Ado About Nothing</i>	21st May	1st October	SGT	Jeremy Herrin	
<i>Dr Faustus</i>	18th June	2nd October	SGT	Matthew Dunster	
<i>Anne Boleyn</i>	8th July	21st August	SGT	John Dove	Revival
<i>Globe Mysteries</i>	5th August	1st October	SGT	Deborah Bruce	
<i>God of Soho</i>	27th August	30th September	SGT	Raz Shaw	

RSC 2012

Play Title	First Preview	Closing Night	Theatre	Director	Notes
<i>The Taming of the Shrew</i>	19th January	18th February	RST	Lucy Bailey	
<i>The Heresy of Love</i>	2nd February	9th March	Swan	Nancy Meckler	
<i>Twelfth Night</i>	8th March	15th May	RST	David Farr	
<i>The Comedy of Errors</i>	16th March	14th May	RST	Amir Nizar Zuabi	
<i>Richard III</i>	22nd March	15th September	Swan	Roxana Silbert	
<i>The Tempest</i>	30th March	19th May	RST	David Farr	
<i>King John</i>	6th April	15th September	Swan	Maria Aberg	Philip the Bastard played by Pipa Nixon.
<i>Julius Caesar</i>	28th May	7th July	RST	Gregory Doran	Production relocated to "Africa" - all black cast

<i>A Soldier in Every Son</i>	29th June	28th July	Swan	Roxana Silbert	Collaboration with Mexico's Compañía Nacional de Teatro
<i>Much Ado About Nothing</i>	26th July	15th September	Courtyard	Iqbal Khan	Production relocation to India - all South Asian cast.
<i>Troilus & Cressida</i>	3rd August	18th August	Swan	Mark Ravenhill & Elizabeth Le Compte	Wooster Group Co. Pro.
<i>A Tender Thing</i>	27th September	20th October	Swan	Helena Kaut-Howson	
<i>The Merry Wives of Windsor</i>	25th October	12th January 2013	Swan	Phillip Breen	
<i>The Orphan of Zhao</i>	30th October	28th March 2013	RST	Gregory Doran	
<i>Boris Godunov</i>	15th November	30th March 2013	Swan	Michael Boyd	
<i>The Mouse & His Child</i>	17th November	12th January 2013	RST	Paul Hunter	
<i>King Lear YPS</i>	30th November	1st December	Courtyard	Tim Crouch	

SGT 2012

Play Title	First Preview	Closing Night	Theatre	Director	Notes
<i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i>	27th February	8th March	SGT	Bill Buckhurst	PSwDB
<i>Henry V</i>	7th June	26th August	SGT	Dominic Dromgoole	
<i>Hamlet</i>	11th June	1st September	SGT/Tour	DD and Bill Buckhurst	Touring Production
<i>The Taming of The Shrew</i>	23rd June	13th October	SGT	Toby Frow	
<i>Richard III</i>	14th July	13th October	SGT	Tim Carroll	All-Male
<i>As You Like It</i>	3rd September	16th September	SGT/Tour	James Dacre	Touring Production
<i>Twelfth Night</i>	22nd September	14th October	SGT	Tim Carroll	All-Male

RSC 2013						
Play Title	First Preview	Closing Night	Theatre	Director	Notes	
<i>The Winter's Tale</i>	24th January	23rd February	RST	Lucy Bailey		
<i>The Life of Galileo</i>	31st January	30th March	Swan	Roxana Silbert		
<i>Hamlet</i>	14th March	28th September	RST	David Farr		
<i>The Empress</i>	11th April	4th May	Swan	Emma Rice		
<i>As You Like It</i>	12th April	28th September	RST	Maria Aberg		
<i>Titus Andronicus</i>	16th May	26th October	Swan	Michael Fentiman		
<i>A Mad World My Masters</i>	6th June	25th October	Swan	Sean Foley		
<i>All's Well That Ends Well</i>	19th July	26th September	RST	Nancy Meckler		
<i>Candide</i>	29th August	26th October	RST	Lyndsey Turner		
<i>Richard II</i>	10th October	16th November	RST	Gregory Doran		
<i>Antony & Cleopatra</i>	7th November	30th November	Swan	Tarell Alvin McCraney	Co production with The Public Theater NY & Gable Stage Miami	
<i>Wolf Hall</i>	11th December	29th March 2014	Swan	Jeremy Herrin		
<i>Bring Up the Bodies</i>	19th December	29th March 2014	Swan	Jeremy Herrin		
<i>Wendy & Peter</i>	10th December	2nd March 2014	RST	Jonathan Munby		
SGT 2013						
Play Title	First Preview	Closing Night	Theatre	Director	Notes	
<i>Romeo and Juliet</i>	13th March	26th March	SGT	Bill Buckhurst	PSwDB	
<i>The Tempest</i>	23rd April	31st August	SGT	Jeremy Herrin		
<i>King Lear</i>	13th May	18th May	SGT /Tour	Bill Buckhurst	Touring Production	
<i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i>	24th May	12th October	SGT	Dominic Dromgoole		
<i>The Taming of the Shrew</i>	10th June	21st June	SGT /Tour	Joe Murphy	Touring Production - All-Female	

<i>Macbeth</i>	22nd June	13th October	SGT	Eve Best	
<i>Gabriel</i>	13th July	18th August	SGT	Dominic Dromgoole	
<i>Henry VI Parts 1,2 &3</i>	23rd July	8th September	SGT/Tour	Nick Bagnall	Touring Production - Played at key battle sites of the Wars of the Roses.
<i>Blue Stockings</i>	24th August	11th October	SGT	John Dove	
<i>The Lightning Child</i>	14th September	12th October	SGT	Matthew Dunster	

RSC 2014

Play Title	First Preview	Closing Night	Theatre	Director	Notes
<i>The Taming of the Shrew</i> (YPS)	6th February	8th February	Courtyard	Michael Fentiman	YPS (First Encounter Production).
<i>Henry IV Part 1</i>	18th March	6th September	RST	Gregory Doran	
<i>Henry IV Part 2</i>	28th March	6th September	RST	Gregory Doran	
<i>The Roaring Girl</i>	9th April	30th September	Swan	Jo Davies	
<i>The Arden of Faversham</i>	30th April	2nd October	Swan	Polly Finlay	
<i>Midsummer Mischief</i>	14th June	12th July	TOP	Erica Whyman & Jo McInnes	
<i>The Two Gentlemen of Verona</i>	12th July	4th September	RST	Simon Godwin	
<i>The White Devil</i>	30th July	29th November	Swan	Maria Aberg	Flaminio played by Laura Elphinstone.
<i>Love's Labour's Lost</i>	23rd September	14th March 2015	RST	Christopher Luscombe	
<i>Love's Labour's Won (Much Ado)</i>	3rd October	14th March 2015	RST	Christopher Luscombe	
<i>The Witch of Edmonton</i>	23rd October	29th November	Swan	Gregory Doran	
<i>The Christmas Truce</i>	29th November	31st January 2015	RST	Erica Whyman	

<i>The Shoemaker's Holiday</i>	11th December	7th March 2015	Swan	Phillip Breen	
SGT 2014					
Play Title	First Preview	Closing Night	Theatre	Director	Notes
<i>The Duchess of Malfi</i>	9th January	16th February	SWP	Dominic Dromgoole	First production in SWP
<i>The Knight of the Burning Pestle</i>	20th February	30th March	SWP	Adele Thomas	
<i>The Merchant of Venice</i>	6th March	29th March	SGT	Bill Buckhurst	PSwDB
<i>Titus Andronicus</i>	24th April	13th July	SGT	Lucy Bailey	
<i>Much Ado About Nothing</i>	28th April	19th May	SGT/Tour	Max Webster	Touring Production
<i>Antony and Cleopatra</i>	17th May	24th August	SGT	Jonathan Munby	
<i>The Last Days of Troy</i>	10th June	28th June	SGT	Nick Bagnall	
<i>Julius Caesar</i>	20th June	11th October	SGT	Dominic Dromgoole	
<i>Holy Warriors</i>	19th July	24th August	SGT	James Dacre	
<i>King Lear</i>	6th August	23rd August	SGT/Tour	Bill Buckhurst	Touring Production
<i>The Comedy of Errors</i>	30th August	12th October	SGT	Blanche McIntyre	
<i>Dr Scroggy's War</i>	12th September	10th October	SGT	John Dove	
<i>Pitcairn</i>	22nd September	11th October	SGT	Max Stafford-Clark	
<i>Tis Pity She's a Whore</i>	23rd October	7th December	SWP	Michael Longhurst	
The Knight of the Burning Pestle	11th December	11th January 2015	SWP	Adele Thomas	Revival of the February staging. A few cast changes.

Appendix B: Cross-Tabulation Tables

RSC by Gender			
Year	Male	Female	Total
2000	209	75	284
2001	178	59	237
2002	214	73	287
2003	114	45	159
2004	143	57	200
2005	185	66	251
2006	206	74	280
2007	206	80	286
2008	106	37	143
2009	136	49	185
2010	125	46	171
2011	210	78	288
2012	213	78	291
2013	193	78	271
2014	160	66	226
Total	2598	961	3559

SGT by Gender			
Year	Male	Female	Total
2000	48	17	65
2001	29	8	37
2002	46	6	52
2003	46	34	80
2004	20	21	41
2005	47	18	65
2006	80	23	103
2007	86	32	118
2008	94	33	127
2009	107	45	152
2010	91	37	128
2011	76	36	112
2012	70	14	84
2013	86	49	135
2014	148	56	204
Total	1074	429	1503

Race & Gender		RSC Casting by Gender and Race														Total	
		2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013		2014
White Male		193	168	190	106	129	152	161	177	87	91	96	166	143	164	139	2162
BAME Male		16	10	24	8	14	33	45	29	19	45	29	44	70	29	21	436
White Female		67	56	51	37	49	52	55	63	21	30	32	64	58	57	54	746
BAME Female		8	3	22	8	8	14	19	17	16	19	14	14	20	21	12	215
Total		284	237	287	159	200	251	280	286	143	185	171	288	291	271	226	3559

Race & Gender		SGT Casting by Gender and Race														Total	
		2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013		2014
White Male		46	27	44	43	17	42	73	76	75	86	82	69	65	76	123	944
BAME Male		2	2	2	3	3	5	7	10	19	21	9	7	5	10	25	130
White Female		13	8	6	31	18	18	21	24	27	36	36	30	12	34	43	357
BAME Female		4	0	0	3	3	0	2	8	6	9	1	6	2	15	13	72
Total		65	37	52	80	41	65	103	118	127	152	128	112	84	135	204	1503

RSC 2013	Gender		
	Male	Female	Total
Age			
18-25	53	25	78
25-35	42	23	65
35-45	37	8	45
45-55	24	7	31
55-65	22	4	26
65+	4	1	5
NA	11	10	21
Total Average	193	78	271

RSC 2014	Gender		
	Male	Female	Total
Age			
18-25	32	27	59
25-35	50	22	72
35-45	30	8	38
45-55	24	2	26
55-65	15	6	21
65+	5	1	6
NA	4	0	4
Total Average	160	66	226

SGT 2013	Gender		
	Male	Female	Total
Age			
18-25	17	24	41
25-35	25	18	43
35-45	17	4	21
45-55	8	1	9
55-65	7	1	8
65+	3	0	3
NA	9	1	10
Total Average	86	49	135

SGT 2014	Gender		
	Male	Female	Total
Age			
18-25	17	19	36
25-35	54	18	72
35-45	29	9	38
45-55	27	6	33
55-65	12	1	13
65+	3	0	3
NA	6	3	9
Total Average	148	56	204

Gender	Genre						
	Con	EM	New	Rev	Shax	Total	
Female	4	126	334	75	851	1390	
Male	8	363	706	145	2450	3672	
Total	12	489	1040	220	3301	5062	

Gender	Gender Ratios by Type of Production									
	Globe	SWP	Globe Tour	PSwDB	RSC	RSC Co-Prod	RSC Xmas	RSCYP		
Male	907	42	68	57	2329	51	159	59		
Female	342	13	50	24	834	15	82	30		
Total	1249	55	118	81	3163	66	241	89		

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